**More Than Meets The Eye**

**By**

**Stacey Clarke**

Many short story fiction writings have used allegory and symbolism to create a stronger picture for the audience. In a literary comparison of “Young [Goodman Brown](http://www.exampleessays.com/essay_search/Goodman_Brown.html)” by Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Ernest Hemmingway’s “Hills Like White Elephants”, the symbolic figures, actions and setting can be used to interpret the principal, meaning or emotion being represented. The elements in both stories represent abstract ideas far beyond their literal meanings, leaving the analysis of the symbols and emotions up to the reader and providing a better interpretation of the meaning of the text. The symbolism of the setting, an object, or an incident is very important for a better analysis of the meaning of the text and the consequences of the choices facing both main character Jig and Young Goodman Brown.

The period and setting of Young Goodman Brown in [Salem Massachusetts](http://www.exampleessays.com/essay_search/Salem_Massachusetts.html) in the 1690’s is historically significant; “And it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot… in King Philip’s War” (Hawthorne 331). King Philips War (1675-1676) was infamous for its atrocities committed by the settlers. This time and place was ripe with religious persecution and stringent moral codes. With such an ethical and spiritual backdrop established, the audience is introduced to the underlying message of Faith and innocence vs. religious extremism, good vs. evil.

It is sunset as Young Goodman Brown sets out with “haste on his present evil purpose” (Hawthorne 330), “into the deepening gloom” (Hawthorne 333), which will get steadily gloomier up until the climax of the story, just as the light of Faith increasingly dwindles from Brown's heart. He wanders away into the woods, whose dark, tangled ways and poor visibility represent the loneliness and confusion of a Faithless life. “Brown then leaves the path to run wildly through the forest. Here Hawthorne illustrates that once one leaves the path of righteousness it is hard to find it again even if one wishes to, for the forests of sin are all darkness and confusion” (Maher, par. 5).

Goodman’s wife Faith represents his actual faith in God, while her pink ribbons represent his innocence. In the second paragraph, Faith tempts him to “put off [his] journey until sunrise, and sleep in [his] own bed tonight” (Hawthorne 330). After Goodman Brown is presented with all of the insinuations that the people he knows and trusts are all sinners, Faith is once again sought in the wilderness. “The cry of grief, rage and terror” (Hawthorne 334) was for her, but she was gone and he was left only to behold “a pink ribbon”. The seed of doubt had been planted and once again concrete items and characters represent abstract ideas.

After returning to his town and his friends and family, one would think that the dream in the forest would fade over time from the memory of Goodman Brown. Sadly, it does not. The seed of doubt continues to be cultivated and Goodman lives the rest of his days unable to see the goodness in others or light of God’s love. He dies years later hopeless with a corrupted soul. It seems in this case, the devil proved to be quite crafty.

The symbolic setting of the train station backdrop in Hills Like White Elephants signifies a place of transition, not a destination but a midpoint for the couple. The drastic decision made at this place of limbo will affect the rest of both their lives. The “two lines of rail in the sun” (Hemmingway 295) never intersect, could be a representation of the couple, that they are two people headed in different directions. Jig observes both sides of the tracks, one is “brown and dry” (Hemmingway 296) and “Across, on the other side, were fields of grain and trees along the banks…and the she saw the river through the trees” (Hemmingway 297). This reference could signify the choice of life for Jig, a comparison of the life she currently had with the American: dry and unpromising, or the life she wants with a family: lush green and bountiful.

Though the narrative plays a major role, the use of symbolic references helps reveal the subtext of the polemic issue of abortion, which is never verbally expressed. Jig refers to white elephants in the distant “line of hills”. They were white in the sun, and the country was brown and dry” (Hemmingway 296). This barren wasteland could represent the consequences for how Jig might feel should she decide to go ahead with the operation to get rid of the baby.

From the onset of the story, the reader is consumed by the tone of tension and resentment between the two, by implied emotion. While the American seems aloof and constantly trying to convince Jig “That’s the only thing that bothers us. It’s the only thing that’s made us unhappy” (Hemmingway 297). His arrogance and condescending reassurances that he “wouldn’t have [Jig] do it if [she didn’t] want to. But [he] know[s] it’s perfectly simple” (Hemmingway 297), could suggest that he sees the baby as a white elephant and does not want to raise it because of the cost, and infringement on their lifestyle of mindless drinking and travel.

The symbol of two is repeated as well throughout the story, the couple, “Dos cervesas” (Hemmingway 296), two glasses, two heavy bags, which could suggest that that is the largest number the relationship can tolerate, or maybe it symbolizes Jig and her baby. In the end the reader is left to decide which choice Jig will make. She has the forty minutes until the train comes to decide if she will stay with the hills and the river and all of those symbols of life and fertility and keep the pregnancy or board the train and have the abortion to keep the man.

Symbols are a visible sign of something invisible and therefore make the reader sense that there is more than meets the eye. Each author has effectively focused on symbolism. Hawthorn uses symbolism to convey the loss of innocence and the realization that evil exists all around [Goodman Brown](http://www.exampleessays.com/essay_search/Goodman_Brown.html) and Hemmingway uses the surface dialogue to imply an emotion that is not overtly seen. The symbolism in each journey: away from Faith, his home, and safety and into evil or a discussion prior to a train ride to have an undisclosed surgery is obviously illustrated in the settings and objects chosen by the authors as there are a plethora of images that exude emotion and hidden meaning.

The End

**Works Cited**

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