

Extensive reading - Lecture 5 (Pr. Handour)

Young Goodman Brown analysis

Nathaniel Hawthorne biography:

*Nathaniel Hawthorne was known as dark romantic author. Most of his allegorical narratives are set in New England, often in the 17th century. Writing in the romantic era, Hawthorne focuses on the common rather than the special men, prioritising the emotional over the rational and pushing against the order and formality of classicism and Neoclassicism and questioning reason of the Enlightenment. Hawthorne accentuates the flawed, depraved (corrupt), and sinful aspects of human nature. He strives to lay bare the hypocrisy behind the moral rigor of the godly Puritans, many of whom suffered unspeakable (cannot be described) religious persecution and consequently they fled to New England where they established an extreme religious fiefdom in the 1600s. Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts in 1804 to a family that struck deep roots in the 17th century New England. When he was only four years old, his father passed away and his mother shouldered the responsibility of his upbringing. Hawthorne wanted to separate himself from his ancestors by adding “W” to the original family name **Hathorne**. Hawthorne felt ashamed of the atrocities committed by his family in the past and connected their subsequent decline with their sins. One was a magistrate who sentenced a Quaker woman to public flogging (whipping) as did Goodman Brown grandfather in the story: **“I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem”**. One more ancestor was a judge who sentenced many women to death during the 1692 Salem witch trials. Being unable to let go of these binding ties, though disgraceful, Hawthorne was obsessed with the history of his family, a facet of which is related in “Young Goodman Brown”. This story was one among many other literary products of 12 years of relative seclusion in his mother’s attic where he dedicated his time to reading and learning the art of writing.*