



## THE IMPACT OF DREAM IN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S "YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN"

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### ABSTRACT

The article addresses the impact of Young Goodman Brown's dream in the Forest. This experience had dramatic and negative impact on the behaviors and the personality of Goodman Brown.

His dream results in believing in the innate badness, corruption and hypocrisy in mankind. This dream or vision caused Goodman Brown to accept the dominance of evil over the deeds of people. His fellow citizen of Salem village and his wife, Faith, were seen as the servants of the devil. Nathaniel

Hawthorne's story "Young Goodman Brown" shows the psychological struggle that Goodman Brown experienced after his venture to the Forest, the den of the devil.

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Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" is a story which reflects the religious and moral aspects of the Puritan society in the New England colony. The moral decadence and the deterioration of religious beliefs were two issues that Nathaniel Hawthorne deals with in his story. The journey to the Forest, in general, and the dream or vision in particular, have tremendously affected Young Goodman Brown's life, behaviors and perceptions of his wife, fellow citizens and his religious beliefs. The focus of this study is Goodman's vision or dreams in the heart of the Forest, and its tremendous impact on his life.

The moment Goodman Brown decided to go to the Forest, the embodiment of all evil and forbidden practices, according to the Puritanical codes of

morality and obedience to the church and its leadership. His determination to start his journey by sun setting and his wife's unsuccessful effort to persuade him not to leave her was the trigger for all the suffering and pain that Goodman Brown experiences. Faith, in return, stresses the point that a lone woman may have bad dream "pr'y thee, put off your journey until sunrise, and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts, that she's afraid of herself, sometimes. Pray, tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year!" (Hawthorne, 53)

It is important here to show that Hawthorne is establishing the importance of "the dream or vision" in the story. Faith is afraid that she may have a bad

dream. Her strong appeal to her husband is directed towards preventing both of them from not joining others in the heart of the Forest. If it takes two to tangle, it may take Goodman Brown and Faith to be together that night as well, to stay away from the devil and his temptations. The last thing he instructed his wife to do is to say her prayers and go to bed. Goodman Brown's failure here is that he believes sleeping is an act which prevents his wife Faith either from either following him or doing anything else as talking to her neighbors or any passerby. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee." (54)

After he met his companion, the devil, Goodman Brown insists on going back to his wife Faith "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples, touching the matter thou wot'st of." (55). But the devil, cynically, tries to rationalize with Brown, while they were walking "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go, and if I convince thee not, thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest, yet." (56) Seeing Goodman's hesitance and confusion, the devil leaves Young Goodman Brown with his Mable cane and excuses himself "and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along." (59)

The strange and scary surrounding, the familiar voices of the people's town, that Goodman is experiencing, in the heart of the heart of darkness, ghostly, cold and damp Forest are causing fear, panic and confusion to him. His inability to show himself to the minister, Deacon Gookin or his catechism teacher, Goody Cloyse, is a sign of confusion and nervousness. Hardt, John S. "Doubts in the American Garden: Three Cases of Paradisal Skepticism," writes that "His forest experience has caused Brown to perceive the discrepancies between appearance and reality, between reputation and performance, between form and meaning." (254)

Despite the mental shocks and surprises, which Goodman Brown is experiencing, his confidence and faith are to a certain extent solid. But Goodman Brown's endeavor and steadfastness against the new reality and the devil's temptation are to be seen in the future scenes stages of his journey

"With Heaven above, and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!" cried Goodman Brown. (61)

It is important to notice that Hawthorne is not focusing on the dream as a mental experience one may go through, rather on the effect of dreams on people's lives and behaviors. Young Goodman Brown's sense of desperation and uncertainty of his appeal to Faith not to accept the new "faith" were the drive force for frustration, disparity and disappointment. Except the dampness of the Forest ground and the thickness of its trees, Goodman Brown found nothing around him, after he was awake; no deacons, no priest, no wife and even no devil, as a companion. "Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest, and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting? Be it so, if you will. But, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown." (68)

In his "Young Goodman Brown and the Psychology of Projection," Michael Tritt states: "The most common readings of the tales assert Brown's loss of faith, in himself and in his fellows. Critics argue that, as a result of his nighttime experience, Brown comes to believe all men corrupt and inevitably evil" (114).

On his way back from the Forest to the village of Salem, Young Goodman Brown is delusional and at loss with his surrounding and reality. For him the forest is his world which is veiled by evil doings and his suspicious and questionable observation of his fellow citizens of Salem are caused by this vision or experience, "The forest in this context reflects a world of Brown's sinfulness" (114).

The people of the Salem village are doing their daily errands, priests are preparing the Sabbath ceremony, and farmers were working in their fields. However, their normal and natural behaviors seem to be strange and suspicious to Young Goodman Brown. His glances towards his fellow citizens of Salem were full of suspicion. "He accepts his vision of evil in the community at large, accusing the members of that community with being the devil worshippers of his nighttime experience." (115)

Goodman Brown tries to distance himself from the wicked behaviors of his fellow citizen of Salem. Through his journey, he consoled himself by the strong faith of his wife and he will "cling to her". And

she will be his salvation and the wrong doings of the Salem's citizen are irrelevant and meaningless. However, Brown's dream or vision caused his hopes to crumble after seeing his wife's acceptance of the devil's baptism and invitation to the new belief. In her "Lachrymal Imagery in Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown,'" Joan Elizabeth Easterly asserts that:

When the vision disappears at Brown's anguished cry to faith, the suddenly changed scenery of the next paragraph deliberately corresponds to Young Brown's emotional state. Words like "solitude," "rock," "chill," and "coldest," suggest the absence or denial of positive feelings, which Brown demonstrates immediately afterward (342).

It is obvious that Brown's reaction when he saw his wife embodied mistrust, fear, anger and disappointment. He "shrank" from her, and kept his distance. For Brown, "Faith" is dishonest, unfaithful, a liar and a deceiver. "He spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and almost kissed him before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting." (68) This reaction is a direct cause to his dream or vision in the forest. It is obvious that Brown's negative behaviors against his wife and his fellow citizens are not a true reflection of their ill nature, but is due to his ill fated dream or vision and farfetched imagination. His highest confidence and trust in the goodness of humanity have crumbled after his dream or vision. He surrendered his "faith" or belief, his wife "Faith" and his good fellow citizens of Salem to the Command of the Devil.

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