

Pray Tarry With Me Young Goodman Brown

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Whenever evil, mortal danger, and the courage of lone protagonists seems important, we can surmise that fiction verges on paranoid delusion. As in the case of paranoia itself, free-floating anxiety is diverted and given focus by the fear of hostile forces that must somehow be defeated. In effect, life is simplified and redefined as a primitive conflict to be won by primitive means. Habit, anxiety, indecisiveness, and intropunitive guilt are allayed by extropunitive righteousness that lets negative feedback prevail at the expense of positive feedback, plot at the expense of complexity of characterization, and righteous illusion at the expense of any genuine effort to come to terms with our personal inadequacies. This defensive self-justification is commonplace in such popular genres as mysteries, westerns, detective stories, Gothic thrillers, and the like, but it also occurs in high fiction from ancient epic and tragedy to most of the contemporary novels which presumably transcend escapist conventions. Fiction's paranoid dynamics might be attenuated and more effectively obscured, but its appeal derives from a comparable dependence on psychological displacements: not my problem, but the story I am reading; not the hero's individual problem but his struggle against outside forces; not empty compromise, but total victory over these forces. Whenever this hierarchy of displacements takes precedence, paranoid tension reduction occurs experienced as pleasure--the satisfaction of having participated in the outcome of a lively and compelling work of fiction.

Occasionally a particular poem, story or novel maps out a major portion of this dialectic. Like other works of fiction, it draws on paranoid needs, but it additionally offers itself as a prototype, or working model, that documents most or all of the process and charts the interrelationship among its parts. Its denial-projective machinery is almost entirely visible, so it both deploys and clarifies the dynamics that give literature its paranoid appeal. Blake, Dostoevsky, and Kafka come to mind as authors capable of works that fit this description, but also remarkable is Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," a short story whose ethical crisis epitomizes both paranoid form and the themes and conventions of American literature. The sometimes painfully obvious Freudian symbolism that dominates the story lays bare a more basic paranoid syndrome that has, in fact, played a dominant role in American fiction since its very beginning. For in fact the relatively brief tale of Young Goodman Brown's nightmarish experience in the forest provides the *locus classicus* of the wilderness quest in a tradition which has persisted from Natty Bumppo and Huckleberry Finn to the detectives, cowboys and anti-heroes crowding the media today. In the case of young Goodman Brown, the choice between heterosexual love and its rejection is sufficiently disguised to be acknowledged, then reformulated as a Manichaeian choice between good and evil. Young Goodman Brown briefly tests possibilities symbolized by his journey into the forest, and then rejects them completely and irrevocably for their sinful implications. His story ritualizes frontier challenge, but with the unique outcome that he returns to civilization a reluctant husband who thereafter meets but despises his family and community

obligations. The explanation, simply enough, is that his nocturnal excursion into the wilderness reveals an identity crisis too dangerous to acknowledge. Once exposed to this crisis, he renounces the possibility of confronting the choice ever again.

Briefly recounted, the story of Young Goodman Brown tells of his journey into the forest to fulfill his overnight assignation with Satan. Faith, his young bride, pleads with him to "tarry" with her at their house in the village, but he leaves determined to fulfill his mysterious mission. Upon reaching the forest he meets Satan, and the two proceed toward a mysterious destination where some kind of a midnight ritual is to be conducted. Soon they overtake his old nurse, Goody Cloyse, who taught Young Goodman Brown his catechism as a child. He discovers to his astonishment that she is traveling to the same ceremony and that she has been a long-standing friend of Satan. When she suddenly climbs on Satan's staff and flies ahead, Young Goodman Brown is shocked by her sinfulness and refuses to cooperate any further with Satan, who thereupon suddenly disappears. Left alone, Young Goodman Brown hears cloud-borne voices passing overhead, evidently of other women flying to the same event. One of these voices sounds like his wife Faith's, and a pink ribbon which drops from the sky seems to be the one she was wearing when he left her at their doorstep. Upon this discovery he loses his composure and frantically rushes to join the evil proceedings, spurred on by the voices of two respectable local clergymen also riding to the same destination.

Soon Young Goodman Brown stumbles into a clearing illuminated by four burning pines and full of local citizens, many from the most pious and prosperous families he knows. He learns that the crowd has been waiting to baptize Faith and himself as two new converts into what Satan describes as "the communion of their race." Only one figure, probably his mother, motions to him not to participate, but she seems to be lost in the crowd. Satan begins his invocation before a blood-filled basin when Young Goodman Brown suddenly changes his mind and cries out to Faith, who stands beside him, to join him in resisting "the wicked one." Instantly, the entire gathering disappears, Faith included, and Young Goodman Brown finds himself alone, swallowed up in darkness. The following day he returns to his village disillusioned with mankind. He fulfills his marriage vows and raises a family of children and grandchildren, but without learning if his extraordinary experience was a dream he withdraws into himself and finally dies a bitter old man unreconciled with his family and neighbors.

Many of the paranoid symptoms seem obvious. Young Goodman Brown's suspicious retreat from family and friends almost perfectly exemplifies paranoid decompensation as the degenerative transition from an acute phase dominated by the struggle to cope with unmanageable feelings, to a chronic phase dominated by intractable delusions of persecution. The first of these is represented by Young Goodman Brown's crisis in the forest, and the second by his subsequent vigilance against the people he lives with for the rest of his life. The explanation for this seemingly radical response is imbedded in the story's narrative, which provides a "completely intact delusional system," an elaborate explanation of events that justifies Young Goodman Brown's hostility toward his presumed enemies--all the friends, neighbors and relatives he has known since his childhood. Every detail confirms his suspicion that a conspiracy is taking place at his expense which is so pervasive that everybody, even his trusted bride, is probably involved. It is only his complete dedication to virtue that prevents him from capitulating, and because of his refusal he becomes alienated from the entire town, now a "pseudo-community" of satanic enemies.

Other elements of the story that reinforce a paranoid diagnosis might seem less obvious, but they can be listed as follows:

1. There is paranoid "centrality" in the illusion of playing a role of crucial importance. Young Goodman Brown's evil communion is celebrated by all society, and his salvation becomes a temporary battlefield in the cosmic struggle between God and Satan.
2. Supernatural interference is too enormous to be withstood except by extraordinary means. Young Goodman Brown finds himself in the clutches of Satan and can only escape by an act of unusual will power.
3. The Manichaean choice between sin and virtue is unduly exaggerated. Young Goodman Brown stakes his life and happiness upon an ethical struggle between evil and purity, and he remains steadfast in his commitment to purity despite the evil temptations to which everyone else has capitulated.
4. Young Goodman Brown's judgment of others discloses a pronounced tendency toward "premature closure" typical of paranoid consciousness. Following his single evening's ordeal, he feels absolutely justified in rejecting his family and neighbors for the rest of his life. Nobody is given a second chance.
5. There is total humorlessness resulting from Young Goodman Brown's inability to laugh at himself and to judge himself objectively.
6. The possibility of compromise is also excluded. Young Goodman Brown's fate is determined once he has made his choice, and there is no room for accommodation ever again.
7. Secret clues are important in exposing the conspiracy against Young Goodman Brown: cryptic allusions, peculiar resemblances, his wife's lost ribbon, etc. Only by sifting this evidence can he expect to save himself from the fate which otherwise awaits him.
8. Disembodied voices can be heard of the clergymen on horseback and the women passing by on a cloud overhead. Hearing voices is typical of paranoid derangement even if special circumstances (for example forest darkness) are adduced to explain the source of these voices. The fact remains that disembodied voices are heard, and this is symptomatic of advanced paranoia.
9. In the final analysis it is not clear whether events are real or imaginary. The story of Young Goodman Brown's experience always seems to be at the edge of delusion. He is confident of his ethical judgment, but he cannot be entirely certain of his evidence supportive of this judgment.
10. Sexual roles are reduced to simple stereotypes typical of paranoid thinking. Women are

divided into paragons of virtue such as Young Goodman Brown's mother and threatening temptresses and/or witches such as Goody Cloyse. Torn between these extremes, Faith herself becomes a dangerous temptress once she decides to join the devil's party.

11. Most of the imagery bears surrealistic implications suggestive of delusional extravagance. Young Goodman Brown journeys along a dark and threatening trail to participate in a ghastly ritual dominated by the paraphernalia of witchcraft. Satan presides, and only the voice of Young Goodman Brown's mother can be heard. An enormous crowd has gathered to watch the young couple's initiation, but it suddenly disappears, leaving Young Goodman Brown stranded in total darkness.
12. The story is told with disarming candor, emphasizing the truth at one level of interpretation in order to obscure it at another. Young Goodman Brown seems dedicated, as does the narrative itself, to the careful distinction between fact and supposition. However, the story's central motivation seems inexplicable until it is deciphered, whereupon it becomes almost painfully clear both to Young Goodman Brown in his effort to save his soul and to the reader in recognizing his paranoid excesses.

Perhaps the most intriguing paranoid symptom is the way Young Goodman Brown's story links delusions of persecution to sexual aversion based on unresolved Oedipal difficulties. As Frederick Crews has maintained, the devil plays the role of an unacceptable father surrogate who is trying to initiate his son to the mystery of sex. Together, Satan and Young Goodman Brown are described as looking like father and son, and Satan's close resemblance to Young Goodman Brown's grandfather doubles and thus reinforces his paternal role.¹ Similarly, Goody Cloyse, Young Goodman Brown's evil nurse, plays the role of a bad or licentious mother, the willing mistress of his father's designs. The witch's sabbath in the woods symbolizes the consummation of Young Goodman Brown's marriage with Faith which would allow him to identify with his father according to patriarchal custom and expectations. He and Faith are newlyweds, and their church rites must be completed by sexual union, imposing upon Young Goodman Brown the sinful role his father once enjoyed with his mother. The various individuals attending this ceremony have apparently lost their virginity in comparable fashion.

Hawthorne specifies that the young couple has been married for exactly three months, ample time to have consummated their relationship. This postponement, the length of a season, seems intended to let the story be told by disguising and sublimating its implications. Nevertheless the future relationship between the two newlyweds is at stake, and what occurs is the symbolic rejection of sex except for the unpleasant necessity of bearing children. Conjugal intimacy is accepted for the limited purpose of raising a family, not for any satisfaction Young Goodman Brown might find in his physical relationship with his wife. Here, once again, an anti-epithalamion discloses itself, for, like Hamlet, Young Goodman Brown is led to reject his designated wife in order to liberate himself from what seems an evil compact between his parents, in his case Satan and Goody Cloyse. Moreover, like the wedding guest in "The Ancient Mariner," he approaches the threshold of matrimony but then withdraws because of the lesson that he has learned from his surrealistic experience. And like Frost's protagonist in "Mending Wall," he erects a barrier to limit human contact--in his case, between himself on one side and Faith, Satan, and the rest of humanity on the other.

The threat of carnal temptation is suggested by the story's initial tableau in which Young Goodman Brown leaves his house to venture into the forest despite Faith's pleas that he remain with her. She seductively entreats him to remain with her as she "thrusts her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap." As in "The Ancient Mariner," Young Goodman Brown stands poised at their doorway, the front entrance of their house, symbolizing at least the possibility of a normal heterosexual relationship, then makes his departure despite Faith's overtures. Young Goodman Brown's preliminary rejection of Faith thus prefigures his more symbolic (and permanent) rejection of marriage later in the story, as does his receding image of Faith still waving from their doorway as he begins his journey. Her benign image recedes even further from his mind by his story's conclusion, though the two continue to live together as a married couple until his death many years later. When Young Goodman Brown, walking to the forest, passes behind the town meeting house, thereby blocking his view of Faith, it also seems as if this building, replete with community values, symbolizes the shared assumptions of society that irreparably isolate him both from his wife and from those neighbors who are able to live in normal conjugal union. But contrary to most interpretations of the story, it is not Young Goodman Brown's suspicion of society that dictates his alienation from Faith; rather, it is his rejection of the marriage rite with Faith that dictates both his alienation from her and from society. By gladly accepting his role as Faith's husband, Young Goodman Brown could join this community, but this he refuses to do. His emotional rejection of his wife therefore guarantees his social isolation for the rest of his life.

The sexual implications of Young Goodman Brown's decision are also symbolized by his journey in and out of a primeval forest with almost blatant sexual implications as explained, for example, by the pubic suggestiveness of trees in Freudian dream symbolism: "He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind." The comparable dream symbolism of the harmless doorway which Young Goodman Brown refuses to enter at the beginning of the story has been supplanted by a dark and threatening forest path whose penetration supposedly leads to a mysterious ritual consummation. The threat of consummation likewise seems plain in Satan's invocation at the forest ritual, when he stands as a minister in front of the two as if in the act of marrying them:

By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places--whether in church, bedchamber, street, field, or forest--where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot. Far more than this. It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts . . ." (italics added)

Here, Satan's disturbed images of sexual consummation as a flow of blood from the earth itself suggest, whether Hawthorne quite realized what he was saying, both the classical personification of the earth as the female ur-goddess Gaea and, in Biblical tradition, the "face of the waters" in the second verse of Genesis that may be traced to the Sumerian ur-goddess, Tiamat, whose "waters" Marduk divides from the rest of her corpse after killing and butchering her, affording the firmament of the universe and later, apparently, the wellspring of feminine temptation.

The specific crimes next listed by Satan combine sex, parenthood, and Oedipal confusion in a scrambled but otherwise barely disguised combination susceptible to Freudian analysis:

. . . how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for the widow's weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their father's wealth; and how fair maidens--blush not, sweet ones--have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest, to an infant's funeral.

Reorganized on a narrative basis, these episodes recounted by Satan predict the fate rejected by Young Goodman Brown. If he as a "beardless youth" can identify with his father in his satanic role (i.e. "inherit his father's wealth"), he would have no trouble in consummating his marriage to Faith by penetrating "the fountain of all wicked arts" to produce "one mighty blood spot." But this "stain of guilt" would also provide the drink which lets him "sleep his last sleep in her bosom," the sole guest at the funeral of his own innocence. This Young Goodman Brown wants to avoid, so ritual is interrupted--in effect, a ritual *coitus interruptus* takes place--justified by his cosmic struggle against the devil who resembles his grandfather. Throughout this passage Satan's imagery exposes the repulsiveness of patriarchal responsibility entailing the acceptance of an adult role. It almost seems as if Satan, too, shares Young Goodman Brown's revulsion against sex but has learned to accept its necessity.

Just as Hamlet differentiates his good from his bad father, Young Goodman Brown remains loyal to his "good" mother, now little more than a half-recognized gesture of restraint, and despises his "bad" mother, Goody Cloyse ("good" becomes "goody"), a witch who has lost her broom and eagerly accepts in its place the father figure's writhing serpentine staff. When Satan repeatedly tries to pass on his phallic staff to Young Goodman Brown as if it were his rightful inheritance, his gesture suggests Oedipal demands implicit in the identification with a father figure who can accept conjugal love as being acceptable, even desirable. But Young Goodman Brown cannot accept such a possibility, so the parental figures who encourage his efforts must be rejected in their grotesque heterosexual caricature as the potential relationship between Satan and Goody Cloyse.

Classic Freudian theory also helps to explain Young Goodman Brown's close affinity to his mother as the efficient cause of his inability to identify with his father.² It is no accident that Young Goodman Brown rejects Satan's staff or that the single individual who succeeds in dissuading him from accepting communion is probably his "good" mother, who "with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back." She alone resists the ceremony that would initiate his maturity, and in doing so she makes her appeal to his regressive and infantile feelings. His conscience, or inner voice, is hers, not his father's, and it is this inner voice that protects him from the ritual demands of Satan. It may also be speculated that because of his mother's influence, Young Goodman Brown spurns the advances of his young bride, who threatens his mother dependency bordering on total identification. In effect, Young Goodman Brown's attachment to his mother verges on mother-identification, but homosexuality remains unthinkable, producing anxiety and identity confusion that must be brought under control by accusing others of evil designs against him. Gender crisis is replaced by an obsessive vigilance against presumed enemies associated with the heterosexual temptation to be rejected. What is fascinating about the story of Young

Goodman Brown is its economy of means in plotting this transition from his pre-paranoid innocence to the relatively narrow cathartic gratification that derives from Young Goodman Brown having exposed his persecutors.

Indeed, Young Goodman Brown cannot fully identify with his mother. Such a choice would be no less unspeakable, so he finds himself in limbo and must bring his role confusion under control by means of delusional experience that carries out the double displacement of denial and projection typical of paranoid logic: "Not that mother-identification prevents me from loving Faith; rather, it is she, my presumably loyal bride, who is involved in a universal conspiracy led by my father to destroy my soul." Young Goodman Brown's sexual ambivalence can accordingly be disguised by the moral choice between sin and virtue that puts everyone else at fault, not himself. These are trying to deprive him of his virtue, and their designs can only be thwarted by his maintaining a desperate vigilance for the rest of his life. His single night's ordeal in the forest thus dramatizes his crisis, carrying out the "acute" stage of paranoia in which extreme anxiety is triggered by unacceptable conjugal demands. When this crisis is resolved by his emphatic rejection of these demands, paranoid decompensation has advanced from its acute to its chronic stage. Narrative action pivots on this transition from severe anxiety to a midnight experience--perhaps delusional, perhaps not--that lets Young Goodman Brown recognize his enemies, though, in fact, he can neither defeat them nor acknowledge the threat they pose as projections of his own personal difficulties.

Young Goodman Brown's infantile expectations in marrying Faith are disclosed when he promises, "I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven," exactly as would have been expected in his early childhood relationship with his mother. However, "good" Faith, chosen for her potential benefits as a mother surrogate, reveals "bad" faith when she makes physical demands exceeding those of his mother. These demands become overt when she pleads with him to "tarry" with her because "a lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afraid of herself sometimes." By implication, however, Young Goodman Brown has more to fear from her nocturnal fantasies than she herself, and he must find a defense acceptable to his conscience, one that would let him, true to his name--and true to his story's title--find the best means to be both "good" and "man" at the same time. Paranoid delusion is the answer, a wilderness quest that eliminates his problem in two clearly defined stages: first by leaving Faith to journey into a world of shadows where her demands can be disguised as satanic ritual, and then by abruptly terminating this ritual because it is satanic. The first stage culminates with the projective displacement, "they're all sinners," while the second stage culminates with the denial displacement, "But not me!" Now Young Goodman Brown can withdraw from his wife fully protected from confronting his identity confusion. He and Faith can go on to raise children and grandchildren, but their marriage will never be a union of kindred souls, since she cannot be trusted to satisfy his innermost regressive needs. Young Goodman Brown's internal crisis has been replaced by a fear of evil temptation, an easier and less threatening problem to cope with than sexual role confusion. By means of the paranoid double displacement, his story shifts from his misguided early expectations to a maturity that disposes of his uncertainty through ceaseless vigilance against the evil influence of others. At the brink of heathen ritual, Young Goodman Brown can withdraw from marital consummation for reasons of profound moral significance.

Neither tragedy nor comedy is involved in Young Goodman Brown's ordeal. The threat is

too dangerous to be acknowledged, for example, in the context of conventional Menandrine comedy. Hawthorne's Satan, it turns out, is less convincing than Prospero, Theseus, Undershaft, and other such father figures who are eager to present their children in marriage in their respective stories. The mother's desperate warning gesture fortifies Young Goodman Brown's resistance, and then he cuts short the forest ritual to confirm his escape from his wife. Never again will there be any possibility of his tarrying with her or sharing with her the communion of their race. No longer tempted, he commits himself to a simpler task, his acceptance of marriage as a perpetual struggle against the threat of satanism. If Hawthorne's symbolism were fully tragic, Young Goodman Brown's story would emphasize his confrontation with a father figure comparable to Laius, Claudius, etc.--in his case through Miltonic warfare against the devil himself. And if a young woman such as Faith were caught up in such a conflict, she would probably be destroyed, like Ophelia, by the almost cosmic release of Oedipal violence, and her elimination would necessarily remain subordinate to Young Goodman Brown's effort to come to grips with the crisis of mother-identification. However, neither comedy nor tragedy takes place. Notable for its brevity, the story of Young Goodman Brown offers little more than a parable or bad dream, a nightmarish enactment of psychosexual ambivalence that justifies the perpetual defense of his inner chastity. The apparition of his "good" mother gives Young Goodman Brown the courage to deny heterosexual marriage, but not to investigate substitutes, so his narrative (as opposed to his life) is quickly brought to its unhappy conclusion. An abortive transition has taken place from a bridegroom's frightened expectancy to the resounding abstinence of a "stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man." Nothing is left but gloom as Young Goodman Brown tries to live out an undeclared compact with his mother which falls short of homosexual identification.

Typical of paranoid behavior, the story unintentionally confesses itself in a variety of partial contexts leading to a resolution whose righteous self-justification may be felt without being understood--the primary obligation of paranoid delusion. No single passage provides a comprehensive explanation of Young Goodman Brown's problem, yet its components may be combined and evaluated to obtain a clinical diagnosis of surprising comprehensiveness. What emerges is akin to *folie à deux*, because the reader can resonate to the story's confessional subtext and thereby share Young Goodman Brown's paranoid experience without suffering from it, and without exactly comprehending it. Moreover, Young Goodman Brown's heterosexual aversion almost entirely crowds from consideration the homo-aversive attitudes that may likewise be expected as a byproduct of his psychological disposition. Both alternatives, masculine and feminine, are rejected in his effort to play a mature role, and the resulting abundance of pathological symptoms is almost too obvious to be ignored. If in real life a distraught young gentleman, Y. G. Brown, were to walk into a psychiatrist's office and confide that he had recently talked to the devil disguised as his grandfather, that the devil had lured him into the woods to steal his soul at a witch's sabbath, and that he knows that everybody except his mother participated in the conspiracy, even his bride he can no longer love--the diagnosis, I think, would be plain: a classic case of paranoia--almost too classic to be true except in fiction.

But of course Young Goodman Brown may only be interpreted as a fictional character the figment of somebody else's imagination. The entire paranoid syndrome cannot be attributed to his characterization, so he is necessarily less paranoid with bona fide clinical credentials than might be indicated by his story. At times he seems almost complex enough to be evaluated in

psychoanalytic terms, but he remains a literary figure without the wide assortment of coping mechanisms typical of real people, even the most rigid victims of paranoid decompensation. Moreover, though he might suffer from conspiratorial delusions, he cannot escape his status as the figment of his author's imagination, so what he suspects might actually be happening to him in the story told of his ordeal. Our fiction is Young Goodman Brown's reality: the devil probably does approach him disguised as his grandfather, and he probably does find himself at a witch's sabbath. Paranoid delusion becomes a reality for him in his role as the story's reluctant protagonist, and if it is real as well as he can ascertain, it is not a delusion, at least for him. What he sees he sees, and he must deal with this as best he can. He lives in a shadowy paranoid world concocted by his author, Hawthorne, and as its reluctant inhabitant he can hardly be blamed for the conclusions he draws. A figment of Hawthorne's imagination, he is ultimately innocent of the circumstances imposed by his creator. Of course such claims of innocence typify paranoid thinking, but they happen to be true in the case of Young Goodman Brown.

Does this mean that Hawthorne and his readers can instead be diagnosed as being paranoid? Not necessarily. To enjoy a work of fiction with paranoid tendencies, we as readers need not suffer from paranoia. Fiction lets us take advantage of its cathartic benefits without totally imposing its values upon us. As readers we can suspend disbelief without giving full credence to the delusions we provisionally accept while engrossed in reading a story. We can engage the paranoid syndrome on a literary basis, and with a pleasure and flexibility that elude the genuine victim of paranoia. We are free to try out any projective mechanisms that appeal to us and discard them once they have served their purpose. We enjoy the freedom to take advantage of these mechanisms, assured that our lives need not be dominated by them. Limited to fiction, paranoid form may be enjoyed for its strictly aesthetic success.

But it should also be mentioned that Hawthorne himself may have suffered from mild paranoid tendencies suggestive of the circumstances depicted in his story. He somewhat resembled his character, Young Goodman Brown, if his description by Henry James, Sr. was at all accurate: "He has the look all the time, to one who doesn't know him, of a rogue who suddenly finds himself in the company of detectives."³ Also suggestive of Young Goodman Brown's role was Emerson's description of Hawthorne in his diary entry the day after he attended Hawthorne's burial: "Clarke [the minister who presided at the funeral] . . . said, that Hawthorne had done more justice than any other to the shades of life, shown a sympathy with the crime in our nature. . . . I thought there was a tragic element in . . . the painful solitude of the man--which, I suppose, could not longer be endured, & he died of it."⁴ The words "painful solitude" which Emerson applied to Hawthorne could just as easily have been used to describe Young Goodman Brown in his later years.

Young Goodman Brown's central crisis symbolized by the forest ritual he rejects also seems to recapitulate in the context of fiction Hawthorne's relatively slow emancipation from his mother's household once he reached maturity. His father died while Hawthorne was in his infancy, and thereafter, except for the years he spent as a student at Bowdoin College, he lived with his mother until he was thirty-three years old. A year later, in 1834, he wrote "Young Goodman Brown," and four years later, in 1838, he met Sophia Peabody, his future wife. The two were secretly engaged in 1839, apparently to avoid offending his mother, and they finally married in 1842. Apropos of this family background, it seems relevant to cite the clinical findings of J.

Nydes which indicate that there is often a close connection between paranoia and permanent feelings of guilt arising from an unusual attachment to one's mother:

. . . the absence of a rational authority figure of the same sex has fostered the illusion during childhood that forbidden incestuous impulses may actually be realized. This is accompanied by feelings of guilt and fear of the father, who is perceived unconsciously as a formidable giant who must be defended against.⁵

It accordingly seems possible that Hawthorne's close affinity with his mother, especially at the time he wrote "Young Goodman Brown," might indeed illustrate this relationship. It also seems significant in this light that Hawthorne depicts Satan as a father figure who returns from another realm, presumably hell, to insist upon sealing Young Goodman Brown's marriage to his wife. However, as opposed to Young Goodman Brown, Hawthorne deeply loved his wife, and his son, Julian Hawthorne, may be quoted to the effect that there was considerable difference between Hawthorne's domestic role and his narrative persona: "The man and the works were, in Hawthorne's case, as different as a mountain from a cloud."⁶ This difference seems particularly striking in the case of "Young Goodman Brown," which was written after Hawthorne had left his mother's house but before he met and married Sophia. The story may consequently be understood as an intermediate concern about possibilities entirely different from the satisfaction Hawthorne was eventually to find in marriage. Mild paranoid tendencies might have been experienced at the time he wrote his story, but even then they were well under control, limited to his use of fiction to explore forbidden alternatives. Like Milton, he was probably able and willing to put himself in Satan's party, just as bothered as his readers by Young Goodman Brown's unhappy decision at the forest clearing.

As a result, neither the author, his readers, nor Young Goodman Brown may be diagnosed as being paranoid, despite their participation in a narrative dominated by witchcraft and devilish conspiracy. All are touched by the paranoid condition, but none exactly fits its profile. Where, then, is "Young Goodman Brown's" paranoid machinery situated? Clearly, it is the story itself as a narrative account of Young Goodman Brown's ordeal that embodies the denial-projective displacement typical of paranoia. Not accidentally, fiction plays the same role as the paranoid syndrome in organizing our feelings, but in a temporary and relatively healthy fashion. The basis for a story such as "Young Goodman Brown" might derive from hypothetical experience its author shares with its readers, but it distills and intensifies this experience with almost diagnostic purity. Its narrative structure provides what amounts to a portable delusional system in which a great variety of personal problems may be brought to focus and discharged by intense conflict against hostile forces supposedly bigger than life.

By exaggerating this conflict and then bringing it to its resolution, the story "Young Goodman Brown" stirs the negative vision typical of paranoia, but, unlike paranoid delusion, its narrative apparatus remains accessible to balanced and healthy vicarious involvement. Events unfold in a nightmarish sequence almost totally devoid of affirmative appeal, yet the story provides the benign and relatively "normal" benefits of literary experience--unified, intensified, and, as it were, both purposeful and ethically determined. Unacceptable feelings are denied, but without turning to alternative experience such as might be associated with male bonding and frontier adventure. An enemy is created to give flesh and blood to fearful temptations, but there is no sense

of final triumph at the expense of this enemy. As a result, Young Goodman Brown's circumstances possess singular negative appeal. Readers project themselves into the story to share in almost a pure act of denial, since its sexual implications are well enough disguised for their symbolic rejection to be accepted simply as a ritual encounter by which an entire community may be contaminated for presumably inexplicable reasons. There is grim commitment to a closed-system plot that features ritual as the necessary disclosure to justify Young Goodman Brown's misanthropic suspicions, and the open-system expression of real problems is kept sufficiently cryptic to justify plot's negative accomplishment based on a personal choice unacceptable to most readers.

The same pattern seems at work in other fiction by Hawthorne. Over and over again, a sensitive young man is thwarted in the ritualization of love for a young woman--by his choice, by hers, or by the force of circumstances. Young Goodman Brown's rejection of the forest ritual becomes the death of Beatrice exactly at the moment when Rappacini informs her that she and Giovanni can at last share her special poison flower. Essentially the same interruption happens in *The Scarlet Letter* when Pearl forces Hester to replace her scarlet letter, then her hair in her bonnet, thereby thwarting her marriage with Dimmesdale. The same also happens in *The Blithedale Romance*, if somewhat disguised, when Zenobia assures Miles Coverdale that there is nothing he can do for her just before she commits suicide. Reprobate father figures who encourage marriage, such as Satan and Rappacini, dissolve into Faustian questers such as Ethan Brand and Hollingsworth, and evil scientists such as Chillingworth and Westervelt. These stories of evil, undefiled purity, pacts with the devil, and struggle against patriarchal authority afford enough guilt-ridden consistency (described by Frederick Crews as "underlying sameness") to make further explication almost an exercise in belaboring the obvious.

Parallels may also be found with *Moby Dick*, which Melville completely revised in manuscript after he came under Hawthorne's personal and artistic influence. According to friends, Melville was on the brink of publishing *Moby Dick* at the time he met Hawthorne, but spent another year revising his manuscript, and in the novel he finally published he substantially expanded the role of Ahab and added cosmic symbolism suggestive of Hawthorne's influence.⁷ However, a major difference emerged between their perspectives, since Melville's homoerotic celebration of fraternal love substantially deviated from Hawthorne's vision of paranoid despair. Homosexuality was probably beyond the pale for Hawthorne, but not for Melville.

As Leslie Fiedler has demonstrated, Melville's final version of *Moby Dick* bears phallic symbolism which is patently androgynous, suggesting that it altogether exceeds Hawthorne's fiction in its resistance to patriarchal identification, and with hostility intense enough to culminate not in perpetual vigilance, but in tragic self-destruction comparable to Hamlet's.⁸ By the end of the novel, it becomes obvious that Ahab's pursuit of Moby Dick expresses his eager commitment to his destruction by forces beyond his control--exactly the heterosexual martyrdom repugnant to Young Goodman Brown. More fortunate is Ishmael, the ship's only survivor, who seems to escape Ahab's fate because he can acknowledge his androgynous tendencies. Ishmael's disposition is passive and accepting, exactly the opposite of Ahab's dedication to a homophobic mortal conflict that he cannot even begin to understand. Ahab and his entire crew--just as much a community as Young Goodman Brown's township of friends and acquaintances--are destroyed by this obsession, but Ishmael's pleasure in handling sperm (the flesh of whale, an intended pun that dominates

Chapter 94) and his willingness to consummate his blood brotherhood with Queequeg (having been hugged "in that matrimonial sort of style") when they go to bed together at the beginning of the novel earns his use of Queequeg's coffin to save himself when the Pequod sinks.

The theme or message at the heart of *Moby Dick* almost seems as if it were intended as a reply to Hawthorne's cautionary tale, suggesting the substitution of Ishmael's androgynous affinities for the paranoid isolation of Young Goodman Brown. Young Goodman Brown's inability either to accept or escape marriage is accordingly revised and enlarged in *Moby Dick* as the choice between Ahab's tragic quest, which is also homophobic, and Ishmael's androgynous emancipation, which is all but openly acknowledged. Like Young Goodman Brown, Ahab stakes his existence on his struggle against evil forces beyond his control--in his case actually letting himself be destroyed by this force; in contrast, Ishmael represents as an alternative the intense friendship that might have been possible between Hawthorne and Melville. The novel *Moby Dick* thus becomes what might be described as a cosmic love letter in which Ahab dies, but Ishmael survives--a narrative outcome that demonstrates the modified *carpe diem* theme expanded to epic proportions that true rapport between two men (like Hamlet and Horatio, or Kurtz and Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*) affords salvation from the homo-aversive limitations of heterosexual love. Of course Ishmael ends up alone, like Young Goodman Brown, but without bitterness, and without enemies and devilish conspiracies to guard against.

That Melville might have consciously or unconsciously intended *Moby Dick* as a reply to Hawthorne's attitudes best illustrated by the thematic content of "Young Goodman Brown" might be indicated by Melville's description of Hawthorne in his essay, "Hawthorne and his Mosses," published in *The Literary World* shortly after he met Hawthorne:

Already I feel that this Hawthorne has dropped germinous seeds into my soul. He expands and deepens down, the more I contemplate him; and further and further, shoots his story New England roots in the hot soil of my Southern soul.⁹

It would have been difficult to be more suggestive than this. Melville's effort to imitate Hawthorne has been generally recognized, but it can also be demonstrated, I think, that he sought not just to copy Hawthorne's fiction, but also to depict their relationship in the context of the novel he was writing, investing in Ahab the traits he observed in Hawthorne. Melville clearly identified with Ishmael (provocatively, he began his novel by telling the reader, "Call me Ishmael"), and his physical description of Ahab, for example at the end of Chapter Sixteen, bears a close resemblance to his description of Hawthorne in both his correspondence and "Hawthorne and his Mosses." In addition, Melville dedicated his book to Hawthorne and ascribed to him, in one of his letters, the same Faustian role he gave Ahab in *Moby Dick*: "There is a grand truth about Nathaniel Hawthorne. He says No! in thunder; but the devil himself cannot make him say yes." Coincidentally, this defiance against the devil featured in *Moby Dick* was likewise Young Goodman Brown's achievement in the story of his ordeal. In another of his letters to Hawthorne, Melville consecrated his novel with Ahab's baptism of the harpoon in the name of the devil, "Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!" In doing so, Melville truncated his sentence, "This is the book's motto (the secret one), "Ego non baptizo te in nomine--but make out the rest for yourself." Here Melville bestowed on Hawthorne the status of a father figure (hence the devil), apparently to suggest that he considered Hawthorne singularly competent to grasp the

fullest implications of Ahab's victimization by satanic demands.

In "Hawthorne and his Mosses," Melville more directly drew Young Goodman Brown into the comparison with Hawthorne by paraphrasing one of the story's sentences in his praise of Hawthorne, "It is yours to penetrate in every bosom the deep mystery of sin." But of course Hawthorne could not benefit from Ahab's example. There is no direct evidence why Hawthorne permitted his brief friendship with Melville to lapse, but it can be speculated that the excessive connotations of novel *Moby Dick* might have played a very major role. As Melville had asked, Hawthorne well fathomed the novel's allegory, but he did not like what he read. Like Young Goodman Brown, he penetrated the deep mystery of sin, and then withdrew, in his case by all the more exclusively turning away from Melville and restricting his companionship to his beloved wife, Sophia, with whom, it seems, he preferred to share his innermost feelings.

In the broadest sense, Young Goodman Brown also epitomizes America's cultural heritage of adolescent heroes who reject mature heterosexual compatibility by taking flight into the wilderness. Both in fiction and our cultural heritage we turn out to have been a nation of immature escapists from family obligations. In Fiedler's words, ours has been a tradition of boy explorers who pursue, ". . . that strategy of evasion, that flight from society to nature, from the world of women to the haunts of womanless men, which sets our novel apart from that of the rest of the Western world."¹⁰ Perhaps the explanation for this adolescent fixation has been the relatively high level of mobility among Americans--both horizontal and vertical--as our forbears have migrated among new jobs and new homes at a rate perhaps unprecedented in modern world history. Not only has American civilization expanded as a frontier, but, behind this growing perimeter, there has been sustained restlessness, a cultural "Brownian movement" headed westward that has encouraged continuing mobility. The nuclear family has necessarily been vulnerable to this trend, as for example demonstrated by the large number of American authors who lost their fathers when they were children, including Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, Twain, Crane, London, Frost, Roethke, and Berryman. Most of them also had close relationships with their mothers that postponed and somewhat inhibited their social adjustment as adults. Our educational system was likewise unique in its heavy dependence on female teachers, perhaps explaining the split-identity Van Wyck Brooks has found between sharp business practices and transcendental posturing.¹¹ Those males who have quickly abandoned matriarchal authority--as imposed both by motherhood and the public schools--have pursued the first of these alternatives, while those who have retained their filial ties (authors, moralists, etc.) have pursued the second, but not without resisting its influence--in the case of Hawthorne, Melville, and their successors by compulsively reenacting the choice imposed upon them within the context of fiction.

As epitomized by Young Goodman Brown's ordeal in a forest clearing, the domestic responsibility associated with matriarchal authority has been avoided by pursuing a frontier quest in which Oedipal difficulties could be acted out by the struggle of good against bad, virtuous solitude against nefarious conspiracy, or, simplest of all, white hats against the black. Timidity has been heroically reconstructed as a moral battle against forces that disguise the domestic virtues found repugnant--conciliation rejected as intrigue, job responsibility as oppression, and heterosexual compatibility as abject surrender to the opposite sex. Reconstructed by fiction, the conflict has become one of virtuous youth pitted against patriarchy (i.e. the acceptance of a mature identity imposed by matriarchy), pure mobility pitted against corrupt entanglements, and innocent

peer affinities pitted against social convention and domestic responsibility. Womanhood has been appreciated primarily in beautiful virgins to be worshipped and defended but who were neither married nor effective in their pursuit of marriage. Happy marriage would trap the wilderness hero, so instead he has engaged in a presumably ethical struggle on whatever frontier he has found useful for justifying his avoidances. By confronting and defeating identifiable enemies he has escaped the tranquility he has presumably defended, bypassing the unpleasant recognition that this tranquility has been in fact the enemy he has feared the most. Through paranoid displacement, he has divided his successful escape into two stages: victory against evil, followed by an excusable departure from those he saves from evil--exactly reversing Young Goodman Brown's midnight expedition to seal his unhappy but faithful future with Faith. Indeed, Young Goodman Brown ventured beyond his household and into the woods on a single occasion. However, he immediately returned to become an embittered husband for the rest of his life. In contrast, the archetypal frontier hero of American fiction has frequently emerged from the wilderness, thwarted evil people in towns, then escaped to the wilderness once again, purified by his victory. The principal benefit of this reversal has been that culpability could be more effectively shifted from heroes to those whom they abandon, or, better yet, to enemies whose defeat has been preliminary to these heroes' abandonment of those they only wanted to protect--often enough the women in their lives. Evasiveness has accordingly become pardonable, sometimes admirable, entirely within the tradition of American literary history.

Such figures as Rip Van Winkle, Natty Bumppo and Huckleberry Finn are able to take more prolonged journeys than Young Goodman Brown precisely because Oedipal crisis is better disguised as adventure. Their stories are more optimistic and better ritualized in their effort to liberate themselves from forces beyond their control. Recent counterparts in popular fiction who penetrate domestic boundaries include space travelers beset by extraterrestrial creatures, jaded (but basically "innocent") detectives up against sinister schemes, and now and again befuddled citizens caught up in international conspiracies, saved from destruction by their naive integrity as Americans. During the Twenties such heroes, devoid of recognizable enemies, included "lost generation" innocents such as Gatsby, Jake Barnes, and Babbitt, the latter having strayed into a gratifying extramarital affair before returning to the fold no less chastened than Young Goodman Brown. After World War II, they have included Holden Caulfield, Augie March, Benny Profane, Rabbit Angstrom, Cacciato, and dozens of others, each incapable of a mature heterosexual relationship because of his pursuit of supposedly more fundamental values.¹²

Young Goodman Brown is unique in this tradition because he ventures into the wilderness just once, and very briefly, before returning to his onerous domestic obligations. As opposed to the other literary frontiersmen, he makes what amounts to a one-night stand--with his wife, no less--and the farthest he penetrates is the clearing where ritual hell-fire provides the turning point in his life. He resents his domestic responsibilities even more than Babbitt and Willy Loman, but learns to live with his conditional surrender, nevertheless resentful of his sacrifice to the "petticoat government" ridiculed by Washington Irving in "Rip Van Winkle." He is trapped but innocent, and knows his only salvation is his successful defense of his innocence through emotional withdrawal. His circumscribed effort exposes the escapist achievement of our less thoughtful frontier heroes, for, singular in his isolation, he reveals the barrier they need to test their mettle, most of them without understanding why. And his ordeal takes precedence historically, set in the earliest colonial times hundreds of years before our frontier closed in on itself and shattered into a variety

of bizarre displacements. In the very infancy of our culture, Young Goodman Brown tests its perimeter, judges possibilities, and finds it a "dream of evil omen."

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Footnotes

1. *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 98-106.
2. Young Goodman Brown's characterization integrates Freud's explanation of homosexuality as identification with one's mother in his study, *Leonardo da Vinci: A Psychosexual Study of an Infantile Reminiscence*, with his explanation of paranoia as repressed homosexuality in his study of the Shreber case, *Psycho-analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)*.
3. Letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1861, in Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, 2. vols. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1935), vol. 1, p. 88.
4. *Emerson in His Journals*, ed. by Joel Porte (Boston: Harvard, Belknap, 1982), p. 522.
5. J. Nydes, "The Paranoid-masochistic Character," *Psychoanalytic Review* 50:216, 1963--cited in David Swanson, Philip Bohnert, and Jackson Smith, *The Paranoid* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), p. 261.
6. Julian Hawthorne, "The Salem of Hawthorne," *The Century Magazine*, 28 (May, 1884): 6--quoted by Crews, *Sins of the Fathers*, p. 6.
7. For a sketchy but relevant description of *Moby Dick* preceding Melville's meeting with Hawthorne in August, 1950, consult Evert Duyckinck, "Melville's *Moby Dick*; or, The Whale," *Literary World*, Nov. 22, 1851, pp. 403-404.
8. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Stein & Day, 1966), pp. 369-388.
9. Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and his Mosses, by a Virginian Spending a July in Vermont," *Literary World*, August 17, August 24, 1850--in *Billy Budd and Other Prose Pieces by Herman Melville*, ed. by Raymond Weaver, from *The Works of Herman Melville* (London, 1924), vol. XIII, p. 140. Also ref. Merrell Davis and William Gilman, *The Letters of Herman Melville* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), pp. 124, 115, 133, 140, etc.
10. Fiedler, *Love and Death*, p. 76. Fiedler's interpretation of the female perspective as represented in American fiction is represented by his book, *What Was Literature: Class Culture and Mass Society* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).
11. The predominance of female primary and secondary school teachers in the United States as compared to Europe is discussed by Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963), pp. 316-22. Though overlooked, this basic difference between the education of Americans and Europeans seems an important variable in

defining our unique cultural heritage.

12. John Updike's *Rabbit Run* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979) seems especially useful as a modern example of this trend, since the novel's protagonist, Harry Angstrom, escapes back and forth between domestic responsibilities imposed by two women. The frontier is reduced to its microcosm in a mountainside patch of woods which Harry must traverse at the end of the novel in escaping Janice, his wife, to return once again to Ruth, his pregnant lover (296). As he dashes through underbrush in broad daylight (in contrast to Young Goodman Brown's nocturnal experience), the sky seems to leap between tree tops shaped like a disapproving blue monkey--undoubtedly a female monkey, as implied by the earlier description of females by Tothero, Harry's mentor and former coach, as creatures that drop out of the trees at night (53). The heart of the novel--in its thematic explanation, at least--occurs when Harry suddenly reaches the brink of an ancient foundation overgrown by trees. As he momentarily stares into its cavity, he recognizes it was once a house, a domicile with parents and children, and he is bothered by its symbolic value in representing the family obligation he has violated. The angry blue monkey above and the gaping foundation below both convey the same message--a primordial matriarchal insistence upon the importance of family at odds with his effort to justify his irresponsibility as a pursuit of Christian perfection more important, he had thought, than family and social responsibility.