



SURREALISM IN FRANZ KAFKA'S FICTION

Kasab Chandra Giri

Research Scholar

OPJS University

Abstract

Surrealism is a new artistic and literary movement originated in France in the second decade of the 20th century. It opens a new horizon of the creative powers of subconscious mind. Surrealism is depicted in painting, poetry, fiction, novel, with its unique features. Franz Kafka is a phenomenon in portraying the surrealist images in his fiction. He skillfully delineates it through the use of sentence, syntax, dictionary, feeling, symbol and metaphors in his fiction. Kafka challenges the readers' perception of reality, using a solid yet trifling things that reinforces themes of senseless, bizarreness, absurdity, powerlessness, and existential crisis. His works often depict the labyrinth border line between the reality and the subconscious, creating a world where logic and reason are undermined by dream like, obviously nightmarish scenarios. Kafka's surrealism finds its voice through the various themes such as alienation, absurdity, somnambulism, senseless powerlessness, nonverbal communication strategies, existential crisis, parable, bureaucratic systems, psychological conflict, awkwardness, silence, dream like trance and the like. His characters couldn't relate with self, complex psychological framework leading deep despondency and anxiety in life. Franz Kafka conjures up images of a world without a centre and correspondence its interpretation through the constructive strategies. Surrealism practitioners endeavored in portraying the creative faculties of subconscious workings of human being. Kafka's narrative technique and devices create an atmosphere of surrealism through which characters experiences in his fiction to occasion that they are dragged into. The Kafka's influence on surrealism extends beyond literally technique to thematic concerns. Kafka's protagonist frequently find themselves ensnared in incomprehensible situations that expose the futility of human reports to impose order on an indifferent world.

Introduction

The word 'surrealism' first made its appearance in Apollinaire's absurdist Play, *Mamilesh de Tiersias* which was written in 1913 but first staged in 1917. The play was subtitled "drame surrealste" (surrealist drama) For Apollinaire the word expressed an analogy of convincing essential reality of life. Surrealism was a literary and artistic movement originated in France in 1922 and through out the 1930 surrealism movement continued to gain momentum despite its internal disagreements among the practitioners. It has its adherence to ignite both art and life by using the creative powers of the subconscious. To some it is an extended form of Dadaism, a moment of artists and writers who responded to the horror and chaos of the first world war by rang chaotic and intentionally meaningless composition the Andre Breton a medical practitioner and Dadaist poet, who was deeply influenced by the theories of Sigmund Freud. Surrealists broke with the nihilistic ideology of Dadism in order to pursue the expression of a "superior reality "by means of compositional techniques that highlighted the role of subconscious in the creative process. Avowedly exposing their contempt for all aesthetic traditions, the surrealists attempted to reflect the supranational workings of the subconscious in writings based on bizarre juxtapositions of unrelated concepts and images. The ground work of surrealism had been laid near the end of 19th century by the iconoclastic plays of Alfred Jerry and the anti posture of the symbolists and in the early 20th century by the stylist innovation of poet Guillaume Apollinaire. The new movement was named before the end of the war by Guillaume Apollinaire. In a letter to Paul Dermée, of March 1917, he preferred to adopt the word surrealism rather than surnaturalism, and added that surrealism was not yet in the dictionary. Apollinaire was thus, pioneer among these surrealists-Breton, Eluard, Aragon, Peter, Souault. They also admired Max Jacob and especially the painters: Picasso,

Matisse, Laurencin, Le douanier Rousseau, Derain, Braque, Fernand Leger. The four earlier writers whom they all read and studied and claimed as the first pathfinders of surrealism. The real ancestors were Nerval, Beaudelaire, Lautreamont, and Rimbaud.

Breaking with Dadaism in 1922, Breton's historical proclamation with the abortive conference inaugurated the course of modernism in new direction. Breton's experimentation began to take a new direction of automatic writing was followed by accounts of dreams and speeches made while in a trance, the pursuit of the insights of the subconscious and Reliance of the non rational which is the essence of surrealism. This was what Breton was later to call the 'intuitive epoch' of surrealism. He believed that the mind could free itself of the restrictions of logic, rationality, and conscious control by its own efforts and that thought was "supreme over matter". In this precept and belief he delineated it in the *Manifeste du Surrealisme*, published in 1924.

Since its inception, the surrealist literature was founded upon a single composition of motifs known as psychic automatism. According to Breton, by surrounding oneself to a trance like state resembling sleep, one could free the subconscious mind to participate in the creative process, and it was this "automatic writing" technique that the surrealists used to create their distinctive texts. Surrealism, although a special part of its function is to examine with a critical notions of reality and unreality, reason and irrationality, reflection and impulse, knowledge and fatal ignorance, usefulness and uselessness, drama and reality, is analogous at least in one respect with historical materialism in that it too tends to take as its point of departure the colossal abortion of the Hegelian system.

The success of the surrealist endeavour can be judged by its contribution to the individual arts. In literature, the surrealists produced an abundance of highly regarded poetry, and several surrealists ranked among the major poets of the 20th century. But the surrealist novels and stories are considered important primarily for their experimental nature. Despite the fact that Breton originally applied his theories only to the creation of literature. Critics generally agree that surrealism made its most profound and enduring impact on the plastic arts. Throughout the mid twentieth century, surrealism dominated the art world, represented by such major personalities as Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy, Andre Masson, Joan Miro, and the like

Surrealism in other texts

Surrealism in literature challenges traditional narrative techniques, introducing irrational, dream like elements that subverts conventional realism. Many authors have retained their takes over the theme of surrealism. Nikolai Gogol's short story *The Nose* (1936) is a superb example of satirical literature that employs elements of absurdity and grotesque surrealism to critique the rigid and open illogical bureaucratic system of the 19th Century Russia. Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machine of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) is a provocative and surreal novel that explores the manipulation of reality, the nature of the desire, and the intersection of political power with illusion. The novel's complex and philosophical underpinning sets it apart from other surrealist works, making it a unique contribution to speculative fiction. The novel *The Informal Desire Machine of Doctor Hoffman* is a phantasmagorical journey through a world where reality is under siege by diabolical machinations of a mad scientist who has unleashed desire machines that warp perception and desire.

Surrealism in Kafka's fiction

Kafka is one of the most outstanding and admired writers on surrealism content. His works have an animated and inquisitive feeling which makes them distinct from other writers. The more we read Kafka, the more it opens new selves of meaning to its text and readers. Kafka's works are widely recognized for its exploration of alienation, bureaucratic operation, existential crisis and psychological torment all that he skilfully interweaves into a surrealist structure. His works often misty border line between the reality and the subconscious, creating a world where logic and reason are undermined by dream like, obviously nightmarish, scenarios. Kafka's all through his unique use of language, narrative structure, characterization and thematic complexities. Kafka's almost all literary works touch the elements of surrealism. His *The Metamorphosis*, *The Trial*, *The Castle*, and many other short stories, present a reality that is both homely and alien at the same time. Through these texts, Kafka challenges the readers' perception of reality, using a solid yet animated and linguistic style that reinforces themes senseless, bizarreness, absurdity, powerlessness, and existential crisis. His language and expression are open mark by ambiguity, disjointed syntax, and an unsettling simplicity, obliquely intrudes reader's complex psychological involvement with the narrative of the text.

Kafka's prose style incorporates to the surrealist elements of his works. His sentences are long winding and labyrinth, upholding the mirror image of confusion and entrapment experienced by his characters. As if his characters are dragged into the occasion but never able to come out from it. His characters couldn't have a space to meditate prior the questions what and why. He employs a neutral, detached narrative voice that heightens the eerie and this concerting the quality of stories. His stylistic portrait ensures that even the most irrational events are depicted with an air of inevitability, intensifying their unsettling effect on both characters and readers.

Kafka's approach to time and space contributes to the surreal effect of his narratives. The abrupt settings in his narratives cannot be defined in liminal space where conventional motion of time and space are blurred. This disjunction and disorientation reinforcement, the sense of isolation are experienced by his characters and aligns with surrealist explorations of dream like environments. The protagonist in *The Castle*, for example perpetually remains in labyrinth in the journey. He is unable to reach the destination of the castle and falls in the trap of embarrassing in endless circle of frustration and uncertainty. In this intension of unattainable goals and ceaseless struggle underrates surrealist tension between reality and illusion.

One of the noteworthy features of Kafka's realism is his ability to unfold the absurd without explicit supernatural elements. Unlike traditional Surrealist works, which open engage overtly fantastical or dream like visions and imagery, maintains a grounded, almost bureaucratic realism that paradoxically enhances its surreal quality. His narratives are constructed with meticulous details, presenting common place settings that gradually unreveal into bizarre and unsettling experiences. This technique reinforces a sense of unfamiliarity and existential uncertainty, as seen in *The Castle*, where K. struggles against an opaque bureaucratic system and in *The Trial* where Joseph K. navigates judicial orders that disowns comprehension.

Franz Kafka's narratives are profoundly fixed in surrounding with nonverbal communicative strategies that extent beyond conventional linguistic structures. The use of gestures, silence, and visual imagery in Kafka's narratives play a pivotal role in shaping the surrealist thoughts of his fictions. His narratives of employs least dialogue, allowing for implicit weight silence, body gestures and imagery psychological depth and existential anxiety. For example, in *Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa's inability to connect with his family on a meaningful level under scores the inherent isolation that exists within modern society, where individuals are often estranged from one another despite their physical proximity. In *The Trial*, Joseph K's interactions are often punctuated by perplexing silences and inexplicable bodily postures and vexes, which form diversity and elimination inherent in his encounters with bureaucratic authority. Gestures in Kafka's works function actively in creating the atmosphere of feared The unknown verbal lexicon that exposes the internal conflicts and suppressed anxieties of characters. In *Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa's transformation into an insect is most vividly expressed not through dialogue but through grotesque distortions of his new bodily form. His thinning legs, fragile physique and mind, and futile attempts to convey his words with his family sum up his existential crisis in causing despondence and anxiety, reiterating Kafka's theme of the estrangement between self and external world.

One of the dominant theme of Kafka's fiction is a sense of alienation which has a potential to create the atmosphere of Surrealism. Kafka's characters are alienated to self, to family, and to society as well. His protagonists often experience disconnection from their surroundings, their families, and even their own identities. In *Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa's physical transformation into an insect that serves as the ultimate manifestation of his alienation. Unable to communicate with his family in any meaningful way, Gregor becomes a grotesque spectacle, feared and repelled by those who were closed to him. His insect form haunts him utterly alone in a world that no longer makes sense, manifesting the absurdity of human existence and the meaninglessness in endeavoring to find the meaning in a universe. That deems indifferent to individual suffering The name Frenz Kafka conjures up images of a world without a centre of people alienated both from society and from themselves. Kafka lived at the threshold of the modern technology world, and his stories are prophetic of the bewilderment and anxiety that typify modern frustration and darkest moods. Humans are gradually detaching from the essential nature. The same thing has been portrayed in allegorical form of the trilogy novellas *Our Ancestors* by Italo Calvino human condition through fantastical narratives. Each story delves into themes of Identity, duality and the struggle for personal integrity, The first novel of follows a noble man who It explores the becomes split into two halves, each representing different aspects of his personality. The second rejecting empty norms to find his own path. The final chooses to a knight who exists only as an empts suit of armor, symbolizing the quest for self and the essence of being. Together these Kafka's weave a rich tapestry of philosophical enquiry into the existence of human condition. Kafka's influence on surrealism extends beyond literally techniques to thematic concerns. Just as in the crisis of sensibility which begins with romanticism, surrealism was but another attempt to resolve the logically irreconcilable, to fill by fiat the void of being. It's most

impressive conquest, according to Robbe -Grillet, was its ability to highlight, to bring to the attention of a blase public, the wonder of daily life:" the most ordinary phenomena are therefore, in all probability, the most revelatory, the most striking". Surrealism was born of a desire to wrest from the unknown knowledge born of revelation. This was its origin and aesthetic.

Surrealists were deeply interested in exploring the subconscious mind and the irrational forces that shape human existence. The surrealists, however, recognized early the pointless and ultimately gravity circularity of spoofing the ridiculous, of pompous, of mocking society. themselves included. Kafka's works resonate with the concerns through their emphasis on emptiness, alienation, guilt, helplessness and enigmatic nature of authority. His characters live in such society where they have to fight against inscrutable forces that same to arise from their own inner turmoil, blurring the line between external oppression and psychological distress, this thematic obscurity and ambiguity aligns with the surrealist fascination with dream logic and the unconscious.

Stylistic Features of Language in Kafka's Fiction

Franz Kafka, one of the most influential modernist writers, is renowned for his distinctive use of language, which contributes to the surreal and often nightmarish quality of his fiction. His stylistic choices reflect deep existential concerns and create an atmosphere of alienation and absurdity. This paper explores the linguistic elements in Kafka's fiction that contribute to narration, including his use of ambiguity, paradox, and dreamlike sequences. Additionally examines the role of absurdity and existential themes in shaping his narrative style.

Linguistic Elements Contributing to Surrealism

Franz Kafka's literary works are renowned for their surreal quality, which imase ouders in a world where reality appears distorted, dreamlike, and often nightmarish This surrealistes is achieved through various linguistic elements, including syntax, diction, and narrative structure Kafka's use of precise yet bureaucratic language to describe absurd otherworldly events creates a striking contrast between rational linguistic stracture and irrational experiences, producing an unsettling effect on the reader (Pasley, 2000) Moreover, his employment of long, winding sentences mirrors the labyrinthine experiences of his protagonists, while his choice of diction, deceptively simple yet laden with deeper meaning, contributes to the existentialist themes of his work. Through these linguistic techniques, Kafka crafts a surreal literary landscape that challenges readers' perceptions of reality and highlights the inadequacies of language in capturing the complexity of human existence.

Kafka's syntax plays a crucial role in establishing the surreal tone of his fiction. His sentences are often lengthy and meandering, mirroring the psychological disorientation of his protagonists. This syntactical style contributes to the oppressive atmosphere of his narratives, trapping both the characters and the readers in a complex, almost bureaucratic structure of language. In *The Trial* (1925), Joseph K.'s interactions with the court are characterized by intricate, convoluted sentences that reflect his confusion and entrapment within an incomprehensible judicial system .The seemingly endless subordination of clauses in Kafka's writing mirrors the protagonist's journey through an endless bureaucratic maze, reinforcing the surreal quality of his predicament. This linguistic style forces the reader to experience the protagonist's bewilderment firsthand, as they must navigate Kafka's complex sentence structures in the same way that the characters must navigate their surreal realities.

Another essential linguistic element contributing to Kafka's surrealism is his use of precise, bureaucratic language to describe absurd and irrational situations. This technique creates a jarring juxtaposition between form and content, as the rational, legalistic tone of Kafka's prose contrasts sharply with the absurdity of the events unfolding within the narrative. For instance, in *The Metamorphosis* (1915), Gregor Samsa's transformation into a giant insect is described with meticulous detail, as though it were a routine occurrence rather than an extraordinary and inexplicable event (Kafka, 1915/2016). The matter-of-fact tone with which Gregor's condition is reported further disorients the reader, as the surreal elements of the story are treated with a detached, bureaucratic precision. This paradoxical use of language heightens the nightmarish quality of Kafka's fiction, as it denies the render the expected emotional or dramatic response to such surreal occurrences.

Kafka's diction also plays a pivotal role in constructing the surreal atmosphere of his fiction His language is often deceptively simple, yet it carries multiple layers of meaning that evoke a profound sense of unease. While his words and phrases may appear

neutral of straightforward on the surface, they often possess connotations that suggest deeper existential anxieties. This linguistic ambiguity aligns with the existentialist notion that language is inherently inadequate for fully capturing human experience (Gray, 2010). In *The Castle* (1926), for instance, the protagonist K. attempts to gain access to a mysterious and elusive authority, yet the precise nature of this authority remains ambiguous and undefined throughout the novel. The simplicity of Kafka's diction paradoxically enhances the complexity of his themes, as it forces the reader to grapple with the underlying uncertainties and contradictions inherent in the text. By employing language that appears clear yet ultimately defies definitive interpretation, Kafka creates a surreal world in which meaning itself is elusive and unstable.

Furthermore, Kafka's narrative structure reinforces the surrealism of his fiction. His works often lack conventional resolutions, leaving readers in a state of uncertainty and disorientation. The absence of closure in Kafka's narratives mirrors the experiences of his protagonists, who frequently find themselves ensnared in endless bureaucratic and existential dilemmas. This open-ended structure further contributes to the dreamlike and surreal quality of his fiction, as it defies the conventional expectations of narrative progression and resolution. In *The Trial*, for example, Joseph K.'s journey through the legal system does not culminate in any clear revelation or resolution; instead, it concludes with his abrupt and inexplicable execution (Kafka, 1925/2019). This lack of narrative closure leaves the reader in a state of unresolved tension, reinforcing the unsettling and surreal atmosphere of the novel.

Kafka's use of repetition and circular reasoning within his narratives also contributes to their surreal quality. His characters often engage in dialogues and thought processes that seem to loop endlessly without arriving at any definitive conclusions. This linguistic and narrative circularity mirrors the absurd and futile nature of the protagonists' struggles, as they are trapped in systems that offer no clear answers or escape. In *The Castle*, K. repeatedly attempts to gain access to the castle's authorities, yet his efforts are met with endless bureaucratic obstacles and contradictions that render his quest futile (Kafka, 1926/2011). This repetitive structure reinforces the surreal atmosphere of the novel, as it creates a sense of stagnation and entrapment that mirrors the protagonist's existential predicament.

Additionally, Kafka's use of indirect and ambiguous dialogue contributes to the surreal and disorienting quality of his fiction. His characters often speak in a manner that is evasive, contradictory, or laden with hidden meanings, making it difficult for both the protagonists and the readers to discern clear intentions or truths. This linguistic uncertainty heightens the sense of paranoia and confusion that permeates Kafka's narratives. In *The Trial*, for example, Joseph K.'s conversations with court officials and other characters are characterized by vague and contradictory statements that obscure rather than clarify his situation (Kafka, 1925/2019). This deliberate use of ambiguous dialogue enhances the surreal nature of the novel, as it prevents the reader from establishing a firm grasp on the reality of the events described.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Kafka's surrealism is deeply rooted in his linguistic choices, which create a world where reality is distorted, ambiguous, and often nightmarish. His use of complex syntax, precise yet incongruous diction, and unconventional narrative structures immerses readers in an environment where meaning is elusive and logic is subverted. By employing bureaucratic language to describe absurd events, Kafka creates a striking contrast that heightens the sense of disorientation and unease. His long, winding sentences mirror the psychological turmoil of his protagonists, while his deceptively simple diction conceals deeper existential anxieties. Through these linguistic elements, Kafka crafts a literary landscape that challenges conventional perceptions of reality and forces readers to confront the uncertainties and contradictions inherent in human existence. Ultimately, Kafka's surrealism is not merely a stylistic choice but a fundamental aspect of his philosophical exploration of alienation, bureaucracy, and the limits of human understanding.

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