

Extensive reading - Lecture 3 and 4 (Pr. Handour)

Young Goodman Brown analysis

Context:

*“Young Godman Brown” is a story¹ told in retrospection². In the title Young Goodman Brown, “**Brown**” is the character’s surname³; “**Goodman**⁴” is a form of address and “**Young**” serves to differentiate the son from the father and forefather⁵, who were also known as Goodman Brown.*

The historical context:

*Puritanism was a 16th and 17th century **reform movement**⁶ whose main goal was to purge⁷ the Church of England from the legacy of Catholicism. The extremism inherent in Puritanism among other factors kindled civil war and turmoil⁸ in England. Under the pernicious⁹ effect of persecution some Puritans fled¹⁰ in the 17th century in quest of¹¹ a safe haven in the American colonies, creating puritan settlements in towns such as Salem, Massachusetts...*

*Puritans had a strong conviction that they had covenant¹² with God. Their belief in predestination -- the doctrine that God has ordained everything that will happen, especially with regard to the salvation of some and not others-- made them think they had been selected as godly people who were redeemed. Nathaniel Hawthorne, who believed in the sinful nature of men, uses the story of Young Goodman Brown as an allegory of the **Fall of Men** which represented the Original Sin. Unlike Hester Prynne (The protagonist of “The Scarlet Letter”), who survives through the ignominious¹³ ordeal¹⁴ of her sinful experience and achieves a kind of 19th century Transcendentalist redemption by devoting her life to serving fellow humans, Young Goodman Brown godliness¹⁵ is marred¹⁶ by doubt and suspicion (his dying hour was gloom).*

Hawthorne’s scathing rebuke¹⁷ of the Puritans, including his forefathers, is due to their fanatic and extremist beliefs and their vilification and oppression of anyone who thinks

differently from them. Having been victims of persecution in England, they turned out victimizers in New England. They tortured and hanged the Quakers (also known as the Religious Society of Friends, they are united by their common belief in each person's ability to experience the light within or see “that of God in everyone”).

*{The fourth lecture} The founder of the Quaker movement was called **George Fox**. The early Quakers were believed to sit in silence and meditate on the words of the Bible until they felt the inner light of God shining upon them. Among those hanged was **Mary Dyer** (1611 – 1660), who repeatedly defied a puritan law banning Quakers from Massachusetts Bay colony. She was one of the four executed Quakers known as the Boston martyrs. The Puritans assassinated thousands of Native Americans in battles and set fire in their settlements killing women, children, and elders in **king Phillip’s** war between 1675 and 1676. In the tumultuous upheaval generated by **Cotton Mather** (1636 – 1728) (a new England puritan minister and prolific writer of both books and pamphlets). The Puritans convicted 33 accused witches, hanging 19 of them and pressing to death elderly **Giles Corey** (1611-1692) (English born farmer who was accused by witchcraft along with his wife **Martha Corey** during the Salem witch trials).*

*In his oeuvre **Hawthorne** portrays most of the atrocities committed by colonial Puritans denouncing their violence as antithetical to Christian’s ideals. He is pretty aware that the hands of his **Hathorne** ancestors were tainted with the blood of Quakers, witches and the native Indians. One of the godfathers of the Transcendentalist movement is **Ralph Waldo Emerson**. He was known for his criticism of the scientific cause-and-effect model embraced by rational philosophers at Harvard University. Central to this movement is the idea that humans could transcend the rationalist world of facts and materialism through intellect, intuition and a deep affinity with nature. The tenets of Transcendentalism are put forward in his work “**Nature**” in 1836 and the magazine “**the Dial**”. Emerson became the mainstay of the **Transcendentalist enclave of Concord**, often financially supporting **Henry David Thoreau**, **Bronson Alcott** and **Hawthorne** (and their families) with wealth obtained from his late wife and speaking fees.*

Vocabulary:

- (1) **Story:** *tale.*
- (2) **Retrospection:** *written in the past tense.*
- (3) **Surname:** *family name.*
- (4) **Goodman:** *like Mister.*
- (5) **Forefather:** *ancestor.*
- (6) **Reform movement:** *حركة إصلاحية*
- (7) **Purge:** *purify.*
- (8) **Turmoil:** *chaos.*
- (9) **Pernicious:** *negative.*
- (10) **Fled:** *escaped.*
- (11) **In quest of:** *seeking.*
- (12) **Covenant:** *Agreement.*
- (13) **Ignominious:** *shameful.*
- (14) **Ordeal:** *bad experience.*
- (15) **Godliness:** *piety (التقوى).*
- (16) **Scathing rebuke:** *severe criticism.*