

- 7- Different critics suggest different reasons for the meeting. According to Lang, for example, Brown goes "to the devil for knowledge of human nature" (p. 92); according to Martin, "the journey... is best defined as a kind of general, intermediate allegory, representing man's irrational drive to leave faith, home and security temporarily behind.. to take a chance with one more errand onto the wilder shores of experience" (p. 92); according to Colacurcio, Brown aims to "check out the reality of the word he has escaped" (p. 292).
- 8- Such suggestions can be found in Q.D Leavis, "Hawthorne as Poet" in Kaul, pp. 35-6; Martin, p. 89; Levin, pp. 5 -75; Colacurcio, pp. 287-312
- 9- Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God", *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, vo. 1, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979), p. 248.
- 10- See for example, Edmund S. Morgan's important study: *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. press, 1975), pp. 1-10.
- 11- Hence the significance of the word "covenant" in Brown's first speech to the devil" (p. 66).
- 12- See, for example, Edwards' "Sinners." "Therefore, let everyone that is out of Christ, now awaken and fly the wrath to come" (p. 259).
- 13- See David Levin's "Shadows of Doubt: Specter Evidence in Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown,' *American Literature* 34 (1962): 344-52. See also Colacurcio, pp. 294-98.
- 14- See Leavis, p. p 35-36; Arlin Turner, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1961), pp. 131-32.
- 15- Thomas Shepard, *Autobiography*, in *The American Puritans*, ed) Perry Miller (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1956), p. 226.
- 16- Thomas Hooker, "A True Sight of Sin," *Ibid.*, p. 153.
- 17- See, for example, Edwards' "Sinners" and Morgan's *Visible*, especially pp. 1-32.

quite poor. Nevertheless, as a common, ordinary Christian (an Everyman) he has, I believe, done quite well: he has sinned deeply, suffered deeply, and (as far as we can tell from reading the story within a Puritanic context and from reading between the lines) repented deeply.

Notes

- 1- Professor Michael Colacurcio has written a most profound and a most persuasive analysis of the story. See *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984), p. 287. See also pp. 283-313. I am indebted to this study throughout.
- 2- Roy R. Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1957), p. 12.
- 3- Roy Harvey Pearce, "Romance and the Study of History," *Hawthorne Centenary Essays* (Columbus, Ohio: 1964), p. 233. Other studies which emphasize the negative implications of the journey include: Harry Levin, *The Power of Blackness: Hawthorne, Poe, Melville* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1958), pp. 74-75, 193; Edward Wagenknecht, *Hawthorne: Man And Writer* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), especially p. 192; Terence Martin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc. 1965), pp. 89-93; J. Donald Crowley, *Hawthorne: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 99, 359, 457.
- 4- Studies examining the story in relation to Puritanism / Calvinism, other than Colacurcio's, include: Thomas E. Connolly, "Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown': An Attack on Puritanic Calvinism" *American Literature* 28 (1956): 370-75; H.J. Lang, "How Ambiguous is Hawthorne?" *Hawthorne: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. A.N. Kaul (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 86-98; Q.D. Leavis, "Hawthorne as Poet," *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
- 5- All citations from "Young Goodman Brown" and from "The Minister's Black Veil," later, are taken from James McIntosh (ed.), *Nathaniel Hawthorne's Tales* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Co. 1987). This particular quote appears on p. 65.
- 6- On this point, see Colacurcio, p. 287.

remains Puritanic. In his last cunning speech at the communion, Satan discloses what he precisely wants from Brown. Says the devil to him: "Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness" (p. 74). No one can argue that Brown has not embraced the first premise. In fact, all he sees at the end of the story is evil: in people around him and in himself. But the point to underscore here is that such embrace is not at all negative. For the first of the two sentences sums up very succinctly a fundamental Puritanic tenet. Christianity, and particularly Puritanism, emphasizes that man's *nature* (not just deeds and thoughts) is corrupt—that "Evil is the nature of mankind" (17)

The second statement is Satanic. The shrewdness of the devil lies here in his ability to build on Puritanic doctrines (in this case, the first statement) un-Puritanic (i.e. demonic) conclusions. Christianity does not say "Evil must be your only happiness." Far from it, it expects people to live a life of sorrow, anxiety, and repentance. And this is precisely what Brown, who rejects the devil's advice, does. His awareness of evil does not bring him happiness (as it would have if he had accepted the devil's philosophy); rather, it brings distrust, fear, and unrest. Furthermore, the fact that "his dying hour was gloom" (p. 75) is an additional testimony to his Christianity. True believers, "The Minister's Black Veil" teaches us, do not die rejoicing; on the contrary, they are supposed (since sin is such a grave offence) to maintain their repentant spirit till the bitter end. When people ask Parson Hooper to take off the veil, since he is passing away and will be meeting the Lord soon, he adamantly refuses: "On earth, *never*" (p. 106; my italics). The veil, a symbol of his deep consciousness of sin, must be kept on. Similarly, Brown dies horrified and sin-conscious.

* * *

I hope I have succeeded in arguing the case for Brown's Puritanism, a case which has either been greatly overshadowed by other themes or unfairly dismissed by many critics. Admittedly, of course, I have not dealt with all aspects of the question, for to do so is not my purpose. The air of this essay is, simply, to convince the reader of the significance of the protagonist's underlying Puritanic vision, one which compels him to see things the way he has and to adopt a very uncomfortable, but also heroic, stance. Clearly, compared with that of other classic heroes (i.e. Red Cross, Christian, etc.), Goodman Brown's achievement—as a penitent hero—looks

The old people of the village came stooping along the street. Children, with bright faces, tript merrily beside their parents, or mimicked a graver gait, in the conscious dignity of their sunday clothes. Spruce bachelors looked sidelong at the pretty maidens, and fancied that the sabbath sunshine made them prettier than on week-days.

(p. 97)

A gay image indeed, fit for a Sunday outing and not Sunday worship. This is one main reason, we discover later, why Parson Hooper (who himself has been some what complacent and easy-going) decides to put on a fearful veil. His handsome face (perhaps even baby face) must have inspired hope and confidence in his congregation, but it has also, unfortunately, evoked in them a care-free attitude. Now, when he wears the awful mask, he terrifies them (and himself). But the mask also brings about a desirable effect, theologically: Both Hooper and the people, after the initial shock, begin to care, to worry, and to take religion more seriously. They begin to understand the sermons' deeper meanings.

We could say the same about Brown. He strikes us, prior to his forest adventure, as a generally easy-going, content, and proud person. Life is a honeymoon and Christianity is (merely) as lovely as Faith's ribbons. Notice that he himself calls Faith "sweet" and "pretty" (p. 65). His sense of religion is as shallow as his image of himself and of other people. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and *no harm will come to thee*" (p. 65; my italics). A good Puritan is never so superficial. At the end of the story, by contrast, he is in an entirely different boat. Thus, that he turns pale when he hears the sermon at church is (from a Puritanic point of view at least) positive; that he gazes sternly at his wife when the family kneels down to pray is also positive: both images show that Brown a) is *feeling* the way a Puritan ought to feel when he hears the word of God (i.e. guilty, scared, etc.) and b) is beginning to comprehend lessons which he has not comprehended before. True Faith in Puritanism is neither rosey nor "pinky."

Finally, we must not forget (and the ending reminds us of this idea very forcefully) that even though Brown has viewed certain matters through the devil's eyes and that even though his sight (as pointed out earlier) has thus been somewhat contaminated or distorted, his overall vision

we must remember that Brown (as reflected in the citation) does live with Faith, and he continues to do so till the end of his life. Also, as implied in the "bosom" metaphor and in the allusion to the "children" and "grand-children", he is in Love with her, physically and spiritually. Notice, in this particular respect, that the word "often" does not mean "always" and that "shrink" does not mean "abandon forever"; the separation is only momentary. Secondly, and on the more *overtly* religious level, we find that Brown is still a serious churchgoer. "When" and "spoke," in the narrator's clause "When the minister spoke from the pulpit," denote a repeated action, not one past event. One is right therefore to conclude that Brown never stops going to church. As for the expression "muttered to himself" which the narrator employs to give the impression that Brown does not participate properly in the holy family activity (prayers), it may in fact be taken as an evidence that he does. A true prayer is when one is totally immersed, emotionally and mentally, in the holy text, to the extent that one is often not aware of what goes on around. Thus, it does not matter much if other people hear one pray or not, or if they hear "mutterings" or complete words (or if they see "scowls").

But we can still dig deeper. If the fact that a) Brown "turn[s] pale" when he listens to the minister on Sundays and that b) he often deserts Faith in bed at midnight is taken by some readers as an indication of an unfortunate transformation in Brown's personality, the same fact may be taken to indicate the exact opposite by others, especially those familiar with Puritanism. The Puritan way of life is extremely different from other ways. We must keep in mind that they take seriously Adam's and Eve's curse. God has kicked Adam and Eve from Eden and has sent them, out of mercy, into this world to a) inflict punishment on them for their disobedience and b) give them the chance to *demonstrate* how truly sorry they are, and save themselves. The same goes for all their descendents. Life in this world is not a picnic, therefore. Far from it. It is a life of regret, fear, anxiety, and tears (on the one hand) and serious self-inspection in preparation for God's grace (on the other).

Hawthorne has portrayed this theme in "The Minister's Black Veil." When the bell tolls at the beginning of the story summoning people to Sunday worship, they come in a very ungodly, un-Puritanic manner:

Moreover

when Faith, in great excitement, runs into the street to welcome him back, he looks "sternly and sadly into her face" (p. 75) and walks away "without a greeting" (p. 75).

Years go by and Goodman Brown never regains his former peacefulness of mind and propriety of manners. The narrator tells us that at night he often shrinks "from the bosom of Faith" (p. 75). The rift in his relationship with her recalls, by contrast, the beginning of the story where Brown has been very fond of Faith and very loving. When addressing her, he calls her "my Love and my Faith" (p. 65), and when leaving her, he gives her "parting kiss" (p. 65). Now the situation looks completely altered.

The same can be said about his relationship with religion. Previously, he had great joy in the Sunday lessons and great admiration for the minister and other holy people. Now, when he goes to church and listens to the sermon, he "turns pale" and he thinks of the minister and his hearers as "blasphemers" (p. 75). And when his family members kneel down to pray, he "scowls" and "mutter[s]" to himself" (p. 75). Briefly, the overall change in his character seems to be to the worse:

When the minister spook from the pulpit, with power and fervid eloquence and with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saintlike lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often awaking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled, and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave, a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession besides neighbors not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone; for his dying hour was gloom.

Examined more thoughtfully, though, Brown may not be so helpless and desperate. Doubtless, what he does on his way back from the forest is unpardonable, even though it is perfectly understandable (Brown being still under the spell of the shocking forest experience). However, his behavior and attitude *afterwards* are not necessarily so negative. First

famous Puritan clergyman who insists on a *thorough* acquaintance with evil . . .

I answer, a true sight of sin hath two conditions attending upon it, or it appears in two things: we must see sin (1) clearly; (2) convictingly—what it is in itself and what it is to us, not in the appearance and paint of it, but in the power of it; not to fathom it in the notion and conceit only, but to see it with application.

...
...
...
We must look wisely and steadily upon distempers, look sin in the face and discern it to the full. (16)

Thomas Hooker distinguishes here between a fake "sight" or sense of sin ("the appearance and paint of it") and a "true sight" or sense ("what it is in itself"). One must experience it "fully." To have a glimpse or a small taste of it is not acceptable by Puritan standards. And this is what Brown does: he, in the words of Hooker, "Looks sin the face" and does "discern it to the full." The night Goodman Brown goes into the forest, he not only hears firsthand a shocking account of the nature of sin, but also a horrifying *vision* of it and of its implications. He has been given the chance to "scent out all the places—whether in church, bed chamber, street, field, or forest—where crime has been committed" and to "behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot," and, more significantly still, to "penetrate, in every bosom, the *deep mystery* of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts..." (p. 74; my italics). It is interesting, even ironic, to observe here that Puritans are held accountable not only for the quality of their repentance, but also for that of their sin.

III

Upon his return from the excursion, as well as for years afterwards, Goodman Brown appears to be extremely dejected and despondent. The morning following the eventful night he not only comes into Salem village "slowly" and "staring around him like a bewildered man," but he does a series of blasphemous acts. For example, he rudely avoids the "good old minister" who has meant to bestow a blessing on him (p. 74); he accuses Deacon Gookin, who "was at domestic worship" of being a "wizard" (p. 75); he snatches away a little girl whom Goody Cloyse stands catechizing.

forest, for example, he says repulsedly: "A grave and dark clad company" (p.72); and when he realizes that he has sinned, he abhors himself for it:

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him. "Let us hear which will laugh loudest. Think not to frighten me with your deviltry. Come witch, come wizard, come Indian powwow, come devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fear you." (p. 71)

The depth of Brown's sin (the third reservation) may in fact be considered positive. Puritan authors stress not a passing experience of sin, but a profound one. This emphasis we can find in almost all Puritanic autobiographies. Before a Puritan writer comes to the climax of repentance and conversion in his account of his past life (which usually occurs in the last third of his autobiography), he devotes the first two thirds of the book to a depiction and dramatization of his sins. Following is an example from Thomas Shepard's *Autobiography*:

The first two years I spent in Cambridge was in studying and in my neglect of God and private prayer, which I have sometime used. I did not regard the Lord at all unless it were at some fits. The third year wherein I was sophister, I began to be foolish and proud and to show myself in the public Schools, and there to be a disputer about things which now I see I did not know then at all, but only prated about them. Toward the end of this year, when I was the most vile..., the Lord began to call me home to the fellowship of His grace. (15)

Shepard, who later becomes one of the most powerful Puritan believers and defenders of the faith in America, illustrates quite eloquently that before a Puritan is called "home to the fellowship of" God's "grace," he commits many (not just one) sins. In the passage, Shepard is guilty of: a) neglect of God b,) neglect of "private prayer," c) foolishness and pride, etc. In other words, his sins are by no means small or little the theme is articulated more explicitly in "A True Sight of Sin," by

man Brown, as reflected in his given name, is a *common* Puritan, a typical citizen of Salem. As readers of the story may be fully aware, "Goodman is a term used in connection with a person of humble birth and low social status who leads an ordinary life. He is neither a scholar of formidable learning nor a saint with unshakable faith. Most of his religious education, as is the case for many common Puritans, comes from the catechism he is taught as a child and the Sunday sermons. In any religion in the world, there are always the shepherds and the sheep. Brown belongs to the latter category. This is why some of Hawthorne's critics are absolutely right in seeing him as an "Everyman." (14) But an Everyman, like a superman, has (whether he likes it or not) to come to terms with evil in the world, symbolized by the devil, and face it with whatever faith he possesses—even if such faith happens to be, and will perhaps always be, "poor" and "little." In sum, Goodman Brown is simply a down-to-earth Christian, with an average familiarity with religious matters and an average *intellectual* ability.

Though Brown has swallowed much of the devil's deceiving fiction and fallen in most of his traps (the second reservation), he has not done so a) (without some resistance and b) without some sincere feelings of remorse. Of course, he may not have resisted glamorously. And yet, the fact that he has done so at all is important. There is a big difference between an *evil* person who enjoys sinning or is guilt free (like Faustus and Tom Walker) and one who is forced to sin, and dislikes it. Brown has proceeded *reluctantly*. The first: signs of reluctance appear, as hinted earlier, when he is leaving his wife on his way to the forest ("what a wretch am I"). Many other moments of hesitation and resistance follow. For example, when he walks with the devil, we are told that he "unconsciously" resumes "his walk" (p. 67). After he thinks he sees Goody Cloyce, he says to the devil: "my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand" (p. 69). And, finally, when the devil wants him to drink at the communion, as a sign of his allegiance to the devil, he refuses: "Faith, Faith!" cried the husband, "look up to heaven, and *resist* the wicked one" (p. 74; *my italics*). We should not forget, also, that Brown condemns both himself and others for succumbing to evil. When he discovers the devil's allies in the

the constable, when he lashed the Quaker Woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village in King Philip's war. They were my good friends both...."

(P.67).

After expressing some initial surprise at this strange tale which he has never heard before, Brown then takes it in wholly, and much more, without requesting evidence. For just as he believes or idolizes easily, he disbelieves easily. He loses confidence in Goody Cloyce, Deacon Gookin, the Minister, and Faith in much the same way. In short, all it takes for Brown to be trapped is sheer hearsay and irre recognizable "figures" and "voices." There is no clear-cut evidence that the "figures" and "voices" he sees and hears, which make him doubt and discount the persons he has previously respected and adored, belong to the people he thinks they belong to.(13)

Thirdly, Brown's journey extends all the way into the heart of the forest. He could have met the devil at the edge of the wood (one would have hoped) and then returned. This is in fact his intention at first. He tells the devil once he has met him that he immediately plans to go back. But due to his gullible nature and to the devil's shrewdness, he keeps travelling on. He stops several times, but finally he progresses at a remarkable speed and reaches the *farthest* point in the wood:

And, maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest path rather than to walk or run.

The road grew wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil. (p. 71)

Undoubtedly, Brown is condemnable here. But he could also be defended. His littleness of faith or poorness of knowledge (the first reservation) is, realistically speaking, quite understandable and even excusable. Good-

Despond and Vanity Fair before he finally reaches the heavenly kingdom.

It is obvious also, from Edwards' citation and from Brown's reply to Faith (above), that it is the devil, not Goodman Brown who dictates the timing of the encounter. In *Beowulf*, for example, the physical location and exact hour of the fight are imposed by Grendel, Grendel's mother, or the dragon, and not by the hero. As a true "Christian" hero, Beowulf cannot but respond. He cannot say he'll have to wait until these evil monsters attack during the daytime. The devil, in *Beowulf* as in our story, prefers to work at night, which is one reason perhaps why he is called the prince of darkness. This explains why Brown insists to Faith that his mission be carried between sunset and sunrise. And if he leaves on a holy night, this is the more favorable, for what is nobler than a confrontation with the arch-enemy of God?

II

One can think of many reservations about Goodman Brown's stance throughout the forest excursion, but three are particularly noticeable. The first is his vulnerability or weakness. The fact that he is "but three months married" to Faith means that his religion is not strong enough to withstand any serious test or threat admirably. Brown has not been admitted long enough to church membership to be able to deepen his knowledge of the subtle tenets of Christianity. For example, he fails to understand a most basic principle in Puritanism: that people are (or can be) saints and sinners at once—i.e. brown, not just black or white. What he says in the following quote is a typical example of his simple-mindedness and extremeness: "My father *never* went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him" (p.67; my italics). It is interesting to remind that he himself describes his "Faith" as "poor" and "little" (p. 65).

The second, a consequence of the first, is that the devil has tempted and seduced Brown with little difficulty. For example, when Brown expresses his exaggerated sense of pride in his family members, being "a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs" (p. 67) the devil, being the superbly astute and cunning creature he always is, says:

"Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your Family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather,

as thou callest it, forth and back again, *must*
needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise.

(p. 65; my italics)

This citation and Edwards' (above) explain better the notion of premeditation raised earlier. Brown's night trip is premeditated or planned *only* in the sense that it is expected. Since sin, as has just been pointed out, is unavoidable, then a Puritan is likely to run across the devil anytime. This is the semantic framework within which we ought to understand Brown's soliloquy upon entering the forest: "There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree.... What if the devil himself is at my elbow!" (p. 66). The language, which echoes Edwards' statement almost verbatim, is precise. Brown does not say, as he indeed ought to if he has arranged a 'meeting with Satan, "Where is the devil?" or "Where are you devil?" No. He says "What if the devil should be here; The narrator's assertion that the devil is "not wholly unexpected" ought to be interpreted in this same framework. Also, when the devil says to Goodman Brown, "You are late," he means to say that he has been *expecting* him, as he has been expecting others.

We could go further and say—and this is the second answer to the question about the purpose behind Brown's journey—that sin in Christianity is an essential state or stage in the lengthy process of salvation, part and parcel of the idea of the "covenant." (11) Christianity (especially Puritanism) is immensely different from many other religions in its emphasis on the dialectical function of evil. What consolidates "Faith" in Puritanism, in addition to the firmness of belief in the fundamental tenets and dogma, is *repentance* of sin, not avoidance of it. No one can prevent sin from happening. All that one can do, is to repent every time it occurs. This is why in their sermons the Puritan ministers call on their audience not so much to refrain from sinning as to be sorry whenever they feel sinful. (12) The more one repents the stronger one's faith becomes. What this means, if one reads between the lines (as Hawthorne always did), is that if there is no sin, there is no repentance. Sin is then absolutely necessary for redemption. This idea is expressed effectively (though perhaps by implication, rather than deliberately) in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the exemplar eighteenth-century novel which describes the stages of redemption minutely and masterfully. Christian (the protagonist) *has* to go through the Slough of

So, why does Brown go to the forest? One answer has perhaps already been anticipated. He has simply been seduced by the devil, or fallen into sin. Brown, as the story is strongly suggesting and as critics have shown, is a Puritan.(8) Therefore, he is always liable to commit sin, not only a) according to the wellknown Christian, especially Puritanic, premise, "In Adam's Fall, we sinned all" (i.e. the doctrine of Original Sin), but also b) according to the Puritanic conception of individual sin. Puritanism stresses, may be more so than other Christian sects, that the devil is always on the lookout for good Christians. This, we learn from *Paradise Lost* (itself a most profound Puritanic epic), is his job. Jonathan Edwards, a proponent and an explicator of the faith in America, means exactly this when he says, describing what befalls sinners:

The devils watch them; they are ever by them
at their right hand; they stand waiting for
them, like greedy hungry lions that see their
prey... (9)

Scores of Puritans are trapped by Satan daily, and Goodman Brown is no exception.

We have to remember here that a rendezvous with the devil is basically a symbolic matter. It is a way of saying that one has sinned; this is an important clarification to keep in mind when judging Brown. For when he meets the devil, or "sins," he is not doing something that other Puritans would not do. Puritanism teaches that *all* people are sinful, young and old, those with weak faith as well as those with strong faith and saints and common churchmembers. (10) This is the lesson we find in Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil," where the minister himself—a savior, a teacher, and a *visibly* holy person—wears a black veil (a symbol of his and others' sin) till death, and in *The Scarlet Letter*, where Dimmesdale, a holy minister and a pillar of the church, commits adultery with Hester, a woman in his parish. Examined in this context, Brown's "visit" to the devil appears not only quite normal but also inevitable. This latter notion is embodied in Brown's firm response to Faith when she passionately appeals to him not to go:

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night *must* I tarry away from thee. My journey,

Puritan pay the devil a visit in the first place? Are not religious people supposed to shun "adventures" of this kind, unless they (apparently) have the worst of perverse hidden urges which they hope to secretly fulfill? Of course, the intention is not explicitly declared. We do not know for sure why Brown is conferring with the devil, (7) but we smell some thing fishy when he reproaches himself for leaving Faith behind and when he says, "...and after this one night L'Li cling to her skirts [Faith's] and follow her to heaven" (p. 65). Furthermore, the decision to visit the devil appears to be willfully made, and the visit itself carefully premeditated and planned. For example, when Brown enters the forest and finds Satan waiting for him, the first thing the latter utters is "You are late, Goodman Brown"; and when they start chatting, Brown tells his "companion," whom the narrator refers to as "not wholly unexpected", "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return..." (pp. 66-7). The language of these brief statements conveys a strong impression that the meeting has been arranged beforehand, and the term "covenant" in particular implies that some sort of (secret) agreement has been already reached.

Certainly, Brown looks very bad here. Nevertheless, we could, theologically speaking also, view his same incentives, thoughts, and choices prior to the start of the journey from a different perspective.

Before delving into a discussion of what the real drive behind the ominous rendezvous is, it is profitable first to state what this drive is not. A careful examination of details, both initially and afterwards, reveals that Brown is not hoping to achieve a selfish goal, be it material gain or psychological satisfaction. He is neither like Faustus, who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for some sinister knowledge or power, nor like Washington Irving's Tom Walker, who trades it off for financial Prosperity. The lengthy dialogues throughout the excursion make it obvious that Goodman Brown, unlike Faustus and Tom Walker, is not there to negotiate or agree, but to quarrel and argue. He affirms, for example, soon upon seeing the devil, that he has "scruples" regarding the meeting, that he (the devil) is terrible "company", that other people can be his (the devil's) allies, but such people "have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me" (p. 67). In other words, no deal of any sort has been made.

look the same issues from other angles and come up with different, or even oppositional, interpretations. Moreover, there are several positive moments in the narrative and several positive aspects in Brown's stance and character which deserve a fuller investigation. In what follows, therefore, I wish—while simultaneously reinforcing and diverging from some of the classical readings of the story—to highlight some of the protagonist's virtues and strengths and attempt to portray him as an essentially earnest christian, possibly even a hero, rather than simply a fool, a hypocrite, or (even) a victim of the Puritan faith(4). Throughout, I shall naturally stop to examine more carefully some fundamental words or acts whose meanings are inherently dual or polar.

I

Unquestionably, a great deal is wrong with Goodman Brown from the very beginning. There is, first, the timing of the journey. He leaves for the woods at "sunset" (5). A forest is risky and dark enough during the daytime, let alone at night. This proves significant later on because much of the protagonist's confusion (as will be shown) results from his inability to see well. In addition, the night Brown chooses to stay out happens to be a somewhat holy night, one which it is good for Puritans to spend at home. (6) His wife reminds him of both risks when she begs him to "put off... [his] journey until *sunrise*" (p. 65) and when she says: "Pray tarry with me *this* night, dear husband, of all nights in the year" (p. 65; italics mine)

Secondly, if we take "faith," allegorically, to mean "belief," then Goodman Brown, in disobeying his "wife," is disobeying religion. Faith affirms in the quote above and in the following quote, that she is strongly against his departure. "A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afeard of herself sometimes" (p. 65), she warns. But he does not listen. How can a true Christian go against the dictates of his "faith," and how can he, worse still, leave his "faith" behind when he most needs it? Goodman Brown is being very wicked and sinful here, and he is fully aware of such wickedness and sinfulness, deep down: "What a wretch am I to leave her [Faith] on such an errand," thinks he, "for his heart *smote* him" (p. 65; my italics).

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, Brown's motive for leaving seems quite dubious and hard to swallow. Why would a God-fearing

"LOOK UP TO HEAVEN, AND RESIST THE WICKED ONE":

GOODMAN BROWN, A POSSIBLE PURITAN HERO

By

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

Assistant Professor
English Department
Yarmouk University
Irbid, Jordan

Theologically, interpreters of "Young Goodman Brown," Hawthorne's ever challenging masterpiece, have drawn attention to the negative nature and consequences of the protagonist's traumatic journey into the wilderness, viewing it as unthoughtfully daring and almost entirely disastrous. They have, in discussing this particular aspect of the story, pointed out many of Goodman Brown's flaws in the three stages of his unfortunate adventure: the preamble, the excursion into the forest, and the troubling aftermath. As for the first, the preamble, we are shown how our unlucky hero is evil from the start. In the words of Professor Michael Colacurcio, Goodman Brown is "already in a state of 'bad faith.'" (1) As far as the excursion itself is concerned, secondly, the protagonist's performance is equally dissatisfactory and upsetting. For one thing, he is "easily" deceived by the devil. Also, in what ultimately amounts to a debate about the relation of good to evil, Goodman Brown, as Roy R. Male asserts, becomes completely "stupefied by the ambiguity" of the relation (2). With respect to the aftermath, thirdly, Goodman Brown is in effect ruined. He is left at the end, as Roy Harvey Pearce informs us, suffering from a "loss of faith" and "destroyed as a person ." (3).

Assuredly, such critical opinions are not only valid but also perceptive. However, the story is so complex and rich that there is always room, indeed a demand, for further clarification. Since Hawthorne's style (here as else where) is highly allegorical and suggestive and the argument is largely elusive and noncommittal, it is possible (perhaps even preferable) to