

"young goodman brown" by nathaniel hawthorne essay (book review)

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Nathaniel Hawthorne has written his short story " Young Goodman Brown" as the mixture of two genres - the horror story and the story with the moral. Hence is the unique peculiarity of the narration: the short story is interpreted as the text with the contradictions. In " Young Goodman Brown" Hawthorne writes about the most significant of the contradictions: " Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest, and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?" (17).

The nature of the reality is called in question, and it is difficult to understand, what really happened to young Brown. After all, I think that even the storyteller does not know, what actually happened to his character.

Hawthorne uses his favorite device of the ironic ambiguous features, the shift of the viewpoint from the narrator to the character and back. We as the readers find ourselves in the world, where we can hardly distinguish between real and seeming.

All the events, persons, and things have two sides, and every character, which is considered to be " good" by young Brown, turns out " bad" in reality. Actually, I suppose that there are no " good" persons in the short story except Goodman Brown. The metamorphoses concern the items too; simple knotty stick transforms into the magic staff wriggling like a snake.

However, the most important and the most terrible metamorphoses happen on another level: the divine service is substituted for the black mass, and the sacred church utensils are replaced for the false analogs connected to the devil. Another terrible thing is the betrayal of people, whom young Brown

trusted and who played very important role in his life – from aged and respectable priest to Goodman Brown's wife Faith.

Finally, after his salvation (or still the awakening from the nightmare?) young Brown finds himself in the world of the all-out substitution. Here he must live till his death, all alone, not able to free himself from the true (or still not?) state of affairs. For Goodman Brown, it is the terrible reality he has faced. He was a naive person at the beginning; the world was joyous and simple for him.

His wife was " a blessed angel on earth" (" Young Goodman Brown" 5), his ancestors were " honest men and good Christians" (" Young Goodman Brown" 7), and his neighbors were " a people of prayer, and good works to boot" (" Young Goodman Brown" 7). However, after his journey he found out, that all his neighbors are the hypocrites, and Goodman Brown has become " a stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man" (" Young Goodman Brown" 17).

These are the ancestors who doomed young Brown to such a destiny; from them he gets the duty to go through the path of the initiation. The fate is not revealed substantially: Goodman Brown only has to leave his home at the appointed time of the night and go along the appointed road to the appointed place. Exactly on this road Hawthorne creates the terrifying peculiarities of the short story: the atmosphere of the frontier, the crossroads, and the old road, where everything reminds about the sinister events.

The key feature that connects the details into the horrible whole and gives the short story such a powerful effect is time. It defines the creepy old times, which surround young and inexperienced Brown, saturates the air around him with the recollections about the bloody events of the past. The myths of the New England revive; the Salem witches arise in the imagination of the hero to confirm the shocking guess: the witchcraft is real, and the devil is its inspirer.

The short story "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" is full of the symbolism. To my mind, the deep meaning of this short story, that Hawthorne implies, is the America's coming-of-age journey. The main character of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" is 18-aged Robin, who comes to Boston to find his uncle Major Molineux. Finally, Robin finds him, humiliated by the crowd. I suppose that according to Hawthorne's idea, Major Molineux is Great Britain.

He is described by the author as an "elderly man, of large and majestic person, and strong, square features, betokening a steady soul" ("My Kinsman, Major Molineux" 21). Major Molineux symbolizes the positive features of Great Britain, its power, maturity, and grandeur.

We can see from all the words concerning Major Molineux that Hawthorne is in sympathy with him, moreover, I think the author wants the readers to feel the compassion and sadness when the crowd scoffs at Major Molineux. I found this scene emotionally powerful and had an aversion for the crowd and felt compassion for aged Major. Nevertheless, this incident is a very symbolic

act: the colony shows disrespect to the mother country. In his turn, Robin symbolizes young America.

He enjoys his freedom while looking for the uncle and that is why he is in no hurry. Sometimes the impression is that Robin does not want to find his uncle at all. After all the events, Robin understands he can live without the financial support of his uncle as well as without his guidance and pieces of advice.

Robin loses his naivety, innocence, and inexperience, in order to gain the sense of confidence and independence. Hawthorne shows, that America is ready to take any risk to become free from British rule, even if the circumstances are unfavorable. Another symbol is the prostitute wearing a red petticoat.

She treats Robin much better than other citizens and does all her best to seduce him. Nevertheless, Robin rejects all her offers, and that is how Hawthorne shows the boy's willpower, focus, and dedication. The author uses the situation with the prostitute to symbolize the commitment of the young America to its great goal.

According to Hawthorne, the temptation and sin, as well as the promise of the prosperity and safety, which is obviously should be associated with the rule of Great Britain, cannot distract the America in the person of Robin from its lofty objectives and purposes. The final important symbol I can see in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" is the transfiguring look of the church pillar.

Robin sees the tall church columns transforming into the tree branches that have an appearance of his uncle Major Molineux, and then back to the original shape. Such metamorphoses symbolize the interconnection of Great Britain and the Church. Hawthorne wants to emphasize the critical goal of the young America - to gain the religious freedom from the mother country. I think the church pillars are used by the author so that the readers can remember the crucial reason Americans strive for their independence and freedom.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. My Kinsman, Major Molineux. 1832. Web.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. Young Goodman Brown. 1835. Web.