

The call of "bartleby the scrivener" and "young goodman brown"

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Authors truly have endless opportunities as far as creating effects is concerned. They can create effects by what they say and they also can create effects by what they do not say, or what their characters do not do. In 19th century American literature, we see the use of the latter tool in "Bartleby the Scrivener" and "Young Goodman Brown", where authors do not give the full information about their characters and events to create the desired effects. In Herman Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener", the enigmatic title character "prefers not to" do things. On the other hand, in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown", the lead character appears to be affected by his own inability to discern the truth and thus becomes a character that fails to trust anything or anyone in life. In this short story Hawthorne does not confirm us whether Goodman Brown's experience at all happened or it was just a dream; but this holding back of information creates the desired effect that I will explore shortly.

Our main focus today is perhaps not only to examine the tools authors use but to investigate how Bartleby and Goodman Brown, two characters that have the 19th century Dark Romanticism paint in them ultimately urges the dawn of idealism or transcendentalism, a popular genre of the 19th century American literature. It is in human nature to try to solve the mysteries it faces or the questions that are put forward to it. Sometimes authors provide solutions for the problems they portray and often they simply leave hints and invite the readers to find the answers themselves. Both "Young Goodman Brown" and "Bartleby the Scrivener" are stories that invite the readers to go searching for answers. Though there are certain differences between Bartleby and Goodman Brown in terms of their ability, they both show a

dearth of knowledge in terms of what they should really do. Compared to Bartleby, Goodman Brown simply looks at a loss about what he ought to do. Bartleby is a character who stresses that he would rather do nothing than do just anything for the sake of doing it.

He asks the society to question its own actions. Bartleby emphasizes heavily on discerning what we really ought to do rather than just going with the flow and do things that do not really represent us. Though Bartleby does not evolve to the point that he discovered what he would have really preferred to do, he at least found out what he did not prefer to do - and that in itself is a bold stance. On the other hand, Goodman Brown is a character who does not show any regency. He seems so powerless that he keeps on living his entire life with the people he doubts. Hawthorne does portray a world that signifies the themes of " Dark Romanticism". He shows that human nature is perhaps not equipped to make itself perfect.

Brown appears to possess no intuition or inner awareness that can help him to differentiate rights from wrongs. Even though the short story appears to be very bleak, it does give a strong message. Hawthorne has set in the text certain elements that suggest the probable way to redemption. " Faith", is a strong suggestion that Hawthorne suggests Brown and all characters like him lack. Here, " faith" is a quality that is very much a part of an idealist society or a characteristic of transcendentalism. In " Young Goodman Brown", the title character keeps on uttering the name " faith", but he does not even have faith in Faith. In the story, Faith's pink ribbons are a symbol of innocence.

When Brown returns from the wilderness, he still sees Faith with the pink ribbons; and the author shows no signs of any loss of innocence of Faith, but Brown cannot trust her. In the times this story was written, there was an attitude in the society that women were to be symbols of purity and innocence and all men had to do to redeem themselves is be associated with a good woman. In this story, the plot reflects this attitude of the society. Brown tries to save himself by clinging on to Faith's "skirts and follow her to heaven". The reaction that "Young Goodman Brown" is most likely to draw out from its readers is a kind of realization that Brown had a choice in the story to have faith. He never finds any proof of evilness in his wife or the respected people around him, but he still chooses to be doubtful. The subtle message that the story gives is that "doubt" is the culprit and men are at fault for succumbing to it.

Doubting does not make Brown's life any better. He never trusted anybody and he were not even deceived by anybody. So the story shows that by having faith, he could have changed his life. He could have lived much more happily. In both "Bartleby the Scrivener" and "Young Goodman Brown", we find themes and characteristics of "Dark Romanticism". They represent characters who do not completely know what the most right thing to do is. But what both these works do is create an urge in the reader to wish for perfection.

These two stories are more like bridges to transcendentalism. Even though the dark romanticism period in the New England led by Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville and Emily Dickinson did not fully

embrace transcendentalism, these two stories particularly leave the reader wanting and pondering more. The human mind works in a complex way and it has to be prepared for certain things to emerge. These two stories serve as a mirror that will help us to look within us for something more divine, that will help us find a greater understanding of what we ought to do. In both "Young Goodman Brown" and "Bartleby the Scrivener" the authors flirt with some invisible or uncertain elements. These uncertain or invisible elements challenge the readers to step into the shoes of Bartleby and Brown and think what they would have done in their cases. Bartleby and Brown invite us to right the wrongs.

They appeal to us in different ways. But both call on us to observe and question how we do things. In literature, the effect it creates is probably the most important thing. The messages that come through these two short stories could have just been given explicitly and directly, but that would not have had the same kind of effect on us that the complex nature, tone, attitude and treatment of these two stories create. Bartleby's call is strong as he takes a stance against characters like Nippers and Turkey, against whatever or whoever decides to roll in the mundane activities of the world without any consideration of what one ought to do. A very important aspect of the story is the character of the lawyer himself. The lawyer's name is not mentioned in the story, which gives a significant hint that after all his profession is his most dominant identity.

The lawyer tries to do things as a good, kind-hearted man would do. But still then he is not able to penetrate the mystery of Bartleby. This suggests that

even the apparent or regular good is not good enough. The logical, materialistic mind of the lawyer is not deep enough, more is needed. "Bartleby, the Scrivener" sets us up in pursuit of more; it sets us up in pursuit of perfection. A prominent transcendentalist of the 19th century American literature, Ralph Waldo Emerson said, " Even the materialist Condillac, perhaps the most logical expounder of materialism, was constrained to say, ' Though we should soar into the heavens, though we should sink into the abyss, we never go out of ourselves; it is always our own thought that we perceive. What more could an idealist say? " It is said that Herman Melville was influenced by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Even if he was not in reality, his work " Bartleby the Scrivener" surely sets us up or at least make us look in the direction of idealism. Goodman Brown is not a character that takes a stance, but the way he falls victim to his own ignorance compels us to look towards idealism as well, because as solution men and women tend to look for better. When materialism seems bleak, men are bound to look beyond into spirituality or seek ultimate reality.