

Symbolism and the Alienation of the Artist in *A Hunger Artist*

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Abstract The paper delves into the manner in which Franz Kafka utilizes the various symbolic representations to enhance the overall impact of the thematic content of the short story. While the author explores how artists can be alienated from the society and even misconstrued, he uses various symbols to highlight this matter. Also, the association of business and art is explored through the use of symbolism in this tale. The protagonist and his fasting also symbolize the thirst for appreciation and fame. The various symbolic representations not only enrich the text, but provide the tale with much more emotional appeal. The paper explores the impact of symbols like the cage, the clock, the act of fasting, hunger, the artist himself, the impresario, as well as the panther to bring out the true essence of the life and sacrifices of the hunger artist. The characteristics of the text that lead to the quintessence of literary appeal are explored in detail. Thus, the short story is analytically deciphered to understand the apt use of semiotics by Kafka. Finally, it is made conspicuous that the theme of the narrative along with the richness of the symbols has the capacity of leaving a lasting effect on the readers.

Key words symbolic representation; hunger artist; alienation

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Introduction

There can be no denial of the fact that Franz Kafka is one of the most significant literary artists in the entire history of world literature. The stalwart has used his

literary prowess and emotional appeal to reach out to the avid readers of the text with all the impetus. For instance, one can take the example of one of the most well-known works by Kafka titled, *A Hunger Artist*, that leaves no stone unturned to bring out the thematic content in front of the common readers with all the impact, thereby making a lasting impression on the innermost core of the hearts. What makes this particular narrative stand out with all the panache and affective appeal is the fact that the skilled author goes on to use the literary elements with utmost quintessence to highlight the theme. The perfect amalgamation of the content and the apt use of literary elements make this narrative reach its zenith with regard to the communication of the innate message to the readers. One should first identify the thematic content of the narrative to further delve into the manner in which the symbolic representations of the text corroborate and catapult the thematic content and appeal among the readers (Hoffmann 205). “In the universe of semioticians in which all entities are signs, all groups texts, and all experience interpretations-in which no self exists, except as the series without paradigm of its readings, and the vale of soul-making has been developed into the archive of soulmarking-Kafka’s work would seem to occupy a privileged position because of the rigor with which it holds this view to be deranged” (Corngold 294). Artists are always alienated and separated from their societies, and they are often misunderstood by the common people, apart from being ill-used by the managers and businessmen. This specific artist shown in the text sacrifices himself to gain appreciation and respect.

The Cage

Now, the texts written by Kafka “do not need to be deconstructed, because they deconstruct themselves” (Sandbank 281). The short story by Kafka has tremendous impact on the reader’s mind and perspective as the narrative goes on to show the troubled relationship of the hunger artist with all the spectators. While one might have believed that an artist is closely intertwined with the society and its people, the contextual narrative paints an entirely different picture in front of the readers. The notion of the close relationship between the society and the artist has been existent since ages in the human world, and Kafka shows the insight and courage to challenge this perspective with all the impetus to portray his own comprehension of the dynamics (Blyn 135). The author is very much instrumental in highlighting the fact that since the artist is existent apart from the larger society, he must be misconstrued. In the case of the hunger artist as portrayed in the contextual short story, being an individual refers to the act of entirely cutting one’s own self off from the rest of the world around (Waterman 9). The short story shows this alienation in

the best possible manner through the use of various literary elements. One can say that the act of the conscious choice of the hunger artist to sequester his own self inside this cage can surely be seen as a vehement signifier of the fact that the artist is inclined toward alienating himself from the influences of the external world to give precedence to the domain of thoughts and individual vision.

One has to comprehend the fact that the act of physical separation executed by the hunger artist with his spectator goes on to actively mirror the essence of the spiritual segregation of the public will and the artistic ego of the individual. One can very well understand that this contextual gulf between the mindset paves the way for a very critical gap in comprehension. Over the course of the narrative, it becomes clear that since the hunger artist is separated from the rest of the society, he is able to construe the substantial importance of his own aims and accomplishments (Troscianko 335). He is the only one who realizes that he is not at all cheating. The narrative portrays how the contextual protagonist endeavors to tread on the path of being perfect. However, this journey on the path to perfection makes him move away further from the sea of people for whom he shows his performance. The author of the narrative goes on to establish that the individual artist would remain separated from the larger society as the very capacities or qualities that differentiate the individual as an “artist” and are identified as idiosyncrasies or individual skills are those that make sure that the artist himself would not be construed by the society.

In context of the discussion, one should reckon the fact that the cage portrayed by Kafka in this short story is one of the most significant symbols of the text which works in favor of catapulting the overall impact of the theme of the narrative in the minds of the readers (Reynolds 152). It should be comprehended that the cage that the hunger artist uses for his performance goes on to represent his personal alienation from the rest of the society. The hunger artist cannot be placed on the same plane as other people in the society owing to his psyche and perspective. However, the psyche and perspective of any individual are abstract in nature, with a symbolic representation embodies the abstraction with panache in a physical form. The cage performs this action, and helps in communicating the notion and impact of alienation among the readers of this short story. The readers can note that the contextual symbol of the story goes on to suggest the distinction between the spectacle and spectators and the impediment or barrier that thwarts the process of comprehension of the artist and his actions (Rubinstein 16). Thus, it is very intriguing to note how Kafka is instrumental in giving embodiment to the idea of alienation of the artist through a cage. It is as if the cage works as a barrier to

communication and comprehension, thereby making way for the gulf between the two sides in context.

The spectators are unable to comprehend the artistic quintessence of the hunger artist. While the hunger artist goes on to strive the contextual cage to achieve the state of perfection in his art, he is simply seen as this pathetic madman whom people think to be someone who might be cheating on his fast (Steinhauer 32). The hunger artist goes on to suggest that the position of the spectators outside the domain of the contextual cage impedes them from truly construing and appreciating the feat of the hunger artist. The author writes, "Everyone wanted to see the hunger artist at least daily. During the final days there were people with subscription tickets who sat all day in front of the small barred cage. And there were even viewing hours at night, their impact heightened by torchlight" (Kafka n.p.). The hunger artist was a sort of spectacle for the common audience. The readers of the narrative can associate with this perspective very well as the story advances. While the hunger artist might engage in lamentation about his separation from the rest of the society in the side of the contextual cage, it has to be noted that he himself had made the choice of isolating his own self from the rest of the world around by staying inside. The lack of comprehension and communication on the part of the hunger artist and the audience should be seen as an archetypal example, with the cage serving the greater function of symbolizing the barrier that comes into play while experiencing the work of an artist in the society. While the artist endeavors his very best to communicate and reach out to the masses through quintessence and efforts, the common people might not be in congruity with the very vision that the artist embodies and expresses through his act.

One cannot deny the fact that the contextual cage has a significant symbolic meaning for the relationship of the hunger artist with other people, apart from the hunger artist's disposition as well. It needs to be reckoned that this cage goes on to represent the body of the hunger artist with all the impact. He feels he is imprisoned in his body, and the audience can see him being imprisoned inside the cage. The physical self and the needs of his body can be termed as the paramount constraints to the artist's aim to go on fasting for an indefinite period of time. As such, his physical self is simply a prison to him. His ambition and effort to emancipate his own self from this prison can be identified to be a death wish. Through the act of fasting, the protagonist of the tale endeavors to be free from his mortal needs, and his act can surely be linked with both divinity as well as demise. Since the physical self is characterized by limitations, the hunger artist could only achieve his envisaged experience through giving up his temporal existence (Weller 781). It

can be said that this particular achievement on his part characterizes the notion of artistic perfection for the contextual protagonist of the narrative by Kafka.

The Clock

Another very significant symbol used by the skilled author is the clock that is present inside the cage of the hunger artist. The clock goes on to represent the biological clock of the male protagonist of the story. Also, the symbol is effectively utilized for the purpose of making the readers understand the fact that the protagonist has limitations due to the constraints posed by his physical self. The clock reminds the readers of the hunger artist's human existence that is bound by basic need of having food for sustenance. The symbol also illustrates the mental capacity and vision of the hunger artist as it become evident that he is inclined upon undermining his physical constraints as an individual over the course of time so that he can achieve perfection in his form of art. It is comprehensible that the man has to combat with his basic needs, which in turn can lead to major implications for his health and life in the course of time. The hunger artist comes across to be entirely convinced of the notion that the state of perfection in his individual art is truly a lasting as well as noble human milestone. He is driven by his vision that his capacity of starvation would exist for an eternal phase, undermining the physical constraints.

The effectiveness of the clock within the cage, however, has a major function in the course of the fictional narrative as it goes on to expose in front of the avid readers as well as the hunger artist himself that he is encompassed by delusions about perfection and greatness. He is vehemently reminded of the reality of existence and life through the clock in context. It is comprehensible to the readers through the symbolic representation that much in contrast to the ambition of the contextual male protagonist of the tale he is simply like any other animate being. He is subject to earthly as well as physical demands that include passage of time. In reality, it is totally impossible for a mortal individual with temporal existence to exist sans any food. A man would never be able to exist outside the domain of time. As such, the readers can very well relate the symbolism of the clock to the mockery of the hunger artist. The clock serves as a reminder of the fact that the resolute and inspired efforts of the artist to gain immortality would never come true. The symbol mocks the attempt on the part of the hunger artist, and thereby adds to the thematic content of the story by Kafka.

It is very true that the hunger artist is characterized by immense pride in his challenging art. It is this pride on the part of the hunger artist that goes on to enable him in the process of improving his fasting. However, it is noteworthy that the pride

ultimately impedes him from attaining his ambitions as it hurts the individual's connection with other people as well as his public appeal. The author is instrumental in highlighting this through portraying how the man looks on the emaciated frame of his body and the protruding ribcage with a sense of pride and vanity, in contrary to being worried about his own health and future. The hunger artist goes on to deem his physical condition to be the ultimate badges of his honor. The perspective of the hunger artist becomes clear when the author pens, "Those who understood knew well enough that during the period of fasting the hunger artist would never, under any circumstances, have eaten the slightest thing, not even if compelled by force. The honor of his art forbade it" (Kafka n.p.). It is intriguing to note that his body takes a grotesque shape over the course of time, and it ultimately goes on to repulse the females who initially wish to take him from the cage when his fast comes to an end. The process of fasting is surely a manifestation of the artist's pride in his own self. The starved body reminds him of his ultimate aim, but it also makes sure that he would never be admired or loved by the common people who come to see him. It is his immense pride as an artist that engages in turning the male protagonist away from the rest of the society. He gets alienated from his audience owing to his pride and physical appearance.

Hunger: The Artist's Craving for Recognition

What makes the readers wonder more about the psyche and perspective of the man is the fact that he engages in reinforcing his own isolation by the process of imprisoning his own self inside this cage. He goes on to meditate with utmost intensity while fasting as a mortal being. It is his pride that ensures that the hunger artist is encompassed by obscurity, and not transcendence and fame in any way. One needs to note that the grotesque body of the male protagonist of this narrative does not only signify the physical hunger of the person in context. While it is true that the protagonist endeavors his best to undermine his own physical need of having food through his act of intense meditation, his resolution for fasting is also characterized by his need for being recognized and acknowledged for his act. He wants the other people to understand his sacrifice. He wants the audience to consider him as someone who has the capacity to challenge the basic need of food consumption through the strength of his mind and ultimate resolution of character (Dünnhaupt 34). It is comprehensible that hunger in itself works as a symbol in the course of the fictional narrative with the author using this symbolic representation to portray the state of mind, needs, and expectations of the hunger artist who leaves no stone unturned to refrain from giving in to his basic need of food intake to satiate his

hunger for fame and accolades from the common people of the society who come to see him staying inside the cage.

All through the story in context, the hunger artist can be found to truly relish his own hunger. He goes on to relish his hunger with the hope that this act would finally pave the way for his spiritual satisfaction as an individual. However, by the end of the narrative, it becomes clear to the readers that his fasting has left him in a state of emptiness both spiritually as well as physically. The narrative shows how the hunger artist goes on to refuse food. However, the self-denial goes on to reveal his requirement for an entirely different sort of nourishment as an individual. He longs for artistic perfection and public recognition as an individual. The readers can note that hunger is the very subject of his individual performance with regard to his physical as well as spiritual aspects. The male protagonist longs for something that the audience is not able to provide him. For the man in context, the act of fasting emerges to be the most favorable thing in the entire world. The narrative explicates, "For he was also so skeletal out of dissatisfaction with himself, because he alone knew something that even initiates didn't know—how easy it was to fast. It was the easiest thing in the world" (Kafka n.p.). However, it is the immense wish for attaining the spiritual nourishment that drives the man forward. The author pens, "Generally he couldn't sleep at all, and he could always doze under any lighting and at any hour, even in an overcrowded, noisy auditorium" (Kafka n.p.). Kafka adds, "With such observers, he was very happily prepared to spend the entire night without sleeping" (Kafka n.p.). Thus, one can comprehend the priority given by the hunger artist to the scope of being acknowledged by other people for his act. Nonetheless, this spiritual need never gets satiated in any way, and it remains out of the reach of the hunger artist all through the fictional narrative by Kafka.

Thus, the author does his best to symbolize the hunger of this man to add to the thematic content of the tale. The closely intertwined nature of physical and spiritual needs of the male protagonist of the short story goes on to catapult the overall effect of the representation on the keen readers who are left intrigued by the bizarre disposition of the hunger artist from the inception till the very end. However, the symbolism of hunger and its association with the innate message of the fictional narrative goes on to highlight the emotional appeal of the text in a substantial manner indeed. Thus, the skilled author makes it possible for the general readers of the narrative to gain an insight into the mind and psyche of the hunger artist. If the symbolism of hunger would not have been implemented with such aesthetic panache in the course of the narrative, it would not have been possible for the common readers of the narrative to understand how desperately the hunger artist

craved for recognition for his act (Mahony 361). The act of fasting is simply a way of endeavoring to find that acknowledgment and fame in the society for something that other people find very challenging in nature.

The Impresario

One should take into consideration the role of the impresario in the short story. This is a class of individuals who engage in exploitation of artists for the purpose of their personal gains. While it is noteworthy that the impresario is like a partner for the hunger artist in the process of gaining recognition, it is comprehensible that he goes on to behave mostly as a parasite. This man ensures his sustenance through the starvation of the hunger artist. So, one can very well say that the impresario engages in commoditizing the suffering of the hunger artist, while the artist simply aspired to be known for his achievements and efforts. One can further understand the parasitic nature of this man by shedding light on his career trajectory and practices with regard to the hunger artist. A parasite becomes most effective if it does not drain the host in totality. Likewise, the impresario becomes most successful by popularizing the fast of the hunger artist only to stop him at the brink of demise in case of all the performances. Ultimately, he simply abandons the host, the hunger artist, when, there is no nourishment available for him.

So, it would be right to opine that the motivations of the impresario to get associated with the hunger artist are driven by his self-centered nature. However, he does play a major role in fueling the aspirations of the artist in context. He goes on to take the responsibility of the physical requirements of the hunger artist. He is seen to force-feed him so that he can survive for more acts. Also, this man is able to perceive the major disconnection between the death wish of the hunger artist and the requirement of being recognized by the common people of the society. He remains with the hunger artist till the time he can. Thus, one can also say that the impresario is a sort of partner and caretaker as well, apart from being parasitic when it comes to the case of commoditization of the art of the starving individual living in the cage.

The story portrays how the male protagonist engages in performing with the impresario. However, what stirs the readers is the fact that the hunger artist does not succeed in fasting for an indefinite period. It is this failure that goes on to result in his constant dissatisfaction as an individual. The hunger artist is unable to comprehend the fact that the very spiritual satisfaction for which he craves is reliant on the physical existence that he thinks of giving up. The protagonist is left incapable of attaining spiritual satisfaction as he goes on to renounce his claims on temporal life. The impresario is very significant in context of the narrative.

The symbol signifies the utter demand of the contextual protagonist to gain acknowledgment and fame. His act of fasting is simply left futile if people fail to understand the fact that this man is doing something that is not at all commonplace. The fact that people can understand and accept that the act of the hunger artist is a signifier of his greatness and commitment as an individual can only bring him the required fuel that would make him keeping going as an individual. In spite of the fact that the male protagonist is alienated from the rest of the society, it is the urge of the hunger artist to make people realize the aestheticism and resolution behind his act (Del Caro 42). However, his failure to do so would lead to the meaninglessness of all the efforts given in the act.

The impresario works as the bridge between the hunger artist and the common audience. As such, it is understandable to the readers of the story that the impresario has immense significance in context of the ultimate aim of the hunger artist that can never be satiated without the acknowledgment of the common people of the society. While the cage creates the distance and barrier between the common audience and the hunger artist, it is the impresario who goes on to provide the limelight to the male protagonist of the tale. The impresario is a sort of fuel for the male protagonist, and the symbolic representation shows the avid readers how the alienation of the hunger artist does not stop him from endeavoring to reach out to others. The author writes, "Much more to his taste were the watchers who sat close up to the bars, who were not content with the dim night lighting of the hall but focused him in the full glare of the electric pocket torch given them by the impresario" (Kafka n.p.) So, the impresario in context also represents the innate desire of the hunger artist to be watched, to be observed, and recognized for the act of fasting with utmost commitment and grit inside the cage in solitude.

The relationship between the general spectators and the hunger artist also comprises one of the most intriguing aspects of the narrative by Kafka. The artist never feels disturbed by the common audience who come to see him. However, it is the common people who come to see this man who have a problem with his grotesque physical appearance. Also, the common audience is often incredulous of the honesty of the act of fasting. The author shows how the hunger artist does not mind the powerful lights that thwart his sleep as he knows he is being watched by people of the society. The paradox of the narrative is that the hunger artist longs to be watched and understood, but finally ends up being misconstrued by the audience. Also, while he keeps on fasting to be famous and perfect, he denies the importance of his physical existence that is the only way in which he can be acknowledged and known by others. "It becomes impossible to construe a contradiction that the hero

registers within his conscious horizon as the collision between a fact and a mere surmise. Kafka's heroes are not, as is often said, forever tarrying in the domain of pure possibility" (Corngold 305). The paradoxical nature of the motivations and actions heighten the overall impact of the thematic content of the fictional tale by the stalwart literary artist.

It needs to be reckoned that the hunger artist is seen as spectacle by people. The common people see this man's act as a form of entertainment. The contextual occurrence goes on to point toward the fact that the society is impacted by mass culture with the people like the male protagonist of the contextual narrative being ruled by the people. As such, the very private act of going on a fast gets transformed into this spectacle, with the hunger artist craving for attention and approval of the common people of the society. While the man could have been satisfied by the fact that he has himself achieved the feat with all the resolution and strength of mind, he also needs to be sure that the audience believes that the act has not been performed by cheating in any way. Thus, the very knowledge of his personal achievement and greatness becomes meaningless to him as he can only be validated through the crowd's recognition of his act and efforts. The process of fasting becomes a powerful symbolic representation in the course of the narrative that signifies the commitment and grit of the individual. The readers also become aware that the act of fasting in itself is only ascribed proper meaning through dissemination of the news of his fasting and the credulity of the common people.

In a story that delves into the alienation of the principle character, it is very interesting to note how the skilled literary artist has explored the symbiotic relationship between the general audience and the hunger artist. While the general audience extracts entertainment from viewing this man who is starving himself to death, the man himself is so engrossed with the greatness and uniqueness of his act associates his success with the acknowledgment of his audience. It is true that the hunger artist is able to real in his achievement only through becoming a spectacle. The process of fasting is a matter of commitment, art, and expression of grit for the hunger artist. However, the same art is demeaned by the common audience by belittling his disposition to the state of being a spectacle. The utter reliance of the hunger artist on the spectators simply becomes the main reason behind his inability to break the fasting records while he is well-known as an individual. One needs to note the fact that the common people always forcibly put an end to the contextual spectacle after a span of forty days. It is through his endeavor to become associated with the circus that the hunger artist shows his interest in being alliance with a greater spectacle. However, this makes him fall out of the very limelight that he has

always craved for (Thiher 229). Although the man engages in fasting longer than ever before, he finds no sense of triumph in his feat as his final success is not in the public domain to be acknowledged and recognized.

Franz Kafka does the very best to bring out the importance of spectacle and the spectators with regard to the development of the plot of this narrative. The short story makes the common readers ponder about the primary importance of recognition in the life of an artist who does the best to make his or her act perfect. The hunger artist's perfection toward the end of the tale and the associated lack of sense of victory shows the importance of common audience for any artistic achievement. As such, one can very well note that the act of fasting, the hunger, and the show itself are closely linked to one another in the entire tale. The alienation of the hunger artist makes him keep a distance from the rest of the world, but the artist also feels the need to be accepted by others. One can say that the symbolic significance of the various representations substantiate the overall plot of this narrative to bring out the true impact of the tale on the common readers who can identify the specific literary elements used for enhancing the emotional appeal and meaning of the thematic content of the short story by Kafka.

The Jesus-Like Artist

One should reckon that the artist himself has symbolic significance in the story. The artist goes on to starve himself to gain acclaim and complete his act with perfection. In the process, the hunger artist is left to sustain in a body that exposes his ribs. People who watch the person inside the cage can understand that he is different from others. Also, the act of starvation demands a lot of mental strength from the male protagonist of the tale. "There is no doubt that the paradoxes in Kafka's work can be read in light of motifs from the Book of Job" (Liska 125). The artist himself has resemblance with Jesus owing to certain characteristics and dynamics. Just like Jesus, the hunger artist goes through physical suffering for a greater cause. However, the physical suffering never bothers the artist in any way. Jesus too was never bothered about the physical suffering that he had to go through owing to being caught and crucified. Jesus knew that his crucifixion was necessary so that the human kind could be forgiven for the sins caused. On the other hand, the tale depicts the character of the hunger artist who feels his act is necessary so that he can reach his final aim of transcendence. While the crucifixion of Jesus attracted many people to witness his pain and suffering, here one finds how the act of the hunger artist is seen as a spectacle by the general public.

Toward the end of the tale, the narrator describes, "The artist now submitted

completely; his head lolled on his breast as if it had landed there by chance; his body was hollowed out; his legs in a spasm of self-preservation clung close to each other at the knees, yet scraped on the ground as if it were not really solid ground” (Kafka n.p.). Thus, one can very well comprehend how the condition of this artist had deteriorated owing to the act of fasting. However, just like Jesus, he never gave in to the challenges of human pain and suffering so that his ultimate aim could be fulfilled with all the impetus. The artist makes one reminiscent of the sacrifices and life of Jesus who embraced demise for the greater cause. Also, Jesus wanted his preaching to be widely known among the common people. Likewise, the hunger artist too wants his acts to be appreciated and acknowledged by the common people with all their hearts.

The Panther

The readers come to see how the panther replaces the hunger artist in the cage at the end of the narrative. The panther can be found to have this raw energy. “Literary history could then take its bearings from the different views of Nietzsche and Kafka implied by the types of reversal enacted in their texts” (Corngold 140). Although the beast is trapped inside this cage, it does not seem to have any shortcomings as it does not require anything in essence. In comparison to the panther, the hunger artist meets with his demise having given up all that he had in his mind. He was unable to attain any of his ultimate goals by the end of his mortal existence. In stark contrast, the panther comes across to be a powerful symbol in the narrative indeed. The panther exudes liveliness and strength. It goes on to serve as the opposite of the starving, weak hunger artist. The hunger artist was powerless, and he finally had to embrace his death. All through his life, the hunger artist endeavored to achieve the state of spiritual satisfaction through his committed act (Beaney 61). However, after his demise, he is replaced by this panther that stands for the ultimate uninhibited energy of this physical world of existence.

Kafka describes the panther saying, “The panther was all right. The food he liked was brought to him without hesitation by the attendants; he seemed not even to miss his freedom; his noble body, furnished almost to the bursting point with all that it needed, seemed to carry freedom around with it too” (Kafka n.p.). So, one can understand that the hunger artist had lived in this condition of a constant want for recognition as well as food. In contrast, this panther has no such wants like the hunger artist. It should be noted that this short story “exists as an unstable struggle between the reading of the story that asserts that hungering is an art with that which makes art only the subterfuge of hunger. This struggle rages in the hero: he is the

arena of contesting interpretations of the metaphor, influenced by past and present spectators” (Goldcorn 95). On the other hand, in spite of being caged, the panther is very comfortable inside the cage and it goes on to project this aura of emancipation.

The narrator of the story goes on to claim that the freedom of this beast can be comprehended to be lurking somewhere in the jaws. This suggests that the traits of hunting and consuming food make this beast an embodiment that represents absence of any conflict. The panther is symbolic of the grace and power that can be attained by engaging with the world around. Also, the cage gets crowded by people when the panther is kept in it, thereby signifying the interest of the common audience to see this beast. The aura of the panther makes it stand out as a marvelous being. The hunger artist could be found to be unable to win over the crowd’s recognition as he lacked vitality. On the contrary, this beast is the epitome of vitality and power. The vitality of the panther represents the opposite traits of the hunger artist, making the avid readers of the tale understand the futility of the efforts and ambitions of the hunger artist all the more. Thus, this particular symbol does the best to enhance the appeal of the text, and makes the readers think deeply about the life and ambitions of the hunger artist.

One should understand that the hunger artist is portrayed to be a professional faster in this narrative by Kafka. He wants to dedicate his life in the process of perfecting his art of fasting so that he can achieve what no one has ever done before. The man goes on to endure the pain and suffering of his hunger willfully. It is understandable that this choice made by the hunger artist signifies his vocation of being on a fast apart from his craving for being able to defy the parameters of human nature and existence. While the rest of mankind embraces the requirement of being nourished on a regular basis, Kafka weaves a character that chooses to live in a state of self-denial. He engages in forsaking any kind of companionship, comfort, as well as intake of food, thereby undermining the fundamental things needed for human survival in the society and the world of temporal existence. So, there is no scope of denying the fact that the hunger artist is extremely devoted to his own art. The refusal to accept the need for food intake might be seen as a signifier of his death wish as well. He is clearly unwilling to accept the needs that he has as a mortal being (Sheppard 224). As such, death becomes the culmination of the committed work of his life as an artist.

Surely, the man in context is doomed to remain unhappy all through his career as a hunger artist as he entirely depends on the comprehension of other people. His requirement of validation for his performance as an artist cripples him in a way. While he does feel disdain for the various people who come to see him,

he has to seek acceptance of the same people whom he wants to evade. One can understand that the hunger artist remains as a misfit in the position of this showman. His hunger for being acclaimed is more destructive for him as it never lets him feel happy. On the other hand, his refusal to eat takes a toll on his physical health (Neumarkt 115). Through the representation of the panther, the author also exposes the incompleteness of the hunger artist who fails to exude strength. He neither gets physical strength due to the kind of art he pursues, nor does he remain mentally blissful as he keeps on seeking the approval of spectators who fail to realize the philosophy behind the act performed by the hunger artist.

At a time when the hunger artist goes on to experience any kind of cynicism or suspicion from the audience, it reflects on his state of him. He is also affected if the spectators remain indifferent to him and his act. It is clear that the male protagonist is not able to gauge that the identity of an artist and his disposition are often characterized by a sort of alienation from the rest of the society (Cesaretti 305). It is only at the end of his mortal life that this man seems to tread toward the path of comprehending the paramount paradox that characterizes his very existence as an artist. However, the readers can note that he is no longer in a position to do anything about the matter. He no longer feels that the society is cheating him of the deserved reward for his sacrifice and efforts as an artist. Rather, it becomes clear to him that his personal aspirations and visions could never get fulfilled or rewarded in the domain in which he survives. Thus, "Kafka remains the poet of the ungraspable and the unresolved", and can be describe as one "whose belief in the immovable barrier separating the wish from its realization is at the heart of his excruciating visions of defeat" (Myers 53).

Conclusion

Thus, one can reckon how the symbols have been used by Franz Kafka to highlight the message of the text. The thematic content of the short story in itself very stirring as it creates the ambiance of exploration of the human mind through the representation of the principle character and other instances. "A definition of Expressionism that excluded Kafka's distinctive features would be severely privative" (Corngold 250). The various symbolic representations enrich the textual narrative all the more, and make this story very memorable to the readers. The characterization of the narrative is also weaved in a manner that works as symbolic representations in front of the readers. It is the quintessence of Kafka that gets communicated to the readers as they understand the motivations of the main character (Spurr 180). Also, the perspective of the world around this protagonist is

highlighted with excellence through the use of certain symbols.

Hence, one can end by saying that Franz Kafka's iconic literary work titled, *A Hunger Artist*, has been rightly immortalized in the pages of world literary history. The story is a commentary on human nature. The psyche and perspective of the hunger artist represents the thirst of artists who delve into the apotheosis of their art. The short story has remained extremely popular even after so many decades of its initial publication, and the narrative has also gained immense scholastic importance over the course of time. The apt use of semiotics by Kafka has inspired many literary artists. The text proves that literary elements have the capacity of heightening the appeal and significance of the story in a substantial manner.

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