Of Blindness and Marital Drama

Charmaine R. Berina

Although many critics have written numerous accounts of Richard Carver's "Cathedral" as being about revelation and overcoming prejudice, they have overlooked a very significant aspect: the unfolding of marital drama. The story tells of how a close outside friendship can threaten marriage by provoking insecurities, creating feelings of invasion of privacy, and aggravating communication barriers.

The close outside friendship between the narrator's wife and Robert, the blind man, provokes the narrator's insecurities. This friendship has lasted for ten long years. During those years, they have exchanged countless voice tapes wherein they both tell each other what has happened in their respective lives. Because of this, the narrator feels that his wife has told Robert more than Robert needs to know. The narrator laments, "she told him everything or so it seemed to me" (1054). The narrator's fear is somehow confirmed when Robert arrives and says that he feels like they have already met (1055). The narrator is left wondering what his wife has disclosed. This murky situation leaves the narrator feeling insecure, especially when he sees the warm interaction between his wife and Robert.

The narrator's insecurities unfold when it takes him almost five pages just to demonstrate how close the friendship is between his wife and Robert. It is as though he is justifying his irrational behavior or perhaps questioning if his wife could be secretly in love with Robert. The narrator assumes this because his wife only writes poems if something really important happens to her. He recalls that his wife never forgot that instant when Robert "touched his fingers to every part of her face—she even tried to write a poem about it" (1053). According to Michael J. Bugeja, the narrator feels left out when his wife and Robert recall the years they spent together, before the narrator knew the woman who would become his wife. In addition, the narrator's insecurity worsens when his wife shows Robert extra attention (28).

Not only did the narrator feel insecure, he also feels that Robert's arrival into their home is an invasion of his privacy. Critic Richard Eder said, "In 'Cathedral' a husband who has long resented his wife's devotion to a blind man grudgingly puts up with the blind man's visit" (103). The husband resents the thought of the blind man sleeping in his house (Carver 1054). Studies in social psychology show that people can react strongly to trespassers on their personal space. The narrator's home encloses that personal space and thus he feels that Robert is intruding his privacy. Furthermore, the narrator is plagued with preconceived notions about blind people. For example, he thinks blind people do not smoke, should have dark glasses, and carry a cane (1056). Therefore, to have another man—blind at that—who is close to his wife and sleeps in his house is just too much for him to bear.

Through the narrator's eye, Robert is an intruder not only to his personal privacy but also an intruder to his supposed private relationship with his wife. Could the narrator be threatened by the history shared between his wife and the blind man? After all, Robert came into the wife's life long before the narrator met her. Therefore, one could begin to understand that perhaps the narrator feels he is constantly competing with Robert's shadow. Thus, in the narrator's somewhat distorted view, he shares his wife with another man. So the narrator feels that his relationship with his wife is no longer private.

In this story, Robert is the key that unlocks the couple's communication barriers. The wife is the kind of woman who needs to express herself. Robert's friendship allows her to do that. She tries to share her thoughts and whatever news she has regarding Robert with her husband. For example, she asks her husband if he wants to hear the latest tape from Robert. The narrator agrees reluctantly (1054). Also, she is a woman who needs a sense of connection. She tells Robert that she wasn't happy being part of her first

husband's "military-industrial thing." She divorced her first husband even though she loved him because she was tired of moving and was fed up with losing the people she cared about (1053). In addition, she is a sensitive woman. She feels Robert's grief from when he lost his wife and is angry when the narrator mocks Robert's dead wife (1054).

Exactly what kind of relationship do the narrator and his wife have? Just like any other couple, they have their spiteful arguments. However, they seem to enjoy arguing with each other. Robert's visit triggers the narrator's pent-up feelings. If the couple enjoyed a loving and nurturing relationship, they would be able to sit down and talk things out instead of volleying angry words and angry looks back and forth.

Their failure to communicate their thoughts and feelings with each other causes them a lot of misunderstandings. If only they took the time to express themselves without arguing to get their points across, then the wife would understand why her husband feels threatened by her close friendship with Robert. And likewise, the narrator would understand why that friendship is important to her. Since both of them fail to see their marital problems without the friction caused by Robert's visit, then in a sense both of them are "blind," although most critics are quick to say that it is only the narrator who is "blind."

Most criticism about this story focuses on how Robert helps the narrator overcome his prejudice. Almost never is anything written about the underlying social implications of marriage and relationships. It is worthwhile to note that this story quietly shows that in the exclusiveness of marriage, certain "outside relationships" can either cultivate or destroy lives depending on the relationship shared by a married couple.

A lot of troubled marriages continue to crumble because spouses fail to try to solve their problems. However, this is not to say that marriages are an easy undertaking. In the story, Robert acts as a catalyst to bring the couple's marital problems up to the surface. He is not the root cause of the married couple's disputes as the narrator wrongly thinks.

As Raymond Carver has demonstrated in "Cathedral," close outside friendships can threaten marital relationships by provoking insecurities, creating feelings of invasion of privacy, and aggravating communication barriers. But the story also suggests that if those who are married share a mutual understanding of their expectations and boundaries this need not happen. In addition, congenial relationships outside marriage such as friendships should complement a nurturing and loving relationship between a man and his wife.

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The Blind Man

Teresa Alutto

The narrator in Raymond Carver's "Cathedral" is not a particularly sensitive man. I might describe him as self-centered, superficial, and egotistical. And while his actions certainly speak to these points, it is his misunderstanding of the people and the relationships presented to him in this story which show most clearly his tragic flaw: while Robert is physically blind, it is the narrator who cannot clearly see the world around him.

In the eyes of the narrator, Robert's blindness is his defining characteristic. The opening line of "Cathedral" reads, "This blind man, an old friend of my wife's, he was on his way to spend the night" (1052). Clearly, the narrator cannot see past Robert's disability; he dismisses him in the same way a white racist might dismiss a black person. In reality, any prejudice—be it based on gender, race, or disability—involves a person's inability to look past a superficial quality. People who judge a person based on such a characteristic are only seeing the particular aspect of the person that makes them uncomfortable. They are not seeing the whole person. The narrator has unconsciously placed Robert in a category that he labels abnormal, which stops him from seeing the blind man as an individual.

The narrator's reaction to Robert's individuality shows his stereotypical views. The narrator assumed Robert did not do certain things, just because he was blind. When he first saw Robert his reaction was simple: "This blind man, feature this, he was wearing a full beard! A beard on a blind man! Too much, I say" (Carver 1055). When Robert smokes a cigarette, the narrator thinks, "I . . . read somewhere that the blind didn't smoke because, as speculation had it, they couldn't see the smoke they exhaled . . . But this blind man smoked his cigarette down to the nubbin and then lit another one" (1056). The narrator's naiveté leaves him amazed by Robert, who does things which the narrator would view as atypical of the blind. This reinforces the idea that the narrator is blind to the reality of the world.

The narrator's blindness is certainly not limited to Robert—he no better understands the relationship between his wife and the blind man:

> They'd become good friends, my wife and the blind man. . . . On her last day in the office, the blind man asked if he could touch her face . . . .She told me he touched his fingers to every part of her face . . . .She never forgot it. She even tried to write a poem about it . . . .She wrote a poem or two every year, usually after something really important had happened to her. When we first started going out together, she showed me the poem . . . I can remember I didn't think much of the poem . . . Maybe I just don't understand poetry (Carver 1053).

While the narrator realizes that his wife's relationship with Robert is important to her, he cannot understand why. Under other circumstances, the narrator's wife's descriptions of experiences that summer and Robert's friendship and advice through her marriages might have left him enlightened as to the depth of their relationship. But here, despite all evidence to the contrary, the narrator (ultimately because of his prejudice) has ruled out Robert as a thoughtful, consequential person. He cannot comprehend that a blind man is capable of touching his wife's life. Instead, he arrogantly assumes that he was the most important person to come into his wife's life. This delusion is obvious when the narrator relates surprise that his wife never mentions him in her conversation with Robert that night:

> They talked of things that had happened to them—to them!—these past ten years. I waited in vain to hear my name on my wife's sweet lips: "And then my dear husband came into my life"—something like that. But I heard nothing of the sort (1057).

This only reaffirms that once again, the narrator completely misreads the situations in the world around him.

The narrator's emotional blindness can be seen most clearly in his inability to comprehend Robert's marriage to a woman named Beulah. He muses, "They'd married, lived and worked together, slept together . . . and then the blind man had to bury her. All this without his having ever seen what the goddamned woman looked like" (1054). Here, the narrator's preoccupation with physical appearance is evident. Therefore, it is not surprising that he cannot understand Robert's marriage, which was entirely based on the emotional and intellectual aspects of a relationship. The narrator openly admits their marriage was "beyond [his] understanding" (1054). His inability to imagine or even appreciate such a seemingly wonderful marriage further illustrates his blindness.

In addition, the narrator's prejudice again plays a part in his naiveté. The narrator cannot believe that Robert could possibly understand his late wife's emotions. He says Robert "could never read the expression on her face, be it misery or something better" (Carver 1055). This statement shows that the narrator believes Robert, because of his disability, would be an inadequate husband. The narrator's belief that Robert's physical blindness resulted in an inadequacy in his marriage shows he again has dismissed Robert on the basis of his disability. He is blind to the possibility that Robert can see, whereas he cannot.

But perhaps the best example of the narrator's blindness can be seen in a reference to Beulah:

I found myself thinking what a pitiful life this woman must have led. Imagine a woman who could never see herself as she was seen in the eyes of her loved one. A woman who could go on day after day and never receive the smallest compliment from her beloved . . . then to slip off into death, the blind man's hand on her hand, his blind eyes streaming tears . . . her last thought this: that he never even knew what she looked like, and she on an express to the grave (1055).

The idea that Beulah continually felt an inadequacy in her marriage based on Robert's disability is undoubtedly a ridiculous claim, which shows an intense misunderstanding of love and life on the part of that narrator. Robert's marriage was most likely very intimate and completely unhindered by his disability. The narrator's wife even commented that Robert and Beulah "had been inseparable for eight years" (1054). But such a love is beyond the comprehensive abilities of the narrator, who cannot seem to recognize the most important things in life.

While a lot has been written about Raymond Carver, little has been written about "Cathedral." Contributing writer Charles E. May in the *Reference Guide to Short Fiction* sites a change in Carver's writing style beginning with the stories contained in the same anthology as "Cathedral": "Whereas his early stories are minimalist and bleak, his later stories are more discursive and optimistic" (Watson 114). The few critics who have written specifically about "Cathedral" tend concentrate on that optimism, seen at the end of the story with the narrator's "esthetic experience [and] realization" (Robinson 35). In concentrating on the final "realization" experienced by the narrator, the literary community has overlooked his deep-rooted misunderstanding of everything consequential in life.

The narrator's prejudice makes him emotionally blind. His inability to see past Robert's disability stops him from seeing the reality of any relationship or person in the story. And while he admits some things are simply beyond his understanding, he is unaware he is so completely blind to the reality of the world.

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Religious Revelation In Carver's "Cathedral"

Jeff Jones

At first glance, one might assume Raymond Carver's "Cathedral" illustrates the awakening of an insensitive and insulated husband to the world of a blind man. However, this literal awakening does not account for the fact that the husband awakens also to a world of religious insight, of which he has also been blind. The title and story structure are the first indicators of the importance of the religious thesis. It is also revealed when one examines the language and actions of the characters in the story. Finally, Carver's previous and subsequent writings give an overall background for the argument that "Cathedral" has a significant religious import.

The structural and technical features of the story point towards a religious epiphany. The title of the story, as well as its eventual subject, that of cathedrals, points inevitably towards divinity. Upon first approaching the story, without reading the first word of the first paragraph, one is already forced into thinking about a religious image. In addition, four of the story's eleven pages (that amounts to one third of the tale) surround the subject of cathedrals.

Adding to the obvious structural references to cathedrals and religion, the language and character actions present further evidence of an epiphany of divine proportions. The television program which the characters watch together deals entirely with cathedrals. This spurs the first real conversation between the narrator and the blind man. This presents religion as some form of common ground, on which one could stand, even without sight. When first asked by Robert, the blind man, if he was "in any way religious," the narrator asserts that he is not, and goes on to explain how cathedrals and religion "don't mean anything special to [him]" (1061). This obvious rebuke of religion comes before the climax of the story; therefore, it comes before the narrator's epiphany. When Robert urges the narrator to describe the appearance of a cathedral the narrator fumbles over his inarticulateness. He explains that in "those olden days, when they built cathedrals, men wanted to be close to God" (1061). He goes on to tell Robert that "in those olden days, God was an important part of everyone's life" (1061). These two statements, coupled with the descriptions of the cathedrals themselves as "built of stone" (1061), suggest that the narrator is not only out of touch with what a cathedral looks like, but he believes religion and God to be unimportant to the people of today. He flatly states that he doesn't "believe in [religion]. In anything" (1061).

The narrator appears as a hollow character, empty and void of belief, especially religious belief. The epiphany occurs only after the narrator experiences the cathedral through the blind man's eyes. Therefore, one must recognize that the crass character of the narrator breaks down only after experiencing a cathedral (hence, religion) for himself. After completing this drawing, and seeing it with his eyes closed, the narrator keeps them closed and seems to rise above himself, stating that he doesn't "feel like [he is] inside of anything" (1062). This remark, along with his refusal to open his eyes after completing the drawing, suggests some sort of conversion, after which the convert refuses his old way of thinking. Therefore, not only does the structure of the story point to religion, but the climactic dialogue, the epiphany, and the most significant character actions all point to some form of religious awakening inside the main character.

Another indication of a religious epiphany arises in the examination of Raymond Carver's previous and subsequent works. Previous critics of Carver's works have suggested that he rarely writes epiphanies. However, in those works containing epiphanies ("Cathedral" being named as one), the character arrives at this awakening "by way of talk toward revelation" (Bethea 132). The word "revelation" draws one to

some form of divine realization rather than a mere conventional opening up. Additionally, Carver's epiphanies take an interesting form, differing greatly from those in other writers' stories. In his works, the character's awakening is one in which "suddenly everything becomes clear—to the reader if not always to the character" (Bethea 134). This suggests that in Carver's works, the epiphany may be apparent to the reader, as is the case with "Cathedral," but may escape the attention of the actual character. With "Cathedral," the reader recognizes that the narrator has realized some greater truth, namely religious faith, but the character himself just seems amazed at his new "sight." Finally, one must realize that Raymond Carver is no stranger to religious subtexts. In his poem "Wes Hardin: From a Photograph" and his short story "A Small Good Thing," Carver uses "numbers with ironic Christian reference" (Bethea 176). His repetitious use of "evocative Christian imagery" such as the number thirty-three (Christ's age at crucifixion) and three (the trinity) suggest a common thematic prevalence within Carver's work that comes through in "Cathedral" (Bethea 176). Therefore, one can see a pattern in Carver's work, slanting toward the use of religion as a driving theme within his writing.

Given the previous examples, one can see the religious implications of the narrator's epiphany. The climax of the story also concerns the cathedral. The action most important to the story, the dialogue most important to character development, and the epiphany, all deal with the cathedral, a symbol of religious devotion. In addition, the structure, the language and character actions essential to the story's essence deal with the cathedral. Finally, Carver has a history of dealing with religious subtexts in his works. All these taken together point to the inevitable, that the narrator of "Cathedral" not only realizes what it is like to see the world through the eyes of a blind man, but also to appreciate the world through the eyes of a man of God.

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A Sight To See

April Green

A person's ability to see is often taken for granted as it is in "Cathedral" by Raymond Carver. Although the title suggests that the story is about a cathedral, it is really about two men who are blind, one physically, the other psychologically. One of the men is Robert, the blind friend of the narrator's wife; the other is the narrator-husband himself. The husband is the man who is psychologically blind. Carver deftly describes the way the husband looks at life: from a very narrow-minded point of view. Two instances in particular illustrate this. The first is that the husband seems to believe that the most important thing to women is being complimented on their looks; the second is that he is unable to imagine his wife's friend Robert as a person, only as a blind man.

Carver consistently characterizes the husband as the real blind man because he is ignorant of so many simple things in life. One of the first hints of the husband's blindness is addressed early in the story when the husband thinks about the blind man's wife and says,

Imagine a woman who could never see herself as she was seen in the eyes of her loved one. A woman who could go on day after day and never receive the smallest compliment from her beloved. A woman whose husband could never read the expression on her face, be it misery or something better. (1055)

The husband seems to be saying that women *need* to be seen, that this is the most important or only important thing in their lives. He forgets that Robert can hear his wife's voice, smell her perfume, enjoy her personality, and touch her skin. According to Dorothy Wickenden "Cathedral" is a story about ignorance and vulnerability – the deep-seated kind that we rarely admit to or reveal" (qtd. in Allen 103). The husband's ignorance is illustrated by his being so caught up with what Robert cannot do, he is oblivious to the other things the blind man can do. And the husband's vulnerability is shown is shown in his hostility to the blind man, whom he rightly suspects of having a psychologically more intimate relationship with his wife than he, with all his emotional blindnesses, is able to have.

As the story continues it exposes the many things that the husband fails to realize. For example, the husband neglects to recognize that Robert can feel. Robert commented about the train ride from the city that he'd "nearly forgotten the sensation" (1055). The husband does not understand that what blind people cannot see they can experience by feeling and hearing. The husband does not see what is underneath the skin or what is behind a face. The husband sees people and things at face value; he doesn't look beneath the surface. In contrast, the blind man "sees" things with his ears, his hands, and his heart. Robert does not let the fact that he is handicapped affect how he perceives people and the things around him. Carver illustrates this when the husband observes, "The blind man has another taste of his drink. He lifted his beard, sniffed it, and let it fall. He leaned forward on the sofa. He positioned his ashtray on the coffee table, then put the lighter to his cigarette. He leaned back on the sofa and crossed his legs at the ankles" (1057) He did this just as anyone could have done. He doesn't let the fact that he is blind stop him from smoking, drinking, and talking. If it does not stop Robert, then why should the presence of the blind man prohibit the husband from acting normal?

Being around a blind person should not affect the way the husband acts, but he simply cannot get beyond Robert's handicap. Throughout the story, the husband refers to Robert only as "the blind man." He never acknowledges that Robert is a person. The simple fact of not acknowledging him because he is blind, illustrates how stubborn and ignorant the husband is. The husband fails to comprehend the irrelevance of Robert's handicap. At one point in the story the husband even admits how ignorant he is; he says, "I

thought I knew that much and that much only about blind people" (1056}. He says, "It was beyond my understanding" (1056). Apparently a lot is beyond his understanding, because be comprehends little. Actually, the husband knows very little in general. He does not even expect Robert to look like a normal human. He has a stereotypical perception of the blind. According to the husband, a blind man was not supposed to have a beard. Then the husband exclaims, "A beard on a blind man! Too much, I say" (1054). Another instance, the husband comments, "But he didn't use a cane and he didn't wear dark-glasses: "I always thought dark glasses were a must for the blind" (1056). The husband is oblivious to the reality that blind men live just like anyone else – except that they cannot see.

Being blind affects a lot of things, but the husband in the story seems to think that Robert can not do anything simply because he is blind. The husband says, "He said fast enough in a big voice" (1056). He even believes that being blind affects one's speaking ability. He also commented on Robert's wedding; "It was a little wedding—who'd want to go to such a wedding in the first place?" (1054). But a wedding is a wedding regardless of whether a blind man was the groom or not. Why would being blind make a difference? In the husband's restrictive and narrow mind it makes all the difference, but in actuality it does not. The husband cannot deal with the concept of the blind man being a normal person, participating in normal activities, or acting like a normal person. These actions are beyond the husband's comprehension.

Another thing that is beyond the husband's comprehension is that the blind man could be a "blind jack-of-all-trades" (1057). This burns the husband up. He feels that the blind man cannot do anything. And to know that Robert knows more and has done more than he has makes the husband furiously jealous. The husband cannot cope with the idea of being inferior to a blind man. Robert was once an Amway sales associate, as well as a radio operator. The husband has been nothing, apparently, but a husband – at least in the world of this story that is all he is. He was not as accomplished as the blind man which made him envious.

Throughout the story, the husband appears to be the person who is blind. He constantly disregards his sight which he takes for granted. The husband is so narrow-minded and content within his own world, he neglects to "see" the rest of the world. Marc Chenetien said it best: "A spark of hope in 'Cathedral' tends to give a potentially new agenda to stories whose ultimate promise seems to remain that blindness unavoidably undercuts all awakenings" (30).

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The Husband Who Is "Blind" **Joy McBride**

The short story "Cathedral" by Raymond Carver is about a woman who has a blind friend who comes to visit her and her husband. Although the husband has, technically, normal vision he is in the beginning of this story the one who is "blind." Through the husband's words and actions when he is dealing with Robert, the blind man, we can see that the husband does not "see" or understand what Robert's blindness means or how it changes or does not change him as a human being. At first Robert makes the husband very uncomfortable, for the husband does not know what to say or do around the blind visitor. As the story progresses, we can see a change in the husband; he seems to be able to see Robert as a person and not just as a blind man.

One example that shows the husband is "blind" comes in the beginning of the story, before Robert arrives. When the husband and wife talk about Robert, the husband usually refers to him as "this blind man" (1052), and he never uses Robert's name or assigns any human attributes to him. This shows that the husband does not really see Robert as a person, but just as a blind man who is different because he has a handicap.

When Robert arrives at the couple's house, the husband does not know what to say to him. The husband asks stupid questions about the view from the train: "Which side of the train did you sit on?" (1055). The husband knows that Robert cannot see the view, but he asks him these questions anyway. Also, the husband thinks to himself, "I didn't know what else to say" (1055) which is a clear indication that he does not know how to relate to Robert. Both of these quotations show that the husband does not know what to talk about with Robert because he only sees Robert's handicap, instead of seeing him as a complete human being who has emotions, thoughts, ideas, and beliefs.

Not only does the husband not know how to communicate with Robert, he does not how to act around him either. A good example of this, shown after dinner, is when all three of them go into the living room. This is how the husband portrays what happens when they first enter the room: "Robert and my wife sat on the sofa. I took the big chair. We had us two or three more drinks while they talked about the major things that had come to pass for them in the past ten years. For the most part, I just listened. Now and then I joined in" (1057). The husband's discomfort is revealed through his actions. He shows that he does not know how to act around Robert because again he does not see Robert as a person, but only as a blind man.

As the story progresses, you can see the husband's attitude toward Robert starting to change. One example of this comes during their dinner, when the husband "watched with admiration as [Robert] used his knife and fork on the meat" (1057). The husband is obviously impressed that Robert can eat like anyone else, and he therefore gives him credit for accomplishing this task. This incident is important because this is when the husband first starts to see Robert for who he is inside instead of just seeing his handicap. Another example that shows this change starting to occur comes after dinner. All three of them are sitting on the couch smoking marijuana. When it is Robert's turn to smoke, he inhales and "held the smoke, and then let it go. It was like he'd been doing it since he was nine years old" (1058). This also shows that the husband is impressed with Robert's actions, and it makes the husband start to view him as Robert the human being, instead of Robert the blind man.

Now the wife is tired and goes upstairs. The husband turns on the TV and a cathedral appears on the screen. Robert does not know what a cathedral looks like, so the husband starts to explain it to him. The husband is having a hard time explaining what a cathedral looks like, but Robert comes up with an idea. He suggests that the husband will draw one, while Robert has his hands on top of those of the husband.

While they draw the cathedral together, the husband "rises with the spirit of the blind man as, with eyes closed and pen on paper, he leads the blind man's hand over what he imagines the contours of a cathedral would be" (Weele 40). When they are done Robert wants the husband to look, but he has his eyes closed because he "thought it was something [he] ought to do" (1062). This is when the husband is no longer "blind" because he finally sees that Robert is person with the same thoughts and emotions as himself.

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"Cathedral:" A Blind Man's Gift

Britney Ewers

In Raymond Carver's story, "Cathedral," one man's prejudice is overcome by another man's gift. The husband in the story is given the gift of seeing a cathedral through a blind man's eyes. The true gift comes from the cathedral, which represents the husband's prejudice and the blind man's open-mindedness. This gift is the revelation the husband experiences while he "looks" at the cathedral with his eyes still closed. According to Anatole Broyard, "Cathedral" is "a lovely piece about a blind man who asks an acquaintance to guide his hand in sketching a cathedral he has never seen. At the end, the two hands moving together—one guided by the other—come to seem a gesture of fraternity" (101). The cathedral represents a bond that is formed through the blind man's ability to break through the husband's prejudice. The husband learns a lot from Robert, the blind man, and he learns a lot from himself.

The husband had a preconceived notion about Robert because he had no experience around blind people. He admits that his knowledge of blindness came from watching movies. The husband found it hard to believe that Robert had a beard, that he could tell the difference between a color television and a black and white television, and that he had eyes that looked (even if they did not see) just like everyone else's. The husband underestimates Robert because he has made a judgment about him based not on knowledge or experience but only on ignorance. He dismisses Robert not just because his wife is giving him so much attention, but because Robert is different. As the story goes on, the husband's prejudice weakens, and he becomes more and more impressed with the extent of this blind man's capabilities.

Bruce Allen wrote that "'Cathedral' confronts a jealous, uncertain husband with a visit from his wife's friend, a blind man. . . . The story is about learning how to imagine and feel" (103). Because Robert is so open and so understanding, he teaches the husband to imagine and to feel like a blind man. The husband looses his prejudice through the drawing of the cathedral because Robert guides him, not because he guides Robert.

Robert's being open to new things impresses the husband, and this is evident when the husband and Robert smoke cannabis together. As the story progresses, the husband gradually becomes more comfortable with Robert and forgets his preconceived notions about him. The climax of the story comes in the end when the husband experiences a revelation about what it is like to be a blind man. Seeing is believing, or in this case, not seeing is believing.

As the husband starts to explain the cathedral he becomes frustrated because this is a totally new experience for him and he does not think he is doing well. Then Robert conveniently says, "Terrific.

You’re doing fine. Never thought anything like this could happen in your lifetime, did you, bub? Well, it is a strange life, we all know that. Go on now. Keep it up" (Carver 1061). Robert comforts the husband, and he inspires the husband to be open to new things just as Robert himself is.

During the story, the husband reveals "his own realm of darkness" when he admits to Robert, "I guess I’m agnostic or something" (Johnson 282). The husband realizes that he too is blind in a way. He is blind to faith and to his own capabilities. The husband has a hard time explaining the cathedral, so he stops and professes, "You’ll have to forgive me. But I can’t tell you what a cathedral looks like. It just isn’t in me to do it I can’t do anymore than I have done" (Carver 1061). This is when Robert comes up with the idea of drawing the cathedral together.

This idea was a breakthrough according to Charles Johnson who writes, "Together, with Robert’s hand on his own, the narrator draws spires and flying buttresses and be finds himself unable to stop. Robert makes him close his eyes as he draws. At the story’s end, the narrator is unsure of what’s happening to him and he concludes that ‘it’s really something’" (282). The something is the revelation that he gets from drawing the cathedral through Robert’s eyes. He knows then that he is no different from Robert, and that he has truly has experienced something beyond himself.

Although the husband’s prejudice is strong in the beginning, it weakens in the end as he gets to know Robert. Robert gives the husband a lesson he will never forget because he is so open-minded. The cathedral is the means through which the husband and Robert bond, and the husband is gifted with his final revelation. In the end, the husband really *is* something when he sees through blind eyes.

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