

A short analysis of "the bucket rider" and "a country doctor"

Countries



The Bucket Rider

This short story, typical of Franz Kafka's surrealist writing, would bring the reader into some false hopes that the speaker would somehow get through the dilemma or problem he is in, but ends in frustration and despair. Such false hopes that the narrator would somehow get some coal that she/he desperately needs are created by the magical elements in the story. Somehow likened to Aladdin's flying carpet, the bucket becomes the narrator's humble vehicle which safely brings her/him to the destination, the coal dealer's cellar. Nevertheless, unlike Aladdin, the speaker shows extreme dependence on the bucket and what it should contain, i. e., coal. We could likely interpret the bucket and the coal as the narrator's source of security that ought to be filled up once it goes empty.

Probably it could be one's desire for love or (to be Freudian about it) it could be the libidinal desire for sexual gratification. In one way or another, the characteristics of the bucket could be likened to human emotions: like emotions the bucket "flies," and like emotions, the bucket, likened to a steed, could not resist. There could probably be many other interpretations on what the bucket and the coal may represent (as well as what the coal dealer and his wife, and all the other elements in the short story represent) but one thing clear is the ending: that eventually, coal would run out and when it does at the point when one is without means (but to beg) to get a new supply, then one would have to end in despair, in the regions of the ice mountains. This is the recurrent Kafka theme: that human life is inescapably frustrating and riddled with anxiety, riddles that seem not to have any answers.

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The Country Doctor

This short story stands out for its repeated use in classes in demonstrating Freudian psychoanalysis. A number of psychology and literature professors fancy using this short story to show how a classic surrealist literature could be Freudian. True, the elements of this short story could well be translated in Freudian terms but that I shall not pursue in length. It may be enough for the purposes of this short essay to say that the groom, the doctor's alter ego, could very likely represent his id, the hidden erotic side of his personality, and that being a professional could simply be the sublimation of his sexual desires.

Such would bring a whole new paradigm in the short story; nevertheless, I would want to point out, not how the entire short story could very well demonstrate Freud, but the theme of how frustrating human existence could be. The district doctor is ironically portrayed as powerless to attend to his own needs and desires. Torn by the call of duty, he did not have the power to stop the groom from running after Rose when he explicitly said that he does not have the intention of handing the maid to the groom.

It should be mentioned that the groom and the horses magically came from the doctor's own pigsty, which made Rose say, "You never know what you're going to find in your own house." Such a frustrating existence could very well be seen in the patient's house as the doctor once again is caught in the frustrating dilemma of a healthy boy wanting to die, only to be reversed afterwards, i. e., after diagnosing that the boy indeed is sick, this time the boy wants to live. While in the patient's house, the doctor is constantly troubled by the horses, the parents, the sister, and other human beings like <https://assignbuster.com/a-short-analysis-of-the-bucket-rider-and-a-country-doctor/>

the village elders. Again he proved to be helpless when his upper garments were removed from him.

He managed to escape but this time his magical horses would not canter but would rather go slow. The doctor, now in between the patient's house and his own, gives a cry of despair: " Never shall I reach home at this rate; my practice is done for." All of what he has, i. e., his home and his maid as well as his profession are all now gone, all because he made a mistake to respond to a false alarm. These entire surrealist events point to the meaninglessness of it all, the frustrating existence of the country doctor who is incapable of saving his own self.

Conclusion

Though there are obvious differences as regards the characters, the use of symbols and elements, etcetera, we could say that the two essays are similar in a number of ways: the theme, i. e., inescapability of frustrations and powerlessness in human existence; the use of surrealism and magic; and the possible use of Freudian paradigm to interpret the elements of the stories. All these we have seen in our discussion above.