

Symbolization in sonny's blues short story

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Name : Rani Widi Noortatik Student ID : 1003146 Sonny's Blues

Symbolizations Sonny's Blues is a famous short story written by James Baldwin. The story tells about the brotherhood between 2 black-men siblings — an elder brother and his younger brother named Sonny. Sonny wanted to be a musician but his brother disagreed with him, the conflicts between them and his unablensness to reach his dream to become a musician led Sonny to start using heroin. In Sonny's Blues, there are many symbolizations used which can be identified, some of them are the name of the speaker's daughter —Grace, scotch and milk, and the term ' cup of trembling'. Each of them has a really deep meaning although the deep meaning itself can not be seen explicitly by the readers. Grace, the daughter of the speaker (Sonny's elder brother), was told to be death because of Polio. The word Grace itself means forgiveness, repentance, regeneration, and salvation, mean something as broad as describing the whole of God's activity toward man or as narrow as describing one segment of that activity. An accurate, common definition describes grace as the unmerited favor of God toward man (Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, 2012). In the story, this symbolization came up with the idea that Sonny's freedom was paid by the death of grace. It might also indicates that Sonny's sins were forgiven by god through the ' sacrifice' of Grace's soul. In the story, there is a line stated, " There was a long pause, while they talked up there in the indigo light and after awhile I saw the girl put a Scotch and milk on top of the piano for Sonny. " In a comment written by Keith Byreman in " Words and Music: Narrative Ambiguity in 'Sonny's Blues.'" , he stated that the Scotch and milk drink is " an emblem of simultaneous destruction and nurture to the system;

it cannot be reduced to one or the other. Sonny's acceptance of it indicates that he will continue on the edge between the poison of his addiction and the nourishment of his music" (1982 : 371). In the last line of the story, we can also find the term cup of trembling, " For me, then, as they began to play again, it glowed and shook above my brother's head like the very cup of trembling" The term cup of trembling actually derived from the bible, Isaiah 51: 17-22. One of the sources stated Sonny's drink is likened to a " cup of trembling" which he sips from as he plays. This seems an ambiguous image. Baldwin may be saying that the artist/musician can never escape the " cup of trembling, " that his music depends on feeling, understanding and expressing the fear and sorrow of his people. Or, Baldwin may be saying that Sonny, in taking from the cup of trembling himself, allows his listeners to abstain; that is, his suffering translated into music inoculates his audience from feeling the same depths of suffering. (cai. ucdavis. edu, 2012)

Therefore, it can be concluded that the symbolizations used in Sonny's Blues are strongly related to religious-life. It can be assumed that the writer's thought and beliefs have really influenced the symbolizations found in Sonny's Blues. References : 1. Class Lecture on Sonny's Blues, 2012 [online] available at : <http://cai. ucdavis. edu/uccp/sblecture. html> 2. Sonny's Blues by James Baldwin, 2012 [online] available at : <http://www. gradesaver. com/sonnys-blues/wikipedia/introduction/>