

The Influences of the Puritan's Teaching on Young Goodman in Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown*

Theresia Juwita Purnama*, Eddy Pursubaryanto
Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

*Email: theresiajp@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

This research attempts to investigate the Puritan's teachings in Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown* and the influences of the teachings toward Young Goodman Brown. Formalism was used in this research to analyze the novel. The results of the research show that the Puritan's teaching of total depravity taught by John Calvin appears in most of the scenes involving Goodman Brown, both explicitly and implicitly. The Puritan's teaching of total depravity influences Goodman Brown's thought of people around him. His way of thinking about people around him changed after he returned from the forest. The Puritan's teaching of total depravity also changes Goodman Brown's personality indirectly. So, according to the influences of the teachings towards Goodman Brown, they are accepted by Goodman Brown as an invitation to doubt himself and others, to be suspicious of other people's activities, which eventually leads to an unhappy ending.

Keywords: Puritan, influence, total depravity, change

INTRODUCTION

Young Goodman Brown is one of Hawthorne's great works that deals with the dark sides of human nature. This short story was published in April 1835 and was collected in *Moses from An Old Manse* in 1846 (Wright, 2007, p. 235).

It is curious when Hawthorne describes a parting scene in an early paragraph without providing a specific reason as to why Goodman Brown should take the journey and leave Faith alone. Moreover, Goodman Brown shows a different attitude after returning from the forest and lives his life as someone who is seen as distrustful. This paper looks at what makes Goodman Brown's personality change after returning from the forest and why Goodman Brown embarked on the journey and did not obey Faith's words.

McCabe (1998) states in his paper that *Young Goodman Brown* is a manifestation of Hawthorne's awareness of Puritan teachings

which explains that humans are sinners and unworthy to receive grace from God. McCabe's paper underlines the consequences arising from the teachings that originated from the Puritans.

Finally, this paper also looks at the connection between Goodman Brown's trip into the woods and the Puritan's teaching of total depravity. Furthermore, this paper reveals the influences of the Puritan's teaching toward Goodman Brown and to look into this matter, this paper will bring question: how does the Puritan's teaching of total depravity influence Goodman Brown?

Based on the statement of the problem, the objective of the study is to examine the influences of the Puritan's teaching on Young Goodman Brown.

METHODS

The primary data of the study is the work itself. The data consist of Young Goodman Brown's scenes, the Puritan's teaching of total

depravity in *Young Goodman Brown*, and Young Goodman Brown's personality. The data collection includes textual reading and library research. The data analysis was done as follows:

- 1) a careful reading of the whole text of *Young Goodman Brown*;
- 2) finding the connection between the Puritan's teaching of total depravity and Goodman Brown's journey into the forest;
- 3) finding evidence in the text showing the connection between the Puritan's teaching of total depravity and Goodman Brown's trip into the woods;
- 4) finding the ways in which the Puritan's teaching influences Goodman Brown;
- 5) finding evidence in the text showing the influences of Puritan's teaching of total depravity toward Goodman Brown;
- 6) drawing conclusions from the analysis.

This paper analyzes specifically the Puritan's teaching in *Young Goodman Brown* and the influences of the teaching toward Young Goodman Brown. For this purpose, formalism theory was used in this study. Formalists argue that a literary work can be understood through the intrinsic nature and the focus here is in that form. They would concentrate on the analysis of how the elements in a literary work are integrated into the complex structure of a self-contained aesthetic work.

Focus of a formalism approach is the analysis of intrinsic and structural aspects of texts, such as characters, characterization, and plot, especially for narrative structure (Klarer, 1999, p. 84).

Thus, formalism approach was used in this paper to find answers to the Puritan's teaching in *Young Goodman Brown* and the impacts of the teaching upon the characters of Young Goodman Brown and the traveller.

DISCUSSION

The Puritan's Teaching in *Young Goodman Brown*

After reading the whole text of *Young Goodman Brown*, it is found that the Puritan's

teaching taught by Calvin, implicitly and explicitly appears in the story. The teaching about total depravity arises as a central issue in the development of the plot. So, this study will be focused on this teaching and its influences considering that the teaching gives different influences in each part of the story.

The Reason for Young Goodman Brown's Journey

Young Goodman Brown was taught about the theory of total depravity from his catechism teacher, Goody Cloyse. In the story, Goodman Brown stated that Goody Cloyse is his catechism teacher and narrated as Goodman Brown's spiritual and moral adviser.

"... who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin" (Hawthorne, 1999, p. 84).

Goodman Brown believes that Goody Cloyse will bring him to heaven, which is shown in the scene when he saw Goody Cloyse in the forest during his trip and states, "what if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil, when I thought she was going to Heaven!" (Hawthorne, 1999, p. 86).

However, Goodman Brown himself showed his doubt towards the teachings from Goody Cloyse considering that the Puritan's teaching of total depravity became a reason Goodman Brown did the journey.

The journey taken by Goodman Brown is a deliberate journey. This is shown in the beginning of the story which depicted that Goodman Brown has made a promise to meet the man in the woods and he has set the time to meet the man. His doubt towards the Puritan's teaching of total depravity can be seen before, from his meeting with the traveler. So, they kept covenant to meet again to see the concrete action related to the Puritan's teaching of total depravity.

These quotations show that Young Goodman Brown has made a promise to meet the traveler.

"Friend" said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept

covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came” (Hawthorne, 1999, p. 82).

The Mysterious Journey Taken by Goodman Brown

McCabe (1998) said that to see and realize that people are sinners, one needs God's hospitality to pursue the salvation in their hearts and they should practice self-examination. Night and darkness are chosen by Goodman Brown as the time when he embarks upon the journey. The woods appear as the representation of something mysterious, people do not know what will happen inside and it is described as a quiet and dark place. Darkness referred to a condition where people cannot see anything around them, they could only hear, feel, and imagine. The mysterious journey taken by Goodman Brown into the woods is a representation of self-examination that should be done to pursue salvation from God.

Implicitly, Faith's words show that the journey is not a good journey considering that Goodman Brown's journey is a representation of journey into the human heart.

“Then God bless you!”, said Faith, with the pink ribbons, “and may you find all well when you come back” (Hawthorne, 1999, p. 80).

Goodman Brown was sure that heaven would be his future and believed firmly that faith would bring him to heaven. Faith here refers to both his wife and his own faith. He believed that the faith he had chosen would bring him to heaven. This shows that Goodman Brown believed that the teachings he received would lead him to God.

The Appearances of Salem People in The Forest

According to McCabe (1998), the aim of self-examination is to find the negative side within men's hearts and realize that they are sinners, and unworthy of God's grace. Goodman Brown should take an uncomfortable ways to get into his heart and be ready to see what will

happen. This is shown in the beginning of the story.

Implicitly, Goodman Brown found himself along the journey. The man he met for the first time in the woods is the manifestation of himself. This can be seen from the description of the man that has some similarities with Goodman Brown.

The traveller asked Goodman Brown to walk on further as if invited to look further through the darker sides of him and others. In spite of refusing, Goodman Brown can't go back. In this scene, Goodman Brown showed his identity and his family's, as the race of honest people, good Christians, people of prayer. However, the traveller exposed the dishonor of Goodman Brown's family. The traveller said that Goodman Brown's family is not as good as he thinks.

Goodman Brown made a new conclusion when he saw Goody Cloyse during his journey. It shows that he had deeper considerations that Goody Cloyse is an important person for Goodman Brown, she has taught him catechism and make him believe that heaven will be his future. Goody Cloyse is considered to be a pious lady in Goodman Brown's mind but something is revealed about her in Goodman Brown's journey and is shown to be not a good person. Goodman Brown thought that it is not right that a pious lady that taught catechism was alone in the woods nightfall.

The journey undertaken by Goodman Brown cannot be simply evaluated. He should not rate them based on their actions spontaneously. He must reevaluate every action he has seen, thus he is then able to prevent judging someone without any misconceptions. Actually he had been warned about this through the traveller he met.

In the dark, he only hears, feels, and imagines. Goodman Brown heard voices that appeared and felt that it was Deacon Gookin's and the minister's. Then he imagined that those two were in the woods and considered that they were really Deacon Gookin and the minister.

Goodman Brown viewed that they should not be in the woods at midnight since they were holy people. Even, Goodman Brown started to doubt the existence of heaven. Since he saw Goody Cloyse, he only observed people he knew in the woods but he didn't show himself in front of those he saw, he worried that others knew his presence in the woods at midnight. This is implicitly depicted from the traveller's words whom Brown met for the first time in the woods, in which had mentioned that the man is the representation of another side of Goodman Brown.

By taking the journey, Goodman Brown's faith kept him back but he lost it, both his wife, Faith and his own faith. He acted as a mad man suddenly in the middle of his journey and then claims that he lost his faith.

When Goodman Brown cried, "My Faith is gone!" (Hawthorne, 1999, p. 89), his faith is not completely lost. Faith in the story is not faith in God, but rather faith in the people around Goodman Brown, and faith toward Faith and the teaching he believed that would bring him to heaven.

Goodman Brown does not lose his faith completely. His faith is covered by his darker side and the actions of Salem people he saw in the woods. He thought that the actions are connected to the devil. His different personality after returning back from the woods caused by his broken faith and broken beliefs. He lost his faith towards others in Salem, including his wife, and faith towards the teaching that has made him believe that it will bring him to heaven.

Those who were seen by Goodman Brown in the woods were the holy people, because every Sabbath day they devoutly looked up to heaven. Goodman Brown was truly understanding of their special holiness. However, in his journey Goodman Brown saw them as evil people and he only saw their dark sides.

The Puritan's Teaching of Total Depravity

He is more convinced that evil is within the human heart when he reached the middle of the forest. The teaching of Puritans that said

everybody was a sinner and was shown explicitly in the last scene of the story.

When Goodman Brown met his wife in the middle of the ritual in the woods, he ordered faith, both his wife and his own faith to look up heavenward and resisted the wicked one. However, Goodman Brown didn't realize whether or not Faith and his own faith obeyed.

In the dark forest, Goodman Brown got the light and enlightenment from the Lord, that is when the morning comes. However, he did not use the light to illuminate his heart and others who were still in the dark, he used it to highlight the negative traits that exist in others. His ego grew bigger. He was more concerned with how people behaved rather than how his attitude towards others.

His big ego covered the positive elements that exist in his heart and made him unable to follow his mother's advice to move back when Goodman Brown reached the middle of the forest and saw there were many pious people he knew gathered, and performed a strange ritual. Even Faith, his wife, had begged him first to postpone his journey and wait until the sunrise.

After the journey he took, he spent the rest of life by judging others as a wizard, or hypocrite, and thought that everyone are wicked. He changed his personality toward others in Salem for things that could not have possibly happened.

At the end of the story, it is said that no people, including Faith who wrote a beautiful verse upon Goodman Brown's tombstone and the rest of his life, were depressed. This suggests that people in Salem village whom Goodman Brown's considered as obedient and chaste, were not much different from him. Goodman Brown acted as if he was someone without faith, and sin covered his heart. He was unable to hear and see the kindness that people had performed around him, even his own wife, Faith.

In short, the events and the appearance of the characters in the story are influenced by the Puritan's teaching taught by Calvin, called Calvinism, which was about human are sinners being totally depraved.

The Influences of The Puritan's Teaching toward Goodman Brown's Thoughts of People Around Him

The Puritan's teaching of total depravity has influenced Young Goodman Brown's mind and heart, especially on his notion of people around him and his personality. There are different ways to think of Goodman Brown towards people around him when in Salem village, before he took the journey, and after he completed the journey.

Goodman Brown's Thought of Faith

- a. In Salem Village before The Trip into The Forest

Young Goodman Brown thought that Faith was the most precious part of his life. Faith represents Goodman Brown's own faith and he tried to save her from anything that threatened her life. This thought can be seen when Goodman Brown left his wife to take the trip into the woods.

Faith is like an angel on earth for Goodman Brown and he believed that his future is go after Faith to heaven. This thought is shown explicitly in the early paragraph and was said by Goodman Brown after he and his wife shared a parting kiss.

Faith is seen as a sweet and pretty wife by Goodman Brown and he loved his wife. His love is shown by his effort to save her from the devil during his time in the journey.

- b. In Salem Village after The Trip into The Forest

Goodman Brown saw her as someone different after returning from the forest. He no longer sees Faith as one of the most precious things in his life. He did not continue to consider the presence of Faith. Goodman Brown considers Faith just as a person of Salem that he saw in the woods. He considers her as apart of them. Goodman Brown's journey into the woods has a big influence on his way of thinking about Faith. Goodman Brown's thought of Faith is seen when he returned from the woods and met Faith that looked glad for his presence, but Goodman Brown just look at her with a look of sadness and left without saying anything.

Goodman Brown's Thought of Goody Cloyse

- a. In Salem Village before The Trip into The Forest

Goodman Brown believes that Goody Cloyse is a good woman because she taught him catechism. He is assured that Goody Cloyse would take him to heaven, take him onto good things. In the beginning of the story, when Goodman Brown left his wife, he said, "What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married!"

In the previous explanation it is said that Faith represents the faith which is owned by Goodman Brown himself. So, those words are not only said by Goodman Brown to his wife but also to his own faith. Goodman Brown had just been married for three months with his wife, Faith and his own faith. It can be concluded that since birth, Goodman Brown is a Christian but not a Puritan. Therefore, he believes with his catechist teacher and the teaching she taught.

- b. In The Forest During The Journey and In Salem Village after The Journey

Goodman Brown's thought of Goody Cloyse changed when he embarked on the journey into the woods. When he saw Goody Cloyse in the middle of the forest at midnight, Goodman Brown said, "That old woman taught me my catechism" (Hawthorne, 1999, p. 86). Goodman Brown's statement shows his assumption that it is not proper for Goody Cloyse to walk alone in the woods in the night, considering that she was a catechism teacher and at once, Goodman Brown's moral and spiritual advisor. The impropriety of someone in the woods at night, especially for the Puritan and their belief that the forest is regarded as the home of demons; the forest is a representation of the devil (Hill, 2013).

Puritan's belief that considers the forest as the home of the devil makes Goodman Brown think that Goody Cloyse will go to see the devil that night.

The presence of someone in the woods, especially at night time shows that people will do things that are not good. Furthermore, Goodman Brown considers that Goody Cloyse is the devil,

this is indicated in the last scene when Goodman Brown returned from a trip into the woods and saw Goody Cloyse who was teaching catechism to a little girl.

Goodman Brown's Thought of Deacon Gookin and The Minister

a. In The Early Journey into The Forest

The minister and Deacon Gookin are the important people for Goodman Brown. They are Goodman Brown's spiritual and moral adviser. So, in Goodman Brown's sight, they are a pious and holy man.

Moreover, Young Goodman Brown always felt troublesome whenever he heard the minister's sermons. It would be shameful for Goodman Brown if his journey into the woods was known by the minister.

Similarly with the case of Goody Cloyse, the existence of Deacon Gookin and the minister in the woods is not a proper thing. They will be considered doing something that is not good and related to the devil. The impropriety of their presence in the woods is shown in the scene when Goodman Brown heard the voice that was similar to the minister's and Deacon Gookin conversing and deciding to go to a place in the forest.

b. In Salem Village after The Trip into The Forest

When Goodman Brown returned from the woods, his assessment of Deacon Gookin and the minister had totally changed. He is throwing away his good thoughts about the minister and Deacon Gookin because he realized their presence in the middle of the forest and that they will do something related to the devil, although he did not see them directly and only recognized their voices. Goodman Brown finds Deacon Gookin as a wizard and thought that the prayers said by Deacon Gookin were not addressed to God.

Goodman Brown also avoids the minister when they meet in the morning when Goodman Brown returned from the woods. He avoids the minister as if avoiding the curse.

Goodman Brown's Thought of People of Salem

a. In The Forest During The Trip into The Forest

Goodman Brown thought that Salem people were good and pious people. This is shown in the scene when Goodman Brown saw their presence in the forest.

b. In Salem Village after The Trip into The Forest

When Goodman Brown returned from the forest, he thought that there are no good on earth and it is explicitly shown in his dialogue.

"There is no good on earth, and sin is but a name" (Hawthorne, 1999, p. 89)

The Influences of The Puritan's Teaching of Total Depravity toward Goodman Brown's Personality

a. Goodman Brown before The Trip into The Forest

Goodman Brown said that he and his family were good Christians. He also frequently listened to sermons given by the minister and Deacon Gookin, even the preaching of the minister was able to make him tremble.

When the traveler revealed Goodman Brown's family's disgrace, Goodman Brown denies it by saying that he and his family are people and prayers, so it is not possible for them to do such bad things as told by a traveler.

Goodman Brown had also feared that the minister of Salem village knew about his journey into the woods; he has no idea and doesn't know what to do in his meeting with the minister after the journey.

Before Goodman Brown went into the woods, he treated Faith as the most valuable part of his life. He also asked Faith to pray, and then Faith would be safe.

b. Goodman Brown after The Trip into The Forest

When Goodman Brown returned back from the forest, he turns into a sad, stern, and distrustful person.

Goodman Brown showed his disappointment in the people around him through his behavior, especially against Goody Cloyse, Deacon

Gookin, and the minister. His behavior is totally different with the time before he traveled into the woods.

His disappointment toward the minister is shown by Goodman Brown when he met the minister after he returned back from the forest. He avoided the minister as if avoiding a curse.

Furthermore, Goodman Brown referred to Deacon Gookin as a wizard and considered Goody Cloyse to be a fiend. Goodman Brown no longer sees them as his catechism teacher and his moral and spiritual advisers. He is also ignores the presence of Faith when he came back from the woods.

Although in the beginning of the story, Goodman Brown stated that he and his family are good Christians and people of prayer, in the end, his attitude has been diminished. He changed completely, he showed his negative personality toward people around him, including his wife. He brought his gloomy life and bad attitude up in his last life and no one, not even Faith wrote a hopeful or loving verse upon his tombstone.

As a good Christian, as has been said by Goodman Brown himself, he should not behave as he shown when he returned from the woods. Furthermore, if Goodman Brown's faith did not falter, he would not have made the trip and changed his mind completely about the people around him. As a good Christian, he should forgive and love people who let him down and pray for these people.

Puritan teachings about total depravity indirectly affect the lives of Young Goodman Brown and his relationship with the communities in which he lived. Puritan teachings about the total depravity, was interpreted by Goodman Brown as an invitation to doubt himself and others, and to be suspicious of anything that others do without seeing the good things that exist in those people.

CONCLUSION

Puritan's teaching about total depravity became the central issue in the development of the storyline. The teaching is taught by John

Calvin and known as Calvinism. This teaching was shown in every scene involving Goodman Brown, both implicitly and explicitly.

The teaching came as the reason Goodman Brown embarked on the mysterious journey. He doubted the teaching he got from Goody Cloyse, his catechism teacher. His doubt was caused by his meeting with the traveler before they met each other in the forest. So, Goodman Brown kept the covenant to meet the traveler in the forest at dusk to see the evidence related to the Puritan's teaching of total depravity that teaches that even sinners and those considered to be unworthy may receive grace from God.

The traveler appeared to show that everyone has an evil side within their heart. Goodman Brown viewed people around them, especially Goody Cloyse, Deacon Gookin, and the minister as pious people before the journey. They had made Goodman Brown believe that heaven does exist, and taught him about catechism so he was confident that heaven would be part of his future.

However, during his journey, his way of thinking about people around him gradually changed. He thought that they were on the devil's side. Their existences in the woods at midnight had made Goodman Brown doubtful, he was not sure if there was heaven above, and had been convinced that there is no good on earth.

So, Puritan's teaching of total depravity had made Young Goodman Brown's way of thinking about people around him and his attitude change, although it was not directly. For example, he said that he is a good Christian and his family were people of prayer, but after the journey he became a stern and distrustful person. His belief toward people around him, especially Goody Cloyse, Deacon Gookin, the minister, even Faith had gone.

Puritan teachings about the total depravity indirectly influence the lives of Young Goodman Brown and his relationship with the communities in which he lived. According to the influences of the teaching toward Goodman Brown and his attitudes, Puritan teachings about the total depravity is accepted by Goodman Brown as an

invitation to doubt himself and others, to be suspicious of anything that others do without seeing the good things that exists in those people, and it will not lead to a happy ending.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, M.H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th Edition. USA: Earl McPeck.
- Hawthorne, N. (1999). *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Adobe PDF Formatting by J. M. Esch. United States: Orange Street Press. <https://sparks.eserver.org/files/imported/books/oldmanse.pdf>. Accessed 30 Oct. 2014.
- Hill, Tiffany. (2013) Puritan Superstitions. <https://prezi.com/taznxvc3yj0w/puritan-superstitions/>. Accessed 7 Oct. 2016.
- Klarer, M. *An Introduction to Literary Studies* (2nd ed). London: Routledge.
- McCabe, M. E. (1998). The Consequences of Puritan Depravity and Distrust as Historical Context for Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown". <http://itech.fgcu.edu/faculty/wohlpart/alra/hawthorne.htm#INSERT> 1. Accessed 8 Sept. 2014.
- Wright, S. B. (2007). *Critical Companion to Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Facts on File.