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FIQWS 10108 & 10008

6 November 2023

Inside the Mind of The Doctor Using a Freudian Lens

In many ways, dreams reflect the inner thoughts and desires of people. Freud uses the concepts of dreamwork in his *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* to interpret the dreams of his patients to better understand them and their situations. The dreamwork consists of manifest content: the elements of a dream, latent content: the underlying/hidden meaning of the dream, condensation: the combination of themes in one symbol, and finally displacement: the transfer of intense emotion onto something more trivial. In the dreamlike short story “A Country Doctor,” Franz Kafka illustrates Freud’s psychoanalytic concepts of dreamwork; these concepts throughout the dreamlike story demonstrate the insecurities of the doctor and help deeper understand his romantic feelings regarding Rose.

First, the manifest content of the dream is displayed by the doctor’s horses which have died and then the groom shows up with “two horses, enormous creatures with powerful flanks...by sheer strength of buttocking squeezed out through the door which they filled entirely,” (Kafka 1). The latent content is the feeling of inferiority from the doctor. The doctor compares himself to the young groom who conveniently has very huge horses with great strength these references are phallic symbols. The groom’s horses symbolize virility while the doctor has dead horses showing his impotence and inability to satisfy Rose. Freud points out that “the *latent*

dream thoughts, which you suppose were present in the unconscious” (2222), show the doctor's internal fear of losing Rose to younger, and more capable men. The groom with his horses symbolizes virility and can please Rose. The doctor knows he can't perform sexually due to his old age and isn't going to be able to give Rose what she needs.

Furthermore, the doctor comes across a problematic situation, Rose keeps getting sexually assaulted by the groom. The doctor loves Rose and doesn't want to leave her with the groom while he goes on his journey to save the boy. When trying to save the boy, the doctor's experience relates to displacement. The doctor's thoughts throughout his visit to the boy always go back to Rose specifically when he thinks “I had to see that Rose was all right, and then the boy might have his way and I wanted to die too” (Kafka 2). The displacement is that the doctor knows he can't save Rose from the groom so he ultimately tries to save the boy. The doctor shifts his primary focus from Rose to the boy. Freud describes dreams as “the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious,”(2220). The doctor's thoughts and actions always go back to Rose. The intense emotions he has of wanting to be with Rose are placed on the boy to save him. The doctor wants to be with Rose but knows deep down he cannot. He transfers the despair he has to save the boy, hoping to return quickly to the one he loves.

Another part of the dreamwork is condensation which can be seen when the doctor is examining the boy's wound. The doctor describes the wound as “Rose-red, in many variations of shade.” The color of the wound rose-red is a symbol of Rose, the doctor finds a way to connect it back to Rose, but he unconsciously does it without even realizing it. Then, the doctor proceeds to describe the wound as having “Worms, as thick and as long as my little finger, themselves rose-red and blood-spotted as well, were wriggling from their fastness in the interior of the

wound toward the light.” This alludes back to the groom and Rose, the worms and their description being blood-spotted and wiggling in the wound portrays the loss of virginity. The doctor also describes the worms as “with small white heads and many little legs.” The worms are a symbol of a penis and semen meaning the doctor is concerned about the groom and Rose, he is thinking about them, having sexual intercourse. The doctor then thinks “I had discovered your great wound; this blossom in your side was destroying,”(Kafka 3). The doctor is unable to save the boy. Freud says that “not all dreams are alien to the dreamer”(2221), this portrays the importance of Rose to the doctor as he always finds a way to connect his work to Rose. Rose is his main focus and it’s not strange at all that his thoughts all go back to her. The wound itself shows many different themes but it all goes back to his worry and insecurity of leaving Rose alone with the groom.

Consequentially, Freud's dreamwork concepts help convey the insecurities of the doctor and help the audience understand his romantic feelings toward Rose. Throughout the doctor’s journey he is constantly thinking about Rose and everything he does seems to always go back to her in little ways. This demonstrates the doctor's intense feelings for Rose and the significance of using Freudian concepts to analyze on a much deeper scale to notice the unconscious desires characters have.

Work Cited

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