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Symbolism in "Cathedral"

"Cathedral," a story by Raymond Carver, talks about how a human's character is transformed in terms of character from being careless and depressed to being diversified. It is a story of how one eliminates ignorance and sees things from a broader perspective. It also talks of relationships that exist between people and the actions they engage in to cement them. Carver uses symbolism in the story "Cathedral" through the use of tapes, cathedral depiction, blindness, and the twenty-peso coin being divided between the blind man and his wife.

Robert and the wife to the narrator are seen making tapes and mailing the tapes to and from. The wife to the narrator is putting all sorts of stuff about her life on the tapes (Carver 36). These audiotapes are symbolic in that they represent the understanding and the support of another person, particularly the blind man, because the wife to the narrator is not in a position to genuinely express her feelings and thoughts to any other person. This leads to the build-up of unpleasant emotions which are evoked through such a calming action.

Upon the death of Beulah, the wife to Robert, he is left with a part of a twenty-peso coin whereby the other part was put in the box together with her (Carver 37). The coin is symbolic in that it shows how the marriage between the blind man and his wife is very strong. This relationship represents an unbreakable bond. The bond is strong such that even the death of one

cannot break it; each person is left with the portion of the coin reminding them that their love is unending.

Moreover, while the storyteller is looking at the television, the blind man requests him to define to him the basilica. However, the storyteller is confused as he is unable to depict it (Carver 43). The blind man insists that they join hands and draw them together. The narrator explains that experience as that which he has not come across in his entire life (Carver 44). Before he drew the cathedral, the author's inability to depict it shows that even if he can see the cathedral, he is not in a position to see beyond its appearance and get a comprehensive understanding. However, by bringing out the picture of the cathedral with the eyes closed, the narrator is visualizing the cathedral from the perspective of the blind man. This way, it is more comprehensive as well as detailed despite Robert's inability to see it.

Raymond Carver's Cathedral's use of symbolism relates to the story in different ways. For example, the strong relationship addressed in the story is enhanced by the symbolism where Beulah, Robert's wife is buried with half of the twenty-peso coin, and Robert is left with the other half. This shows how strong their bond is. Additionally, the change of character by the people is seen where the narrator is asked by the blind man to depict the picture of the cathedral. In the first attempt, he is unable to depict the image. Upon closing the eyes, he can see the cathedral from the blind man's perspective. This shows open-mindedness as well as the elimination of ignorance. The symbols used by Carver in the story of Cathedral are not in such a way that more than one interpretation can be derived. Each symbolism depicts its interpretation.

In conclusion, Raymond Carver has used symbolism to bring about the true picture of the message that he wished to convey to his audience. Through these symbols, he conveys the message of open-mindedness as well as how the characters relate.

Work Cited

Carver, Raymond. "Cathedral." 1938-1988

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