

First & Last Name

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English 2327

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Text: "Young Goodman Brown"

Passage: "My faith is gone!" cried he, after one stupefied moment. "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil! For to thee is this world given."

Question: How does Hawthorne make use of Goodman Brown's wife to symbolize the emotional transition of Brown?

Issue: Issue of Symbolism. Goodman Brown's wife plays an important role in this story. Brown's wife, Faith, is not only the name of his wife but also symbolizes the faith of Goodman Brown himself. When Brown is on his way to attend the devil communion, he is still dithering about whether he should stay with Faith. After Brown finds his naïve wife is also a member of the devil group, he begins to doubt much of his faith and then turns insane. His wife, Faith, is involved in Brown's emotion and beliefs at all times, physically and mentally, until the time he closes his eyes.

Critical Approach: Psychoanalytic Criticism. The story explores a psychological and emotional phenomena long existent in our society – the combat between devil and good in our minds. Everybody has a devil inside. They never realize it until they experience individual conflict over their inner desires and social ethic. At that moment, they struggle to decide what to do. As their evil desires occupy their entire mind, they no longer feel innocent. They suddenly cannot accept themselves and lose the faith they rely on.

Answer: When Goodman Brown mentions his wife, Faith, the author actually implies Brown's faith. As Goodman Brown explains to his first companion the reason for his lateness, he says, "Faith kept me back awhile" (Hawthorne 1264). These words represent that before he sinks low to the evil side, he still hold his faith struggling on the edge of corruption. When he cries, "My Faith is gone" (Hawthorne 1269), Brown

is referring to his inner faith which has been defeated by the evil. In the end, after Brown returns to Salem village, Faith runs to him with joy and excitement. However, Brown does not even give her a greeting. This action implies he no longer believes in the faith he used to depend on. Without his faith, Goodman Brown is like a man without the spirit, living doubtfully and unhappily until his death.