

Social Freedom And Cultural Fate Influence The Life And Role Of Individuals

Posted on October 7, 2019

Young Goodman Brown

Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "Young Goodman Brown" portrays the role of society in an individual's sense of identity and belonging. The story focuses on the life of Young Goodman Brown, who grows up with a pious outlook on life, depicting the profound impact of social norms. The young man encounters a struggle between society and himself. His thinking exhibits the preconditioned beliefs of society as he fails to deal with the Puritan life. The social constructs play a dominant role in defining him, resulting in his incapability to know his place in society. He struggles to explore his reality and identity. The hardships due to social constructs make him a prisoner of society and fate. His entrapment in taunting thoughts results in his confusion, motivating him to question his reality.

The struggle of cultural fate is visible in Hawthorne's fiction, encountered by Young Goodman, when his mind is exposed to unholy acts. The bitterness of society becomes prominent in the story, "with a resigned contentment at his place in the world or with an irreconcilable bitterness at his powerlessness" (Hawthorne 548). The struggles of the young man appear between him and the world. In the forest, he experiences the darker realities of the constrained society that limits him to make a free choice. After learning about potential evils prevailing in society, he questions his upbringing and his role in society. Through the construction of Goodman's character, the author tries to display the contradicting realities of the world. The journey to the enchanted forest outside the town allows the young man to explore evilness. The journey results in his self-destruction as he surrenders his faith. The Calvinist sense of sin conveys the moral idea of imagination, emphasizing the factors weakening faith (Keil).

Symbolism and allegory created by Hawthorne in the story reveal the weaker role of faith. The story ripens with age, which intrigues modern thinkers and makes them question the reality of society. The story reveals the aspects of morality, philosophy, and psychology. The author allows assessment of the character through historical context and religious symbolism. Hawthorne conveys the message that human conditions lead to contradicting choices. The young man's drive towards sin displays the weaker role of social constructs. Symbolic inference in the settings uncovers the issues of community that the author represents in Salem's madness. The Salem forest portrays the state of religious oppression, allowing individuals to escape social realities. The Puritan's belief in witches is apparent in the concept of witchcraft visible in the story. The forest represents evil, "the forest, as a place of wild, untamed passions and terrors, has the attributes of the Freudian id" (Hawthorne 139). The author, through the story, also criticizes the Calvinist doctrine that sets limitations on the roles of individuals

(Ezghoul and Zuraikat).

The struggles between faith and man's fate depict the desire to escape social constraint. The young man's decision to take a journey to the Salem forest is the result of his conflicting thoughts. He is unable to accept the moral philosophy and the values taught by society. His rejection of the social norms motivates him to leave the town and meet the contradicting realities of the world. The conflict is visible, "[Brown] is a naive and immature young man who fails to understand the gravity of the step he has taken succeeded by a presumably adult determination to resist his own evil impulses" (Hawthorne 117). His failure to recognize the adversities of his actions reveals the negative role of social constructs (Keil).

Conflict remains one of the visible elements in the development of the plot. The author represents the conflicting situations encountered by youth, which are apparent in the notions of the devil, old woman, and faith. Brown's consciousness becomes prominent when he views the magic serpent. The conflict is visible in, "Come, Goodman Brown' cried his fellow traveller, [the devil] 'this is a dull pace for the beginning of the journey. Take my staff if you are so soon weary" (Hawthorne 120). The fear becomes more prominent in his hesitation to accept the devil's choice. The witness of the old woman increases the intensity of fear in the young man. Hawthorne, through the creation of the story, tests the faith of youth. The faith in the forest deepens in disillusionment, which is apparent in Goodman's delirious state. The weakened state of faith is visible in the comment, "There is no good in the earth, and sin is but a name. Come to the devil; for to thee is this world gave" (Hawthorne 137). The moment exhibits impatience as Goodman is unable to see any hope. He doubts goodness and the piety of the world. The author confers the idea that the elimination of faith results in vague thoughts, convincing young people to reject their reliance on religious values (Ezghoul and Zuraikat).

Hawthorne, in the story, uses satire to criticize Puritanism and its system of belief. Distrust and doubts are prominent elements in defining the journey of the young man. Satire is more prominent in the fictional character of Brown, who fails to act according to social norms. His inability to accept society's morality results in his weakened faith. His determination to purify himself results in his self-destruction. The struggles between social values and the search for self-identity display the negative role of social constructs. Through the portrayal of conflict, the fiction conveys the deeper realities of society.

Work Cited

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