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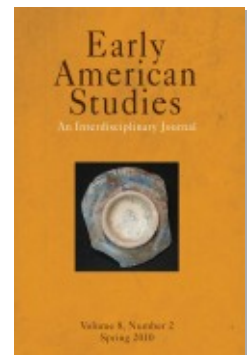
"Light might possibly be requisite": *Edgar Huntly*, Regional History, and Historicist Criticism

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“Light might possibly be requisite”

Edgar Huntly, Regional History, and Historicist Criticism

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ABSTRACT Charles Brockden Brown’s celebrated novel *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker* (1799), set in the Forks of the Delaware region of Pennsylvania, has been related to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia on the basis of a mistaken understanding that its action takes place during the summer of 1787. The correct date is 1785. The narrative’s connections to the local history of Indian relations, however, are systematic and profound. Its villain, the Indian crone “Old Deb,” is modeled after an elderly Delaware woman from Chester County, Hannah Freeman. Edgar himself is modeled in part after Edward Marshall, who walked off the measurement for the 1737 Walking Purchase land fraud. Moreover, a pivotal scene between Edgar and the traveler Weymouth is a symbolic reenactment of the midcentury treaty meetings at which the Delaware spokesman Teedyuscung sought restitution for the Walking Purchase. These claims provide an occasion to reflect on the methods of historicist criticism: how connections to history illuminate a literary work.

Charles Brockden Brown’s novel *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker* (1799), has a special status in American literary history because of its innovation of two subgenres, gothic and frontier fiction. It is one of the most frequently taught works of early American literature, and “a talisman in

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Early American Studies (Spring 2010)

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American studies scholarship."¹ With this essay I hope to influence that teaching and scholarship by developing four claims about the relationship of the novel to history, especially the regional history of Indian relations outside Philadelphia. These claims also furnish an occasion to reflect on the practice of historicist criticism: the endeavor to understand a work within its historical context.²

For those readers who are not familiar with the novel, I will preface my claims with a brief summary. *Edgar Huntly* is epistolary; it comprises a very long letter from Edgar to his fiancée, Mary; two brief letters from Edgar to his mentor, Sarsefield; and a curt response from Sarsefield. Edgar is a young country man without significant means who was orphaned as a child in consequence of an Indian raid. He has had the benefit of intellectual improvement through the solitude of Sarsefield and of Mary's late brother, identified throughout as Waldegrave. Waldegrave has been murdered, and at the outset of the narrative Edgar is preoccupied with solving the crime. On a nighttime walk he is drawn to its scene, "the Elm," a majestic, shadowy, "haunted" elm tree.³ There he encounters the sleepwalking Clithero Edny, an Irish laborer whom Edgar immediately suspects to be the murderer. But, as Edgar eventually learns through a long internal narrative, Clithero is haunted by a different guilt; he mistakenly feels responsible for the death of his patroness in Ireland, Mrs. Lorimer, whom he had for misguided reasons attempted to euthanize. Unbeknown to Clithero, Mrs. Lorimer is still alive and has married Sarsefield. Edgar takes a benevolent interest in Clithero, but Clithero's somnambulism seems contagious, and his identity transferable; as the novel progresses, Edgar increasingly becomes Clithero. After an intervening episode in which a former friend of Waldegrave, Weymouth, comes to Edgar seeking the restitution of a small fortune he had entrusted to Walde-

1. Justine S. Murison, "The Tyranny of Sleep: Somnambulism, Moral Citizenship, and Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly*," *Early American Literature* 44, no. 2 (2009): 243.

2. I use the small-"h" phrase "historicit criticism" to suggest a general practice of scholarship that reflects the methodological influence of the New Historicism without necessarily being directly grounded in the confluence of theories of culture that informed the Berkeley School. See Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1-19.

3. Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-walker* (1799), vol. 4 of *Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*, ed. Sydney Krause (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1984), 9, 14. All subsequent references to the text of the novel are to this edition.

grave for safekeeping, Edgar, still unaware of his own sleepwalking, wakes up half-naked, bruised, and disoriented at the bottom of a pit in a cave in the wilderness of Norwalk, one of Clithero's wild haunts. Edgar climbs out of the pit, slays a "savage" panther and drinks its blood, emerges from the cave, and rescues a white woman held captive by a band of marauding Indians of "the tribe of Delawares or Lennilennapee" who have been sicced on the community by the resident Indian crone, Old Deb, or "Queen Mab."⁴ Over the course of a series of encounters during the long journey home, Edgar kills the members of the Delaware band, is mistaken for dead, and is mistaken for an Indian himself. The letters at the close of Edgar's relation reveal that, contrary to admonitions from Sarsefield, Edgar has interfered by informing the maniacal Clithero of the whereabouts of the pregnant Mrs. Lorimer. Sarsefield is able to prevent Clithero from reaching her, but her shock at seeing a letter from Edgar warning of Clithero's intent causes her to miscarry.

Part of the attraction of *Edgar Huntly* for literary critics is its ambiguity and relative incoherence. It seems to make a theme of misinterpretation and misunderstanding in its portrayal of communication between characters and to exemplify this theme in the challenges it poses to readers, who reliably produce contradictory interpretations. There has been "considerable critical debate," especially, "over how to interpret Brown's portrayal of settler-Indian relations."⁵ Does *Edgar Huntly* justify or critique Indian hatred and imperialist ideology? This debate was formally convened in 1994, when *American Literature* published essays by Jared Gardner and Sydney Krause in tandem. Gardner reads the novel, and its representation of Native Americans, as an expression of Federalist xenophobia in the context of the Alien and Sedition Acts.⁶ Krause, who observes that the Elm represents the tree under which William Penn and the Delawares legendarily exchanged pledges of eternal friendship in 1682, argues that *Edgar Huntly* offers a "subtext" that "awakens dark thoughts" about the Pennsylvanians' breach of promise, and "correspondingly awakens a compassionate attitude toward the Indians themselves."⁷ Where Krause and Gardner agree, in keeping with what was then a

4. *Ibid.*, 167, 207.

5. Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro, introduction to Brown, *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-walker; with Related Texts*, ed. Barnard and Shapiro (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), xix.

6. A revised version of the article appears in Jared Gardner, *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787-1845* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), chap. 3.

7. Sydney J. Krause, "Penn's Elm and *Edgar Huntly*: Dark 'Instruction to the Heart,'" *American Literature* 66, no. 3 (September 1994): 473. See also John Carlos

large-scale shift in critical approaches to literature—back to the archives—is in seeing the novel, above all, in relation to its historical and cultural contexts.⁸ “Brown’s novel,” Krause concludes, “becomes a gloomy and enlightening gloss on determining events in the American experience.”⁹ These conflicting metaphorical lighting effects—“gloomy and enlightening”—are apt, because the light that literary fiction sheds on history can be only partial and equivocal. What about the light that history sheds on literature? If the diversity of interpretations of *Edgar Huntly* is any indication, each act of historicization illuminates a different text, from a different vantage point.

Brown himself uses such familiar and conventional metaphors of illumination and obscurity in *Edgar Huntly*. “What light has burst upon my ignorance of myself and of mankind!” Edgar declares at the outset of his narrative. “How sudden and enormous the transition from uncertainty to knowledge!”¹⁰ The novel’s figure for the unknown is the dark cavern into which Edgar watched the sleepwalking Clithero disappear. “Light might possibly be requisite,” he remarks, as he begins to explore it.¹¹ According to Leslie Fiedler, whose symbolic, ahistorical interpretation epitomizes the earlier generation of *Edgar Huntly* criticism, the cave is a variation on the archetype of the *selva oscura*—dark forest—“a metaphor for the mysteries of the human heart [that] is perhaps as old as literature itself.”¹² After having sleepwalked there himself and awakened at the bottom of the pitch-black pit, Edgar assumes that he must be blind: “Some ray, however fleeting and uncertain, could not fail to be discerned, if the power of vision were not utterly extinguished. In what circumstances could I possibly be placed, from which every particle of light should, by other means, be excluded?”¹³

This image of a space that shuts out “every particle of light” reminds me not only of the *selva oscura* but also of a camera obscura: the sometimes room-sized structure into which an image of the outside world is projected—

Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), chap. 2.

8. According to Philip Gura, “the tides of academic fashion had turned again,” away from “things francophile” and “toward what was called the ‘New Historicism’; and most recently to the new cultural history.” Gura, “Early American Literature at the New Century,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (July 2000): 617.

9. Krause, “Penn’s Elm and *Edgar Huntly*,” 479.

10. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 6.

11. *Ibid.*, 98.

12. Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Criterion, 1960), 160.

13. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 160.

upside-down, and perhaps dim and diffracted—by light entering through a small aperture. The content of the image of the world outside depends on the location of the aperture. This proposed analogy employs notions of interiority, exteriority, and reality that literary critics have long since attempted to deconstruct, but these spatial metaphors may be as indispensable to our thinking as that of illumination.¹⁴ If we think of the literary text as an obscure space like the camera, part of the task of the historicist critic is to locate and uncover its apertures, the points where the language seems to open onto a phenomenal world of events, people, and other texts. For example, in a recent issue of *Early American Literature* containing “New Scholarship on Charles Brockden Brown,” Justine Murison focuses on Brown’s descriptions of sleepwalking to warrant a reading of *Edgar Huntly* in light of “the era’s scientific studies of the mind.”¹⁵ In the same issue Chad Luck spies a rhetorical connection between the pitch-dark cave, in which Edgar sees only the two glowing eyes of a “savage” panther, and David Hume’s figure of “two luminous bodies” that define a space “‘amidst an entire darkness.’”¹⁶ Luck touches on some of the same passages of the narrative and connections to local history that I do here, but his aperture to Enlightenment philosophy illuminates a very different understanding of the novel. Of course, we are more likely to discern such apertures when they correspond to our research specializations. Not coincidentally, my current book project focuses on the history of Indian relations that I see as a primary referent for the novel.

With the camera obscura in mind, then, these are the points that I will develop in the remainder of this essay.

1. The widespread dating of the action of the novel to the summer of 1787 is a false aperture. The novel is set not in 1787, which is the date specified by the authoritative Kent State edition, as well as the Penguin, New College and University Press, and Hackett editions, but in 1785.¹⁷ This

14. See Paul de Man, “Semiology and Rhetoric,” *Diacritics* 3, no. 3 (Autumn 1973): 27–28; J. Hillis Miller, “Literature and History: The Example of Hawthorne’s ‘The Minister’s Black Veil,’” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 41, no. 5 (February 1988): 15–31.

15. Murison, “The Tyranny of Sleep,” 243.

16. Chad Luck, “Re-Walking the Purchase: *Edgar Huntly*, David Hume, and the Origins of Ownership,” *Early American Literature* 44, no. 2 (2009): 281.

17. Sydney J. Krause, “Historical Essay,” in Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, ed. Krause, 354n58; David Stineback, introduction to *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker* (Albany: New College and University Press, 1973), 12; N. S. Grabo, introduction to Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, ed. Grabo (New York: Penguin, 1988), xviii; Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, ed. Barnard and Shapiro, 94n1, 101n1.

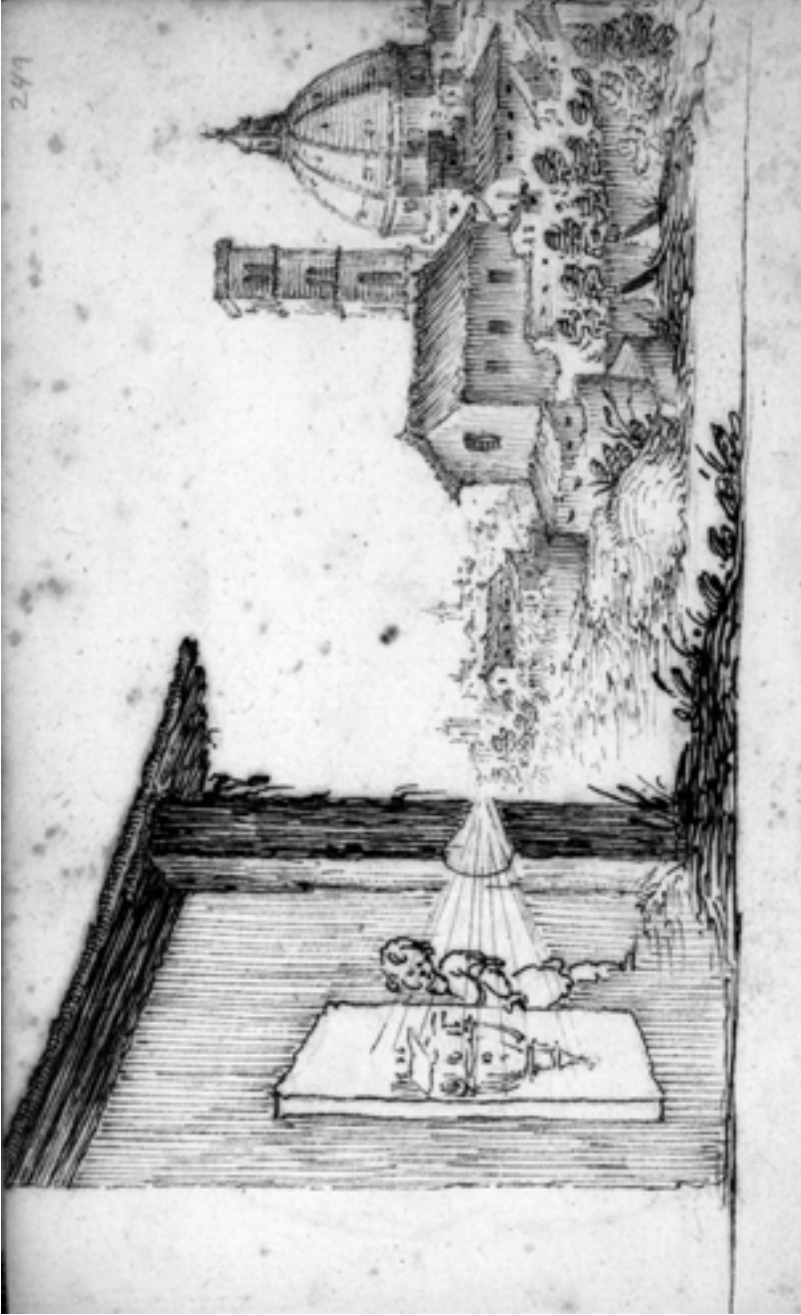


Figure 1. Illustration of a camera obscura from an untitled seventeenth-century sketchbook (possibly Italian) on military art, including geometry, fortifications, artillery, mechanics, and pyrotechnics. Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress; Library of Congress Digital Collections, image 500 of 601.

claim is not an interpretation, but a correction. That is, though the date references in the narrative are somewhat confusing, and somewhat approximate, 1787 can be definitively ruled out in favor of 1785 on the basis of a careful reading. This slight correction is important because it eliminates the one rhetorical clue pointing to a thematic connection to a landmark event that is more prominent to present-day readers than any of the narrative's actual historical referents: the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia.

2. The novel's villainess, Old Deb, is modeled after an eighteenth-century resident of Chester County, Pennsylvania, Hannah Freeman or "Indian Hannah." This knowledge, I argue, is important to the understanding of the novel, but there is no source text to which we can trace Brown's discursive encounter with Hannah, after the manner, for example, in which critics have identified the 1787 "Panther Captivity" as a source for the *Edgar Huntly's* cave and captivity sequences.¹⁸ I came across a recollection of Hannah Freeman in an 1824 news clipping while doing unrelated research, and as any reader of *Edgar Huntly* would, I immediately recognized Old Deb.
3. One of the historical models for the novel's title character is Edward Marshall, the celebrated walker—and Indian killer—who carried out the 1737 Indian Walk, the most infamous feature of the Walking Purchase land fraud.¹⁹ This claim might be understood as a further opening of the aperture discovered by Krause and by Peter Kafer, who independently established that the novel alludes to the Walking Purchase through its setting at the Forks of the Lehigh and Delaware Rivers. Perhaps because I approach *Edgar Huntly* through the history, instead of vice versa, however, I see more of the Walking Purchase in the novel than these scholars do. It is integral not only to the setting, but also to the plot. It is, to use another recurrent metaphor in historicist literary studies, an (if not *the*) interpretive key to unlock the mysteries of *Edgar Huntly*.²⁰

18. Barnard and Shapiro, the editors of the Hackett edition, mistakenly note that the publication date of the gothic captivity tale by the pseudonymous "Abraham Panther" is "the year of *Edgar Huntly's* action." Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, ed. Barnard and Shapiro, 211.

19. *Infamous* has an almost idiomatic adherence to the phrase *Walking Purchase* in current scholarship. Krause, for example, refers to "the infamous Walking Purchase Treaty of 1737" in "Penn's Elm and *Edgar Huntly*," 467. The Walking Purchase is discussed below.

20. See Stephen Greenblatt, "The Touch of the Real," *Representations* 59, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 25; Brook Thomas, *Civic Myths: A Law-and-Literature Approach to Citizenship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), xi.

4. Another character, the traveler Weymouth, is a stand-in for the Delawares who were dispossessed of the region of the Forks of the Delaware through the Walking Purchase. Specifically, he corresponds to Teedyuscung, the spokesman who returned to Easton for peace negotiations near the beginning of the French and Indian War and cited the Walking Purchase as a principal cause of the Delawares' hostility. Yet unlike the correspondences between Marshall and Huntly and Freeman and Deb, which I argue are readily apparent when one holds up passages from the novel against ones from local histories, the one between Weymouth and Teedyuscung is figurative. In this instance, the contextual connection is made possible by an interpretation of the novel, rather than vice versa. Yet this reading is also potentially important to the understanding of the novel—I argue that it establishes the Weymouth episode as not only the structural fulcrum but also the thematic center of the narrative.

"WHAT WAS THE DATE OF IT . . . ?"

The dateline at the conclusion of Edgar's long letter to Mary reads, "Solebury, November 10."²¹ (The subsequent letters are undated.) The opening indicates that only a short interval has passed between the "imperfect close" of the drama and the beginning of composition: long enough to somewhat settle his "perturbations," but not so long that his memory would begin to lapse.²² As will become apparent, the likely date for the climactic action is around the autumnal equinox in September.

The narrative provides two indications that can help the reader fill in the year that is omitted from the dateline. The reason critics have understood the action to be set in 1787 is that, when Edgar narrates his encounter with Weymouth in chapter 14, he states that it "is three years since this man left America" in search of fortune. Subsequently, Weymouth explains that he "embarked . . . on the tenth of August 1784." The math seems straightforward enough, but the problem with simply counting forward three years from 1784 is that, as the context makes clear, August 1784 is not the date of Weymouth's embarkation from America in search of fortune, but of his embarkation, "with a cargo of Madeira," presumably from Madeira, for an unidentified European port. By August 10, 1784, he had already made his fortune, and "was resolved to return to [his] native country." He had sojourned in various European countries, in Spain long enough to "become

21. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 151, 282. Brown spelled the town both Solebury and Solesbury.

22. *Ibid.*, 5.

conversant with its language.”²³ Thus, most of Weymouth’s three-year absence had already lapsed by August 1784.²⁴ On the tenth, having sent \$7,500 to Waldegrave for “safe keeping” and invested “the greatest part” of his fortune in the wine, he set out on a culminating venture, of the kind that in fiction is conventionally doomed to disaster.²⁵ After his shipwreck on the Portuguese coast, Weymouth endured “three weeks” of illness among the fishermen, “seven months” of convalescence under the care of a Scottish surgeon, and various stays, “delays,” and “disappointments” of unspecified duration before his arrival back home in Pennsylvania, plausibly in the summer of 1785.²⁶ That year was the thirtieth anniversary of Edward Braddock’s infamous defeat in the French and Indian War. The second, more straightforward clue to the dating of *Edgar Huntly* is when Sarsefield, informing Edgar of the death of his uncle in the skirmish with the Indians, observes that “thirty years” had passed since his uncle had “retired . . . from the field of Braddock.”²⁷

The discrepancy between 1785 and 1787 seems trivial, but its significance—and perhaps a reason the error has, to my knowledge, gone unremarked—lies in the association of the latter date with the Constitutional Convention. “Set outside Philadelphia in 1787,” the jacket copy of the popular Penguin edition reads, “the book becomes a metaphor for the founding of a new nation.” The adjustment to 1785 does not leave *Edgar Huntly* bereft of historical referents on the national scale; Martin Brückner reads it persuasively as a “commentary on the Land Ordinance Act of 1785.”²⁸ But it does eliminate a tie-in that is especially teachable and also especially germane to the interests of Americanist literary scholars.²⁹

23. *Ibid.*, 141, 144–45, 150–51.

24. Barnard and Shapiro point out that “mid-1784 is also the moment when Brown’s father Elijah was jailed for debt.” Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, ed. Barnard and Shapiro, 101n1.

25. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 144. Within Brown’s moral geography, Madeira was in a toxic clime, at the intersection of Africa and a backward corner of Catholic Europe. Already connotative of the slave trade, Weymouth’s venture is reminiscent of the ill-fated involvements in triangular traffic of Robinson Crusoe and Updike Underhill (in Royall Tyler’s *The Algerine Captive*, 1797).

26. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 145–47.

27. *Ibid.*, 244.

28. Martin Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 203.

29. On the fascination of literary scholars with the historiographic “republican synthesis,” see Ed White, *The Backcountry and the City: Colonization and Conflict in Early America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 5–13. An in-

The 1787 Convention is the signal event in what Michael Gilmore, in the chapter on Brown in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, describes as "a far-reaching shift in American culture as a whole, a movement away from verbal forms to a constellation of values associated with writing and print." Many readers have observed Brown's thematic preoccupation with this shift and with the relative epistemological hazards of speech and writing. For Gilmore, Brown's fiction was "aligned" with the Constitution in its "entrenchment of print ideology": the Federalists' attempt to impose authority over "those persons in American society who inhabited an oral subculture where books other than the Bible and the Almanac were practically unknown."³⁰ Yet the elimination of the 1787 date dissociates the novel from the Constitution and brings it closer to that "subculture."

What this correction suggests is that, for early Americanist literary scholars, the shift Gilmore describes is not only a thematic issue but also a methodological one. To continue with the metaphors of illumination, "Philadelphia in 1787" acts as a powerful beacon to modern readers of *Edgar Huntly*, possibly drawing them away from lesser lights. More generally, it makes sense to situate the novel with respect to both sides of the cusp that Gilmore describes, but print culture supplies the readier and more alluring interpretive context for Brown's fiction. Here is a historicist's paradox: as one recovers or reactivates a text's past significances by developing a network of associations with extant "related texts" and recorded historical events, one tilts it toward the material present. How do we also orient it toward those lights that, in effect, flickered and went out?

"AN OLD INDIAN WOMAN, KNOWN AMONG HER NEIGHBORS"

Though many of Brown's influences, associations, and references must remain irrecoverable, *Edgar Huntly's* tortured meditation on the colonial past anticipates a body of work that was precisely concerned with preserving from "the ebbing tide of oblivion" the "fugitive memorials of unpublished facts and observations, or reminiscences and traditions, which could best

stance of a critic citing the 1787 dating to support an argument about *Edgar Huntly* within the national frame is in Paul Downes, "Sleep-Walking Out of the Revolution: Brown's *Edgar Huntly*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29, no. 4 (1996): 413n9. In my own teaching, I recall writing "Philadelphia, 1787" on the blackboard, and asking the students to develop the thematic connections between the novel (we used the Penguin edition) and the Constitution.

30. M. Gilmore, "Charles Brockden Brown," in Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., *Cambridge History of American Literature*, 8 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1:646, 648.

illustrate the domestic history of our former days.”³¹ Brown’s novel covers much of the same territory, figuratively, as did nineteenth-century contributors to local newspapers and other local historians who, with more detachment and therefore more room for sentiment, strove to maintain or establish a sense of communal continuity by recording oral histories. The magnum opus of this genre was John Fanning Watson’s *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Time* (1830). The 1844 edition included a commendation from Washington Irving: “He is doing an important service to his country, by multiplying the local associations of ideas, and the strong but invisible ties of the mind and of the heart which bind the native to the paternal soil.”³²

It was in Watson’s scrapbook for the *Annals*, in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, that I came across an 1824 clipping from the *Chester County Village Record* describing Hannah Freeman, or “old Indian Hannah,” supposedly the “last of the Lenape, resident in Chester county,” who died in the poorhouse in 1803.³³ I recognized the model for Old Deb, the character Brown himself had professed to be “a portrait faithfully drawn from nature.”³⁴ The discovery of this model provided the opportunity to determine the faithfulness of the portrait.

The uncanny likeness between the descriptions of the historical and the fictional Indian woman, which I shall elaborate below, highlights a telling contrast. Besides his transplantation of “Indian Hannah” (along with “Penn’s Elm”) to Walking Purchase territory, the most remarkable aspect of Brown’s adaptation is his characterization of a seemingly innocuous, if perhaps embittered, neighbor of his extended family as one of the novel’s two unalloyed villains (Arthur Wiatte is the other), a scapegoat for the novel’s will to violence. Though Indian Hannah was a dependent employee of Quaker families in Chester County, Old Deb is the avowed enemy of the farming communities inhabiting the Forks territory, the vindictive con-

31. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 206; John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in the olden time; being a collection of memoirs, anecdotes, and incidents of the city and its inhabitants, and of the earliest settlements of the inland part of Pennsylvania, from the days of the founders* (Philadelphia: John Pennington and Uriah Hunt, 1844), 1:ix.

32. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*, vii.

33. “History of Chester County,” *Village Record*, undated 1824 clipping, in John Fanning Watson, “Watson’s Annals of Philadelphia,” Am 301, 2:513–14, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (hereafter HSP).

34. Charles Brockden Brown, “Edgar Huntly: A Fragment,” *Monthly Magazine*, April 1799, 21; see Luck, “Re-Walking the Purchase,” 270, 302n10.

federate of the murderer of Waldegrave, and the unremorseful mastermind behind the Lenape raids that irrupt in the second half of the novel. Hannah's neighbors felt a responsibility for her welfare, one apparently grounded in her status as a Native American woman, but Deb relieved her neighbors of any obligation toward her through her crimes.

Although Old Deb (nicknamed Queen Mab by Edgar) never appears within the action of the novel, her hut, a symbolic counterpart to the Elm, is the site of its most violent scene, and her interactions with Edgar are revealed in retrospect. In the denouement she is revealed to be the orchestrator of the Indian raids. She is by far the most well-developed Indian character in the novel; the nonspeaking warriors are like the supernumerary henchmen in an action movie, whose principle function is to die, flagrantly, at the hands of the hero. It is only the villain who is accorded a degree of elaboration. Yet an elderly and indigent Native American woman, even one with "pretensions to royalty" and a grudge, on behalf of her kinsfolk, against the settlers on whom she had come to depend for her subsistence, seems an improbable villain.³⁵ Not surprisingly, even as Deb forfeited the sympathy of her fictional neighbors, she has drawn the sympathy of readers and become the object of a critical attention disproportionate to the space she occupies in the novel. Yet scholars of *Edgar Huntly* have lacked the crucial information that Old Deb was based on a historical personage, one with whom Brown would have had secondhand, if not direct, acquaintance. This information should reroute the argument that Brown uses his characterization of Deb to undercut the novel's, and the narrator's, apparently racist politics.

There are three extant documents pertaining to Hannah Freeman dating from her lifetime. *Edgar Huntly* is arguably a fourth. These include two versions of an "Examination" conducted in 1797 by Moses Marshall, the Chester County overseer for the poor, and "Kindness Extended" (1798), a list of subscribers who decided that the decrepit Hannah's "situation Claims the sympathy of the humane in order that she may be more Regularly and Permanently Provided for in a manner suited to her Usual way of living."³⁶

35. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 209.

36. My thanks to Diane P. Rofini, librarian of the Chester County Historical Society (CCHS), who, knowing my interest, sent me a photocopy of "Kindness Extended." The document is also transcribed by Marshall J. Becker, "Legends about Indian Hannah: Squaring the Written Accounts with the Oral Tradition," *Keystone Folklore* 4, no. 2 (1992): 13–14. The "Examination," in manuscript in the CCHS, is transcribed in Marshall J. Becker, "Hannah Freeman: An Eighteenth-Century

Together, the “Examination” and “Kindness Extended” constitute rare testimony, however mediated, pertaining to two overlapping and underrepresented early American demographic categories. The first is native women. The second is the Indians who remained on lands that had been overrun by white colonists, making necessary adaptations to the alien economy and lifestyle. As James Merrell explains, the colonists themselves designated these residents with labels like “neighbor-Indians,” as distinct from the “wilder Indians” of the “back nations.”³⁷

According to the Examination, Hannah was born in the Brandywine Valley in 1730 or 1731; years later, in response to the encroaching settlers, her father moved to the frontier town of Shamokin. Around 1764, fearful because of the Paxton Boys’ massacre of Moravian Indian converts at Conestoga, Hannah and her remaining family moved to New Jersey; she returned to Chester County seven years later with her grandmother, mother, and two aunts, living in various cabins. As her female relatives died off, Hannah found employment among various Quaker farming families, sometimes for wages but eventually for room and board only. She spent the years preceding her Examination “moving about from place to place making baskets &c and staying longest where best used.” There are two baskets in the collections of the Chester County Historical Society that have been inconclusively attributed to her. In *Edgar Huntly*, when Edgar finds himself in Deb’s as yet unidentified “hut,” he observes “a basket or two neatly made” (hardly tokens of malignity).³⁸

The details that Brown culled for the portrait of Old Deb would have come not from the documents but from hearsay, and perhaps acquaintance with a figure who had evidently captured the imagination of the residents of Chester County. Edgar Huntly describes Old Deb as a frequent visitor to his uncle’s house, and it is possible that sometimes the itinerant Hannah Freeman was similarly known to Brown’s uncle, who resided in the south-

Lenape Living and Working among Colonial Farmers,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 114, no. 2 (April 1990): 251–52.

37. J. H. Merrell, “‘The Customes of Our Country’: Indians and Colonists in Early America,” in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Strangers within the Realm: The Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 119.

38. Becker, “Hannah Freeman,” 251–52; Jay F. Custer, “Hannah Freeman’s Baskets,” *Pennsylvania Archaeologist* 68, no. 1 (1998): 34–46; Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 184.

westernmost corner of Chester County, in Nottingham.³⁹ Published recollections about Indian Hannah from local newspapers in the nineteenth century clearly reveal the inspirations for Deb's hut, "eight *long* miles" from the nearest Anglo-American farmhouse; for the "three dogs, of the Indian or wolf species," with whom Deb practiced a "truly wonderful" ability to communicate; for her "jargon," "shrill," "voluble and sharp"; for the "pretensions to royalty" corresponding to the nickname Queen Mab; and for her senses of victimization and entitlement.⁴⁰ Indeed, counterintuitively, the novel, published three years before Hannah's death, can be understood to corroborate the accuracy of the "verbal transmission" of details about Hannah Freeman that were published in newspaper accounts beginning twenty-two years after her death.⁴¹

The "reminiscences" about Indian Hannah, the "last of the Lenape tribe of Indians that inhabited Chester County," are generically typical contributions to nineteenth-century American local newspapers, in which senior community members, sometimes contentiously, sought to preserve and pin down the memories of "olden time."⁴² According to these various reminiscences, Hannah had occupied a "solitary wigwam," or a "hut . . . in the midst of a dense wood, on the property of Humphrey Marshall, the most wild and secluded in the whole neighborhood." In the summertime "she traveled much through different parts of the country, and distributed her baskets." Her only companions were "her little dogs, *Elmun* and *Putome*," who were extraordinarily responsive to her commands: "at the sound of COTCH-AMING and a glance from her dark eye, they would immediately drop behind her as if struck down." Hannah "was also sometimes attended by her pigs." As she aged, her "loud, shrill, and commanding tone" degenerated into "a guttural [*sic*] murmur."⁴³

39. On Brown's Nottingham connections, see Peter Kafer, *Charles Brockden Brown's Revolution and the Birth of the American Gothic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), chap. 1.

40. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 206–9.

41. Becker, "Legends about Indian Hannah," 4.

42. I. M., "Reminiscences for the Register," *Register and Examiner*, February 26, 1839. A folder of clippings related to Indian Hannah is available at the Chester County Historical Society in West Chester, Pa. Local interest in her continued through the twentieth century, although the clippings I cite are from the nineteenth. According to an editor for the *Village Record*, an initial account of Indian Hannah "excited, as it was calculated to do, a good deal of interest." "For the Record," *Village Record*, February 11, 1824, Indian Hannah, CCHS.

43. "History of Chester County," 2:513; I. M., "Reminiscences for the Register."

The parallels between Indian Hannah and Old Deb/Queen Mab extend beyond these circumstantial features. A descendant of one of Chester County's founding families recalled that Hannah "considered herself as queen of the whole neighborhood up and down the Brandywine." In her old age, according to the original 1824 contributor to the *Village Record*, Hannah became "childish, mischievous and troublesome." The writer continued: "Though a long time domesticated with the whites, this woman retained her Indian character, with her copper complexion, to the last. She had a proud and lofty spirit, hated the blacks and deigned not to associate even with the lower order of whites." Isolated and "surrounded only by strangers," Hannah "often spoke emphatically of the wrongs and misfortunes of her people, upon whom alone her affections dwelt, and seemed to view all around her with an eye of suspicion."⁴⁴ This description, written a quarter century after *Edgar Huntly*, suggests some basis for Old Deb's malevolence, yet it stops well short of suggesting that Hannah ever acted on her feelings of victimization.

Such reminiscences, produced decades after her death, were screened through popular literary conventions, and more specifically through the motif of the "last of her race."⁴⁵ Thus, Charles Brockden Brown may have been the first, but he was not the only, Pennsylvanian to subsume Hannah Freeman into literary representation. Freeman was also the subject of several poetic effusions, including a "last sad requiem," that "E" forwarded to the *Village Record* in 1824, conventionally invoking, on behalf of the poet, a modest "reluctance" to commit the verses to print. Anticipating the coda to *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), the poem represents an "Indian Chief," Outalissa, on a visit from "the wilds of the West" to tour the "graves of his Ancestors," delivering an elegy on "the last of the Lenape tribe." The ten melodramatic stanzas allude to the ominous destruction of Penn's Elm in an 1810 storm ("lightning's scathing stroke") and fault Hannah's neighbors for disrespecting her wishes to be buried in the Indian burial ground instead of the potter's field:

And must thou then be buried here,
 Thou last expiring stem!

44. "History of Chester County," 2:513.

45. *Village Record*, June 16, 1824, Indian Hannah, CCHS. See Dawn Marsh, "Penn's Peaceable Kingdom: Shangri-la Revisited," *Ethnohistory* 56, no. 4 (October 1, 2009): 653; Michael G. Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 87.

Was not thy kindred ashes near?
 Then why not rest with them?
 Did not the White men's spirit say,
 Oh let her sleep with kindred clay.

With this stanza the poem segues to bitter protestations against "white men's wrongs" and prideful resignation to the Indians' fated disappearance. The "requiem" concludes: "I go—but still while life remains/The Lenape's wrongs, my soul retains."⁴⁶

Thus, as *Edgar Huntly* does with Old Deb, the poem places the story of Indian Hannah within the historical context of the decline in Pennsylvania Indian relations, emblemized by the blasted Elm. (*Edgar Huntly* was written a decade before the storm, but the novel's Elm was figuratively blasted by the murder of Waldegrave.) Perhaps the most fascinating element in the published poem is an editorial footnote supplied by "E," who, accepting the conceit that the poem transcribed the oration of Outalissa, suggests that the chief "appears to have confounded the Lenape with the whole body of Indians, and to have expressed his feeling of their wrongs upon that general view; as we all know that what might be termed the Pennsylvania Indians, part of whom was the Lenape tribe, were treated with comparative justice and humanity."⁴⁷ Yet the poem itself does not seem to subscribe to the understanding of Pennsylvania as the great benevolent exception to the colonial rule—nor, apparently did Charles Brockden Brown and Hannah Freeman.⁴⁸

The existence of a historical prototype for Old Deb underscores the somewhat arbitrary and indefinite nature of the "sign to sign connection[s]" that critics draw between literary representations and ostensible contexts or subtexts.⁴⁹ It is not usually possible to determine which meanings are active to the author's imagination, and which ones remain latent potentialities of language until they are activated by the critic. Was Edgar's nickname for Deb, Queen Mab, simply suggested to Brown by Hannah's imperious and "mischievous" nature, or did Brown deliberately name her after a Celtic

46. E., "For the Village Record." A contributor to the 1839 *Register and Examiner* recalled that "it is matter of regret that her last request, to be buried beside her mother, should have been suffered to pass unheeded, or totally unregarded." I. M., "Reminiscences for the Register."

47. E., "For the Village Record."

48. See Marsh, "Penn's Peaceable Kingdom," 656–57.

49. Miller, "Literature and History," 16.

fairly to invoke the “racial dynamics of Indian-and Irish-hating”?⁵⁰ Does the nickname necessarily imply that the conflict between the settlers and Delawares is “a contest of empires”?⁵¹ In naming his character Deb, did Brown intend a subversive allusion to “the biblical prophetess Deborah,” the “powerful and faithful leader” who “rallied the tribes of Israel to defeat the raiding Canaanites,” or did he simply choose a biblical name that was roughly equivalent to Hannah?⁵² Such questions may not matter when authorial intention is not a concern, but they do when Brown’s characterization of Old Deb is presented as evidence of his ideological position regarding Native Americans.

Unaware of Hannah Freeman, critics have posited an independent existence for Deb within *Edgar Huntly*’s diegesis (the fictional world of the story), arguing that she is misrepresented by Edgar’s “colonizing narrative.”⁵³ There is reason to be skeptical of Edgar; though he claims to have been fully enlightened by his experiences, along the way he is repeatedly obtuse, and he is also, of course, a sleepwalker. There is little evidence within the text, however, with which to reconstruct Deb’s character, and the women Matthew Sivils and Janie Hinds uncover are as much products of theoretical presuppositions as is Fiedler’s conception of Brown’s “Indian” as a mere “projection of natural evil and the id.”⁵⁴ What Sivils would have Deb be is a champion of native sovereignty, with a “real”—as opposed to Christian—name. Hinds casts Deb as “a stronghold, matriarch, and guerilla warrior in her own right.”⁵⁵ Hannah did exercise a form of sovereignty, as

50. Barnard and Shapiro, introduction, xxiii. The idea that the Queen Mab who first appears in *Romeo and Juliet* is of Celtic derivation is a product of philological research, and it is probably not an association Brown would have had with the character. See William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Horace Howard Furness (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1899), 1:50n53.

51. Eric A. Goldman, “The ‘Black Hole of Calcutta’ in Charles Brockden Brown’s *America: American Exceptionalism and India in Edgar Huntly*,” *Early American Literature* 43, no. 3 (2008): 559.

52. Matthew Wynn Sivils, “Native Sovereignty and Old Deb in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Edgar Huntly*,” *American Transcendental Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (2001): 298.

53. With an interdisciplinary readership in mind I have tried to avoid using literary-studies jargon, but in this instance “diegesis,” designating a “level” distinct from that of the narration, seems particularly apt. See Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 90. Janie Hinds, “Deb’s Dogs: Animals, Indians, and Postcolonial Desire in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Edgar Huntly*,” *Early American Literature* 39 no. 2 (2004): 334.

54. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 146–47.

55. Hinds, “Deb’s Dogs,” 331.

the historian Dawn Marsh asserts, but she did so by insisting on usufructuary rights to privately owned land in order to collect materials for her basket making and practice of herbal medicine, not by staging an armed uprising.⁵⁶ What these critics do not realize, in attempting to decolonize a fictional character, is that in representing a historical Indian woman Brown was himself decolonizing, in a sinister sense, pushing from the inside out, representing a "neighbor-Indian" as a one-woman sleeper cell. His fictionalization of Hannah Freeman parallels the transformation of the Praying Indians into "Preying Indians" in the literature of King Philip's War.⁵⁷ It is difficult to reconcile Old Deb's basis in Hannah Freeman with the understanding that "rather than figuring Indians like Deb as barbaric others, the novel emphasizes the historic responsibility, barbaric violence, and projective scapegoating of its Anglo-Quaker protagonist."⁵⁸

One of the striking points on which Brown's characterization of Deb departs from his model is with regard to language. Marshall's Examination testifies that Hannah, "having almost forgot to talk Indian and not liking their manner of living so well as white peoples," quickly exchanged a temporary residence with her "Aunt Nanny at Concord" for a room-and-board arrangement with a white family in Kennett.⁵⁹ Deb, by contrast, "always disdained to speak English, and custom had rendered her intelligible to most in her native language, with regard to a few simple questions." She spoke mostly with her "ferocious" dogs, with whom she kept up an incessant and incomprehensible patter. Hinds argues, referring to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's "phenomenon of bordering" and to the postcolonial theories pertaining to second-world "settler colonies," that Old Deb and her hybrid wolf-dogs contravene the narration's colonial ideology by destabilizing animal and human taxonomies.⁶⁰ But destabilization, complication, and hybridity are not always the self-evident virtues so often suggested by poststructuralist and postcolonial critiques; taxonomic boundaries can inhibit as well as enable exclusion. By generally depriving Deb of human interlocutors, Brown is pushing her further from humanity. The only point at which she is credited with fluent speech is near the end of the novel,

56. Marsh, "Penn's Peaceable Kingdom," 662.

57. See Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 140; Kristina Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons: Praying Indians in Colonial America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), chap. 6.

58. Barnard and Shapiro, introduction, xxiii.

59. Becker, "Hannah Freeman," 251-52.

60. Hinds, "Deb's Dogs," 331.

when Edgar reports that Deb “readily confessed and gloried in the mischief she had done, and accounted for it by enumerating the injuries which she had received from her neighbors.” He adds, “These injuries consisted in contemptuous or neglectful treatment, and in the rejection of groundless and absurd claims.”⁶¹ This inconsistency, in which Deb suddenly transcends her communicative limitations to display a glib proficiency on the topic of her crimes and motivations, is attributable in part to the formal need for narrative denouement. Yet it is also indicative of Brown’s ideological need to have Old Deb own her villainy. In *Edgar Huntly* an Indian can use speech only to attest to the implacable hatred that even neighbor-Indians bear for their neighbors.

“ONE WHO WALKED WITH SPEED”

Deb’s male kinsmen, as many critics have noted, do not speak at all; thus, Edgar speaks for them: “I knew that, at this time, some hostilities had been committed on the frontier; that a long course of injuries and encroachments had lately exasperated the Indian tribes; that an implacable and exterminating war was generally expected.”⁶² The contrast between his apparent recognition of their “injuries” and his summary dismissal of Deb’s “groundless” “claims” can be attributed to his “sudden and enormous . . . transition from uncertainty to knowledge.” Once the scales fell from Edgar’s eyes, everything that he thought he knew is called into question.

The setting in the “*Forks of Delaware*” makes it apparent that the “injuries and encroachments” include the Walking Purchase.⁶³ In 1737 the agents of the Pennsylvania proprietors, especially the provincial secretary, James Logan, succeeded in pressuring and tricking Delaware sachems (leaders) into signing a confirmation of an agreement they claimed, on the basis of a dubious “copy” of an allegedly missing original deed, transferred to William Penn and his heirs a tract of land to be measured by a day and a half’s walk. Their implementation made the Walking Purchase into a case study for the colonial abuse of literacy, because the proprietors both insisted on and exploited the letter of the agreement, abrogating the spirit of land transactions established by the Pennsylvania founder and his native counterparts. The proprietors cleared a straight path in advance and hired three speed walkers, only one of whom, Edward Marshall, managed to complete the eighteen-hour northward walk, taking in a distance of about sixty-five

61. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 280.

62. *Ibid.*, 6–7, 173.

63. *Ibid.*, 149.

miles. Because the Proprietors surveyed a line from the endpoint of Marshall's walk to the tract's eastern boundary, the eastward-sweeping Delaware River, the tract resembles an enormous right triangle, tilted, the river forming its jagged hypotenuse.⁶⁴

Edgar Huntly alludes to the Walking Purchase not only through its setting, but also through its action. The Indian Walk took place on September 19 and 20, near the autumnal equinox, and was restricted to twelve hours on the first day and six on the second.⁶⁵ Edgar's return home from the cave is similarly divided into twelve- and six-hour increments, although it does not succeed as he plans. He arrives at the "southern barrier" of the wilderness vale of Norwalk around "noon-day," noting, "Twelve hours had scarcely elapsed since [he] emerged from the cavern." He has "not less than thirty miles" left to go, and "six hours" until nightfall in which to traverse the distance.⁶⁶ His challenge, then, was to match Marshall's pace during the first leg of the walk, although with the opposite trajectory: according to William J. Buck's *History of the Indian Walk* (1886), Marshall traveled northwesterly from "Wrightstown to Durham creek, in six hours, which may be fairly estimated at thirty miles, averaging five miles per hour, which may well be regarded as most extraordinary walking."⁶⁷ Edgar realizes that reaching Solesbury (about nine miles north of Wrightstown) before dark "would demand the agile boundings of a leopard and the indefatigable sinews of an elk." Summoning a resolve to counteract his physical exhaustion,

64. According to Nancy Shoemaker, the "Walking Purchase was as much about writing as it was about land." *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 62. See Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from Its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), 388–97; Steven Craig Harper, *Promised Land: Penn's Holy Experiment, the Walking Purchase, and the Dispossession of Delaware, 1600–1763* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 2006).

65. Marshall kept going until two o'clock on the second day, to compensate for time lost "in seeking . . . strayed horses," but this detail is not commonly recorded; most histories have the walk ending at noon. See the deposition by Nicolas Scull in "Copies of Depositions of Persons present at the Walk, performed in September 1737 . . . (No. 4)" Penn Manuscripts, Indian Affairs 1733–1801, 4:23–25, HSP; see also John Watson to Israel Pemberton, July 29, 1757, Friendly Association Manuscripts 1:375, Haverford College, Haverford, Pa.

66. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 204, 211–12.

67. William J. Buck, *History of the Indian Walk, Performed for the Proprietaries of Pennsylvania in 1737, to which is appended a Life of Edward Marshall* (Philadelphia: Edwin S. Stuart, 1886), 111.

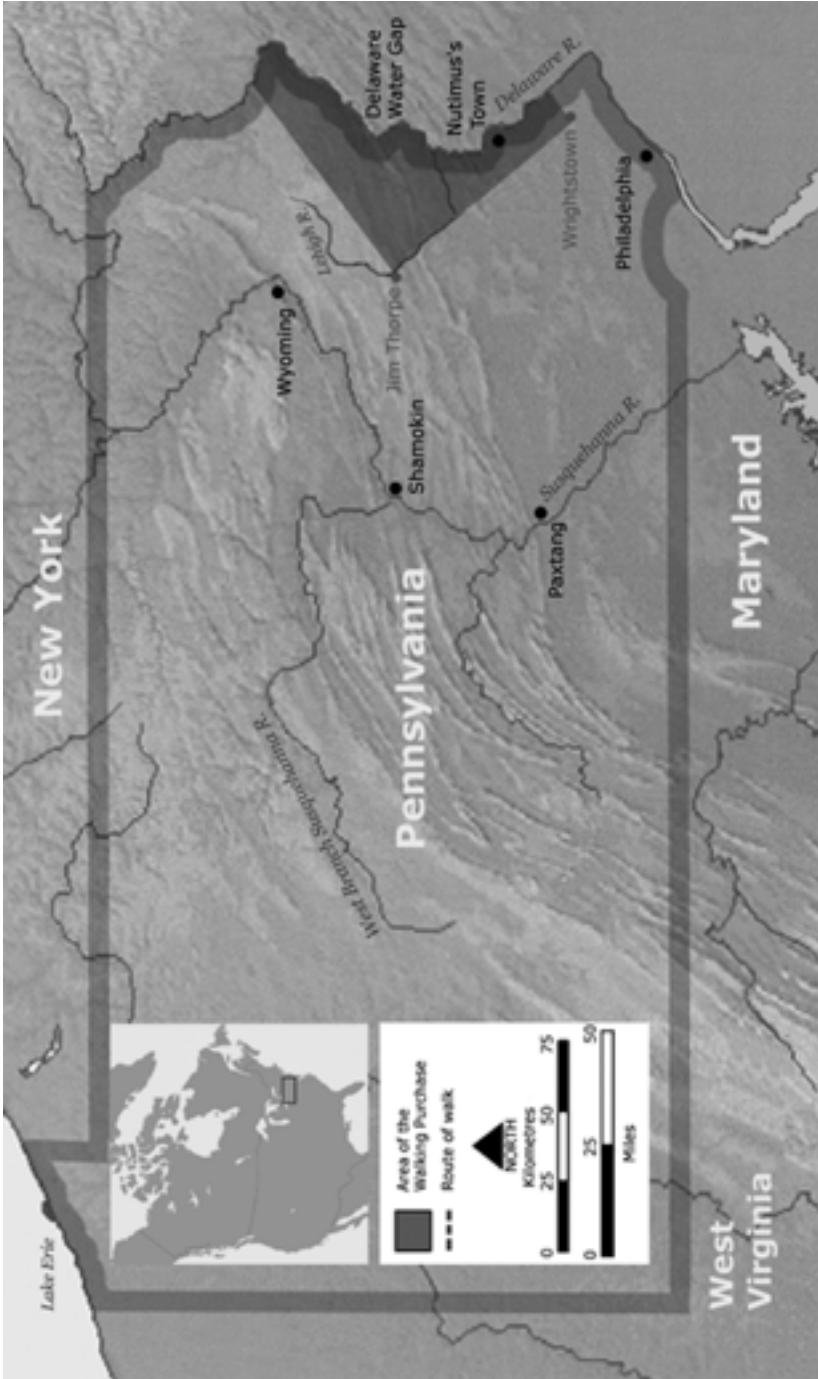


Figure 2. "Area of Walking Purchase," from *Wikipedia Commons*. Image by Nakater, background map by Demis, www.demis.nl, submitted to the public domain.

he recalls that he had effectively trained in "feats of agility and perseverance" throughout his youth. "Greater achievements than this had been performed, and I disdained to be out-done in perspicacity by the lynx, in his sure-footed instinct by the roe, or in patience under hardship, and contention with fatigue, by the Mohawk. I have ever aspired to transcend the rest of animals in all that is common to the rational and brute, as well as in all by which they are distinguished from each other."⁶⁸

This passage offers a multiplicity of associative identifications, not only between Edgar and Edward Marshall—who was assuredly the most celebrated walker in the history of colonial Pennsylvania—but also between the title character and the author.⁶⁹ Edgar's walking, and his sleepwalking, were also characteristic of Brown. His early biographer Paul Allen recounts that the schoolmaster Robert Proud "prescribed" for his sickly and overstudious pupil a "regimen" of "relaxation and exercise" that led to a lifelong practice of "pedestrian exercises," which Brown performed as a waking somnambulist: "At these moments his mind was constantly on the alert, and so familiarized to abstraction, he was often unconscious of what was passing about him. This will account for the frequent anxieties which the different members of the family felt while he was taking his solitary rambles."⁷⁰

Krause is mistaken in his comment that the Walking Purchase "had long since been officially recognized as outright usurpation, one cause of Delaware insurgency."⁷¹ The Pennsylvania Proprietors were officially exonerated by Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Johnson, on behalf of the king, in 1762; he pronounced it "an uncertain thing, at best, how far a man could, or should go in one day and a half's walk."⁷² But though the emphasis of the academic historiography has been on whether the Proprietors cheated the Delawares, and how, the local histories, while condemning the Proprietors, have been equally fascinated with the Indian Walk itself, as the founding legend of upper Bucks and Northampton Counties.⁷³ Historians

68. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 212.

69. Luck also observes that Marshall bears more than a passing resemblance to the fictional Edgar in "Re-Walking the Purchase," 275.

70. Paul Allen, *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown* (1814; repr., Delmar, N.Y.: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975), 11.

71. Krause, "Penn's Elm and *Edgar Huntly*," 469.

72. William Johnson, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. J. Sullivan, 14 vols. (Albany: State University of New York, 1921–64), 3:788.

73. See William W. H. Davis, *History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, from the Discovery of the Delaware to the Present Time*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (1905; repr., Pipersville, Pa.: A. E. Lear, 1975), 1:476–79; B. F. Fackenthal, "The Indian Walking Purchase of September 19 and 20, 1737; Address of Dr. B. F. Fackenthal, Jr., at

described Marshall's achievement and retraced the route, which is now marked with roadside monuments.

The gist of *Edgar Huntly's* Indian Walk passages, which link Edgar Huntly, Edward Marshall, and the young Charles Brockden Brown, is more about "feats" than fraud. By having Edgar set out to outdo both animals and savages, Brown entertains the idea of the walk as a racist triumph. The connections between Edgar and Marshall go beyond walking, moreover, to racial violence. According to local histories, around 1752 Marshall moved from Tinicum Township to Mount Bethel Township, in Walking Purchase territory in Northampton County. In May 1757, while he was away cutting lumber, a band of Indians attacked his house; although the children escaped, his pregnant wife was captured, killed, and scalped. Marshall seems to have been specifically targeted because of his role in the Walking Purchase; his neighbors were unharmed. That August his family was attacked again; his eldest son was killed. Marshall remarried in 1758; his wife was the daughter of a German immigrant who had been killed during the Indian raids.⁷⁴ According to Buck, the union must have been one of "mutual sympathy." Marshall "had lost a wife and son and she had lost her father by the Indians, and also witnessed the destruction of his property by the devouring flames."⁷⁵ Like Marshall, Edgar was away, with his two sisters, when his home was attacked during "the last war": "My parents and an infant child were murdered in their beds; the house was pillaged, and then burnt to the ground." The details are somewhat different, but consistent with the general tenor of the descriptions of the Indian attacks on the region, exemplified by the Marshall accounts.⁷⁶

the Unveiling of a Monument in Springfield Township, Bucks Co. Pa., to Mark the Lunching Place of the Walkers at Noon on the First Day of the Walk," in *A Collection of Papers Read before the Bucks County Historical Society* (Doylestown, Pa.: Bucks County Historical Society, 1925), 6:7–24.

74. Davis, *History of Bucks County*, 1:480–82; "The Indian Walk (Buck's County Intelligencer, Dec 17, 1850)," Penn Manuscripts, Indian Affairs 1733–1801, 4:32, HSP; H. A. Jacobson, "The Walking Purchase," *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 9 (1913): 34.

75. Buck, *History of the Indian Walk*, 222–29; see also Edmund Morris to Roberts Vaux, January 24, 1827, Vaux Family Papers 3:3, HSP.

76. Both Marshall and Huntly correspond to the figure of the Indian Hater, who according to Edward Watts "is an Anglo male whose family—including at least one female, mother, sister, daughter, or lover—has been killed and usually mutilated and sometimes raped by the Indians — an act the Hater-to-be either witnessed or came upon immediately afterward." Watts, "A Spirit Vengeful, Unrelenting, and Ferocious: *Edgar Huntly* and the Genealogy of Indian Haters" (paper presented at the Charles Brockden Brown Society's conference "Brown and the Bayou: Politics,

Edgar attributes his "terror or antipathy" of Indians to this incident: "I never looked upon, or called up the image of a savage without shuddering."⁷⁷ Like Marshall, he becomes an Indian killer, motivated in part by vengeance. "From this time," writes William W. H. Davis in *The History of Bucks County* (first ed., 1876), "Marshall swore vengeance against the Indians, and never lost an opportunity of killing one. He would, at times, simply remark, when questioned about his Indian experience, that when he saw one 'he generally shut one eye, and never saw him afterward.'"⁷⁸ Edgar, similarly, kills every Indian he sees over the course of the narrative. The Marshall tradition resonates especially with Edgar's final killing, in which Edgar, while hidden in the woods, spies his "adversary" at the side of the road: "My eye was now caught by movements which appeared like those of a beast." He fires after drawing the Indian's notice by cocking his piece; yet Edgar is neither so ruthless nor so sure of aim as Marshall, and he fails to kill him in a single shot, thereby requiring a "task of cruel lenity" carried out not only with a second shot but also a bayonet thrust to the heart. The characterization of Edgar, evidently informed in part by the still unwritten traditions about Edward Marshall, provides an inchoate mixture of victimhood, remorse, and sadistic pleasure. "Prompted by some freak of fancy," Edgar took the dead Indian's musket "and left it standing upright in the middle of the road."⁷⁹

For his Indian killing, Edgar, like Marshall (and like Natty Bumppo, and other exemplars of the warrior archetype) uses a weapon of distinction. Marshall's rifle, which became a family heirloom, was a "long, heavy, flint-lock gun." Since he "could not get a rifle to suit him in this country," he imported the barrel and stock from Germany—the name of the maker or place of origin was stamped on the single barrel.⁸⁰ It ended up in the collection of the Bucks County Historical Society. In a 1910 presentation to the Moravian Historical Society, H. A. Jacobson reported that the rifle "is in perfect order and the hair-trigger is as sensitive to the touch as when the original owner set it to shoot Indians. In the flint-box is the identical rammer-screw that Marshall used to clean out the piece before he started on his hunt for human game."⁸¹ Edgar's gun, by contrast, "had two barrels,

Writing and Borderlands in the Postrevolutionary Circumatlantic World," New Orleans, 2006).

77. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 172–73.

78. Davis, *History of Bucks County*, 481.

79. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 199, 201–3.

80. Jacobson, "The Walking Purchase," 34.

81. *Ibid.* See also Davis, *History of Bucks County*, 481–82.

and was lighter and smaller than an ordinary musket.” It was a piece “of extraordinary workmanship. . . . The artist had made it a congeries of tubes and springs, by which every purpose of protection and offence was effectually served.” A knife was fixed to the end, “answering the destructive purpose of a bayonet.”⁸²

It would be convenient if Marshall’s and Edgar’s custom-made rifles were a rhetorical forensic “match,” but they are similar only in their singularity. As Eric A. Goldman has recently demonstrated, Edgar’s rifle, together with the pit in which he found himself nearly entombed, link *Edgar Huntly* to a more extensive historical context than the one I have been developing: not local, popular history, or even the national frame against which the novel is most frequently read, but the “international, global context of European imperialism.”⁸³ The rifle was a gift from Sarsefield, who had received it “as the legacy of an English officer, who died in Bengal” (187). As Goldman explains, this “blatant symbol of British imperialism” is coupled with a direct allusion to the narrative of the 1756 “Black Hole of Calcutta” incident, according to which the Bengalese Governor Siraj-ud-Dauleh imprisoned 146 East Indian Company employees in a “close, hot, dark hole in which 123 of the captives died of suffocation.”⁸⁴ According to Goldman, to “return to the comparatively provincial history of *Edgar Huntly* with this parallel, monumental imperial history in mind is to return to a different novel entirely”—one that subverts Brown’s own exceptionalist claims for his American setting.⁸⁵

So who is the historical model for Edgar, Edward Marshall, the prodigious walker and Indian-killer, Brown himself, with his absent-minded “solitary rambles,” or Robert Clive, the British officer who led the reprisals for the Black Hole massacre, “securing British claims to the Bengal region” in the process?⁸⁶ I think the answer has to be all three, if not necessarily always all at once, and there may be other counterparts as well. Goldman modestly poses his reading as a contribution rather than a corrective, doing for “the international history embedded in *Edgar Huntly* what Sydney Krause has done for the novel’s encoding of a shameful history of American

82. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 185–87.

83. Goldman, “The ‘Black Hole of Calcutta’ in Charles Brockden Brown’s America,” 558.

84. *Ibid.*, 562, 565.

85. *Ibid.*, 567; see Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 3.

86. Goldman, “The ‘Black Hole of Calcutta’ in Charles Brockden Brown’s America,” 567.

colonists' theft of Lenni-Lenape lands."⁸⁷ His essay helps illustrate how different rhetorical leads—ones other readers have passed over countless times—can bring to bear different historical contexts, ones that illuminate not only the selected passages but also the entire novel. Yet none of these contexts can be definitive; they may only appear to be so from a unitary perspective, a sort of tunnel vision.

As Goldman suggests, Krause similarly follows such leads to a reinterpretation of the novel in "Penn's Elm and *Edgar Huntly*: Dark 'Instruction to the Heart.'" Krause's investigations into the significance of the Elm and the relevance of the Walking Purchase brought him to revise his understanding, expressed in the previously published "Historical Essay" in his Kent State edition, that "there are shadings of antipathy in *Edgar Huntly* which suggest that Brown's depiction of the Indian was slanted in ways that go beyond the needs of characterization."⁸⁸ Krause's principal source on the Walking Purchase is Francis Jennings, the historian whose brilliant, impassioned revisionist historiography punctuated the long-standing controversy over whether the Proprietors had committed fraud, or whether the Delawares, and their Quaker advocates, had belatedly brought the accusation for political ends. Jennings's work on the Walking Purchase focuses on what happened in the years 1735–37. In that sense, Krause's information on the Walking Purchase was up-to-date but not necessarily consonant with perspectives in 1799.

Krause argues that by relocating Penn's Elm to Walking Purchase territory, and making it the site of the murder of Waldegrave, a fictional embodiment of Penn's idealism, Brown engenders a guilty meditation on the degenerative course of Pennsylvania Indian relations that undercuts the apparent "pervasive anti-Indian bias" of *Edgar Huntly*. He finds evidence to support this reading in a related text, Brown's "Memorandums Made on a Journey through Part of Pennsylvania," published in his *Literary Magazine* in 1804. Yet his reading of that short sketch is surprisingly incomplete. He confines it to the part in which the narrator, stopping with his brother to meditate on "a large elm on the bank of the river, under which the sachems formerly held their councils," evinces sentimental regret that the colonists whom the Indians "here cherished and warmed by the council fire" had "come to supplant them in their native possessions, to root out their posterity from the country, and to trample down the graves of their fathers."

87. *Ibid.*, 575.

88. Krause, "Historical Essay," 304–5n12, 367.

According to Krause, “though stylized, Brown’s sentiments are clearly genuine.”⁸⁹

The continuation of the sketch, however, strongly undermines those sentiments. First, the narrator observes the unwillingness of the Indians “to submit to the discipline and shackles of civilized life.” In a seeming non sequitur, he then offers an anecdote about how a non-Christian Indian responded to the question posed by “two white men” as to how he “expected to reach heaven.” The Indian responded by offering a blasphemous analogy, imagining that he and his two interlocutors were striving to get to Fort Pitt to get “some good *rum*.” The two white men became distracted from this pursuit by business along the way, but the “Indian got no business, no money to get . . . he set off and go strait up to Fort-Pitt, and get there before either of you.” The narrator explains that “the Indians of North-America are well skilled in this species of sarcastic humour,” meaning that they practice a form of double-speak that is antithetical to the Rousseauist ideal of primitive honesty.⁹⁰

Ostensibly to illustrate such sarcasm, the narrator concludes with a poisonous anecdote about an “interview” between “some of their chiefs and a select number of citizens who had benevolently devoted both time and property to the introduction of useful and civilized arts among the savages.” After one chief, Little Turtle, spoke about making maple sugar, he “was asked how they contrived to procure suitable vessels to contain the syrup when boiling.” His response absolutely contradicts the purposes of the quixotic citizens’ committee and the supposedly remorseful sentiments of the opening of the “Memorandums”: “He affected a very grave countenance, as he answered ‘that the *unfortunate* affair of St. Clair had furnished a considerable number of camp kettles which answered the purpose very well.’” The narrator explains that Little Turtle had led the attack on the American General St. Clair’s forces, “in which the latter were defeated with immense slaughter, and suffered the loss of their camp equipage.”⁹¹ The citizens’ committee, naively and “benevolently” taking on the hopeless task of civilizing the Indians, was thus reminded of their fundamental antagonism. The metaphor of the maple sugar warns Americans not to be

89. Krause, “Penn’s Elm and *Edgar Huntly*,” 474.

90. Charles Brockden Brown, “Memorandums Made on a Journey through Part of Pennsylvania,” *Literary Magazine, and American Register*, January 1804, 255.

91. *Ibid.*

fooled by diplomatic sweet talk: what the Indians are really after is "immense slaughter."⁹²

Taken in their entirety, then, the "Memorandums" are a better exhibit for Gardner, or for Kafer, who suggests that Brown's novelistic vision is "in diametrical contrast to the visionary world and values of his ancestors," or even for Krause's own earlier understanding in his "Historical Essay."⁹³ The evidence Krause offers of Brown's romantic regret for historical injustices is instead insidiously relevant to the United States' present, cautioning readers to resist the urge to atone through benevolence for the necessary wrongs of colonialism. The members of the citizens' committee have their counterparts in the novel: Waldegrave, Edgar, and Euphemia Lorimer. Each of these would-be benefactors becomes an object of vengeance to Little Turtle's counterparts: the Lenape "ruffian," in league with the treacherous Old Deb, who turns out to be the culprit in Waldegrave's death, Old Deb herself, and the "madman" Clithero.⁹⁴ To whatever extent *Edgar Huntly* "awakens a compassionate attitude towards the Indians," it does so in order to squelch it. Like the "Memorandums," the novel lures readers into identification with its naive narrator to help them discover the error of their own "impulse of misguided, indeed, but powerful benevolence."⁹⁵ To paraphrase Stanley Fish, the reader in *Edgar Huntly* is surprised by softheartedness.⁹⁶

"THE IMPULSE OF SPONTANEOUS JUSTICE"

In Stephen Greenblatt's essay "The Touch of the Real," he comments on the "kind of document . . . conventionally adduced to illuminate a work of art." Though the 1668 deposition he brings into relation with *Hamlet* might be subject to the charge of "arbitrary connectedness," a more typical related

92. Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro include these passages from the "Memorandums" in their edition of *Edgar Huntly*; they read them differently: "Note how Brown extends the Indian 'sarcastic humour' he describes, presenting the 'savages' in this passage as sophisticated respondents who know how to reverse and mock patronizing stereotypes about their culture, even as they acknowledge and adjust to new commercial and expansionist realities of the nineteenth century." Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 241.

93. Gardner, *Master Plots*, chap. 3; Kafer, *Charles Brockden Brown's Revolution*, 184; Krause, "Historical Essay," 367.

94. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 281.

95. *Ibid.*, 290–91.

96. Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

document “usually precedes the work in question or is closely contemporary with it; it often comes from the same geographical and social setting; and, most satisfying of all, it may offer a direct philological link.”⁹⁷ Such links connect *Edgar Huntly* with the recorded memories of Hannah Freeman, the Indian Walk, and Edward Marshall. There is no such link, however, connecting the traveler Weymouth with the Delaware spokesman Teedyuscung. Yet this historical referent seems to lie just outside the walls of the camera obscura that is *Edgar Huntly*—much closer, certainly, than Calcutta. The problem is that there is no apparent aperture: nothing so clear and precise, certainly, as the mention of “the history of certain English prisoners in Bengal,” or an aged Indian woman who lived in an isolated hut with her dogs and made baskets, or “thirty miles” in “six hours” near the autumnal equinox.⁹⁸ Thus establishing the connection, as a preliminary to developing its significance, requires interpretation: grappling with the novel’s confusing and fluid set of figurations and internal correspondences. Once Waldegrave is understood as a figurative Delaware from the Forks, his correspondence to Teedyuscung becomes more apparent.

The character Weymouth, the erstwhile resident of the Forks (from the “neighboring township of Chetasco,” which is apparently a fictional place name), returns seeking the restoration of the nest egg he had entrusted to Waldegrave for safekeeping.⁹⁹ Weymouth is not an Indian, but, like Edgar and Clithero, he is figuratively associated with Indians. His name, that of a seaport in England and one of the earliest settlements in New England, manages to suggest both Anglo-Saxon identity and, semantically, orality and perhaps itinerancy. It forms a counterpoint to *Waldegrave*, which combines the German word for *woods* with a root connoting both burial and writing to form a virtual cognate for *Pennsylvania*. (The homophonic significance of the founder’s surname was activated in Indian diplomacy, since both Penn and his successors were labeled *Onas* in Iroquois and *Miquon* in Delaware, words signifying quill.) These names suggest an allegorical understanding of the past transaction between the selfless Waldegrave (Pennsylvania) and Weymouth, who has returned from the wilderness to redeem a trust.

Like Edgar and Clithero, Weymouth travels between the poles of sterility and cultivability, organic metaphors for human potential. Clithero, the nov-

97. Greenblatt, “The Touch of the Real,” 25.

98. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 169; Goldman, “The ‘Black Hole of Calcutta’ in Charles Brockden Brown’s *America*,” 563.

99. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 149.

el's great object lesson in failed benevolence, is snatched from "penury and brutal ignorance" by Mrs. Lorimer and unfortunately learns to aspire to transcend a life "spent . . . in cultivation of [his parents'] scanty fields." Yet he ends up sinking below his original station; his miserable last residence is the oxymoronic "abundantly sterile and rude" site of Deb's hut.¹⁰⁰ The Indians emerge from the precinct of the hut, Norwalk, which "admits neither of plough nor spade," to attack the townships within the adjacent "cultivable space" in the river valley.¹⁰¹ Edgar wonders: "Were these the permanent inhabitants of the region, or were they wanderers and robbers?" They follow on the heels of Weymouth, who had unwisely ventured from one of those townships, Chetasco, to find himself stranded in a region of the Portuguese coast, in a region "in the highest degree sterile, and rude." Edgar wonders: "Is such the lot of those who wander from their rustic homes in search of fortune?" Weymouth's successful return to agrarian civilization displaces Edgar, who becomes a wanderer himself, a sojourner in the "desert" of Norwalk, from which he eventually and ambivalently emerges.¹⁰²

As it does in Edgar's life, the Weymouth episode, which occupies chapters 14 and 15, causes a major disturbance in the narrative, triggering the astonishing sequence of the novel's second half. "I will return to my narrative," Edgar concludes chapter 15. "Here, my friend, thou must permit me to pause," he opens chapter 16 (expressing some vicarious immodesty on the part of the author): "The following incidents are of a kind to which the most ardent invention has never conceived a parallel."¹⁰³ At one moment he is reconciling himself to relinquishing his prospect of financial independence; at the next he comes to at the bottom of a pitch-black pit, from which he sallies forth as a savage killer of savages.

Yet although both the "tom-hawk"-wielding Edgar and Weymouth are provisionally characterized as savages, only the Irish Clithero and the Delawares themselves are completely irredeemable. Weymouth, despite his prolonged exposure to savages and superstitious Catholics, is eligible to return to civilization. He announces his intention to give up the wandering life and settle down, and Edgar has no choice but to urge Mary Waldegrave to restore to Weymouth his fortune. Significantly, this compulsion is not legal, but ethical, and Edgar excludes self-interest as a factor. That is, he must restore Wey-

100. *Ibid.*, 37, 57, 210.

101. *Ibid.*, 96. On the geography of Edgar's township of Solesbury, see Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America*, 197–98.

102. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 145, 154, 171.

103. *Ibid.*, 157–58.

mouth's funds, despite the injury to his own prospects, because he knows that they belong to him; and he knows this even though Weymouth is able to furnish "no legal support" for his claim: "all vouchers and papers, which might attest to my veracity, or sanction my claim in a court of law, are buried in the ocean." For his part, Edgar finds no record among Waldegrave's papers "hinting at any pecuniary transaction" with Weymouth.¹⁰⁴

Thus, for Edgar, in dealing with Weymouth, justice is a paperless transaction. "The non-appearance of any letters or papers connected with it is indeed a mysterious circumstance," he avers, "but why should Waldegrave be studious of preserving these? They were useless paper, and might, without impropriety, be cast away or made to serve any temporary purpose."¹⁰⁵ The explicit exclusion of writing from Weymouth's encounter with Edgar is consistent with the novel's deep suspicion of written communication. In the place of written records, Weymouth deploys native eloquence. Anticipating James Fenimore Cooper, Brown arrogates a power traditionally associated with the Natives and attributes it to a figure constructed as peculiarly American.¹⁰⁶ As Dana Luciano observes, Weymouth succeeds in convincing Edgar because there is no lapse between his words and his person: ultimately, the only corroboration he needs is a "countenance" that "exhibited deep traces of the afflictions he had endured and the fortitude which he had exercised. He was sallow and emaciated, but his countenance was full of seriousness and dignity."¹⁰⁷ Weymouth is a conventional noble savage—without being a savage at all.

The controversial Pennsylvania prototype for the eloquent savage was Teedyuscung, thanks to Benjamin Franklin's publication of his Treaty Council speeches.¹⁰⁸ According to that version of the minutes, at a peace

104. *Ibid.*, 150, 152.

105. *Ibid.*, 157.

106. Though the Indians of *The Last of the Mohicans* are famously eloquent, in *The Pioneers* this power of eloquence is transferred to the white proxy Indians, Natty Bumppo and Oliver Effingham. See Andrew Newman, "Sublime Translation in the Novels of James Fenimore Cooper and Walter Scott," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 59, no. 1 (June 2004): 1–26.

107. Dana Luciano, "'Perverse Nature': *Edgar Huntly* and the Novel's Reproductive Disorders," *American Literature* 70, no. 1 (March 1998): 6–7. Weymouth connotes America in the tradition of the "homme simple et grossier" (simple and coarse man) of Montaigne's "Des Cannibales"; see Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 67–79.

108. James Merrell, "I desire all that I have said . . . may be taken down aright': Revisiting Teedyuscung's 1756 Treaty Council Speeches," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (October 2006): 797.

treaty in 1756, at Easton, the Forks of the Delaware, Teedyuscung declared to Governor William Denny, "This very Ground, that is under me (striking it with his Foot) was my Land and Inheritance, and is taken from me, by Fraud."¹⁰⁹ His accusation of fraud unleashed a political scandal in which the Quakers in the Assembly attempted to deflect the blame for their unwillingness to fund the defense of the frontier onto the Proprietors, whose wrongdoing, they alleged, alienated the province's Indian friends and made defense necessary. Teedyuscung, as the central figure in a succession of dramatic treaty meetings, became by far the most famous Delaware Indian associated with the Forks region, the Walking Purchase, and the raids during the French and Indian War. According to Anthony F. C. Wallace, Teedyuscung's biographer, "probably no other Indian in Pennsylvania's colonial history, not even the legendary Tammany or Tamanend, has attracted so much notoriety, or so many casual chroniclers."¹¹⁰

His name would have been especially familiar within Brown's Quaker milieu: Brown's great-uncle John Churchman had been a member of the Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Measures, which advocated for Teedyuscung's cause (or meddled, according to the Proprietors). Churchman had been in attendance at Easton when Teedyuscung made his apparently unprecedented request to have "the liberty to choose a clerk to take the minutes of the transactions at this treaty on behalf of the Indians."¹¹¹ The clerk Teedyuscung chose was Charles Thomson, the future secretary of the Continental Congress, whom the Provincial Council's minutes identify deprecatingly as "the Master of the Publick Quaker School in the City of Philadelphia."¹¹² Thomson later published the entire case against the Proprietors in *An Enquiry into the Causes of Alien-*

109. J. P. Boyd, ed., *Indian Treaties Printed by Benjamin Franklin, 1736–1762* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1938), 157. On the discrepancies between the various versions of the 1756 minutes, see James Merrell, "Revisiting Teedyuscung's 1756 Treaty Council Speeches."

110. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *King of the Delawares: Teedyuscung, 1700–1763* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1990), vii.

111. John Churchman, *An account of the Gospel labours, and Christian experiences of a faithful minister of Christ, John Churchman, late of Nottingham in Pennsylvania, deceased. To which is added a short memorial of the life and death of a fellow labourer in the church, our valuable friend Joseph White, late of Bucks County* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1779), 181.

112. *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania: From the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government* (Philadelphia: Jo. Severns, 1852), 7:665.

ation of the Delaware and Shawanese Indians from the British Interest (1760). The school that Thomson had been master of was the one that Charles Brockden Brown attended, along with descendants of Israel Pemberton, the leader of the Friendly Association, and other prominent anti-Proprietary Quakers. Brown's schoolmaster, Robert Proud, was Thomson's successor.¹¹³ Thus, Brown may have been exposed to this history through both family and formal education.

Given Brown's probable familiarity with the figure of Teedyuscung, and Teedyuscung's association with the region Brown made the setting for his novel, he was the one specific Indian—apparently, along with Hannah Freeman—whom we can presume came to Brown's mind during the composition of *Edgar Huntly*. His lack of representation within the novel is less an omission than a negation. Instead of the famous spokesman, Brown depicts nameless warriors who seem incapable of speech. Instead of the controversial "King of the Delawares" who complained of fraud, Brown gives us a decrepit and hostile "Queen," modeled after a Delaware woman with no connection to the Forks, whose claims Edgar deems "groundless and absurd."¹¹⁴ Finally, instead of the Native American who returned to the Forks seeking justice, Brown gives us a white native American prodigal son who returns seeking the restoration of his lost fortune.

When Weymouth's interview with Edgar is read as a symbolic restaging of the ones that took place between Pennsylvania officials and Teedyuscung, then the connection of the Weymouth episode to the novel's main plotlines, involving Edgar and the Indians and Mrs. Lorimer and Clithero Edny, becomes clear. The novel makes a symbolic restitution for the Walking Purchase not to an Indian but to a symbolic proxy for the Indians. This episode directly anticipates Cooper's expedient solution to the dispossession of the Mohicans by restoring their land to the surrogate figure of Oliver Edwards in *The Pioneers* (1823).¹¹⁵ In so doing, Brown invalidates the concept of intercultural benevolence in favor of a "spontaneous justice" whose condition of possibility is cultural and racial likeness.¹¹⁶ But Edgar, who professes himself incapable "of disguising the truth or committing an injustice," cannot or will not be just to the Delawares.¹¹⁷ Like the other fictional

113. Kafer, *Charles Brockden Brown's Revolution*, 46.

114. Wallace, *King of the Delawares*; Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 280.

115. See Susan Scheckel, *The Insistence of the Indian: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 21–25.

116. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, 152–53.

117. *Ibid.*, 151.

settlers in the Forks territory, and like the actual descendants of the Forks settlers, who recognized the injustice of the Walking Purchase even as they celebrated the Indian Walk, Edgar is released from any such obligation because the fictional Delawares come seeking not justice, but revenge, as indeed historical Delawares did in 1755.

Brown's "Lennilennapee" cannot bring a suit against the colonists who stole their land, because they express themselves only through violence, allowing the settlers to forgo questions of justice under the urgency of defense. Yet following the historical raids, the Delawares successfully reframed the conflict in legal terms. The enormous, conflicted Walking Purchase archive, which records Teedyuscung's initial accusation and his ultimate retraction, shares Brown's celebrated preoccupations. To a fascinating extent, the treaty meetings dwelled on problems of communication: writing versus speech, mediated versus direct expression, paper records versus memory, the reliability of translation and transcription, "the natural meaning of . . . words and expressions" versus contextual understandings, the authenticity of utterances.¹¹⁸ Thus, the Walking Purchase controversy is at least as apt a point of reference for the novel's tortured examination of the fallibility and volatility of writing as is the Constitutional Convention.

By eliminating writing from Edgar's communication with Weymouth, Brown suggests a best-case scenario for interpersonal communication—the ideal speech-act scenario.¹¹⁹ These are two men from neighboring townships, from the same ethnic background, both close friends of the late Waldegrave. By contrast, Edgar's several interviews with Clithero repeatedly miscarry, just like the fatal letter he sends to Sarsefield at the novel's close. Of course, the communicative divide between Indians and whites is unbridgeable by speech or by letter (with an exception for Old Deb's defiant confession at the novel's close). But Brown evades this problem by staging an interview between two white men who are crossing paths in their passages between civilization and savagery. When Weymouth is understood as a surrogate for the region's original inhabitants, and his interview with Edgar is understood as a symbolic reprisal of Teedyuscung's suit for compensation for the Walking Purchase—one that clears away all the paper, as well as the cultural difference—then the outcome of this interview implicitly acknowledges that justice is on the side of the Delawares: Weymouth gets

118. Johnson, *Johnson Papers*, 3:809.

119. Part of the critique of Austin's foundational speech-act theory is that its exemplary scenarios reflect purely in vitro conditions for communication. See M. L. Pratt, "Ideology and Speech-Act Theory," *Poetics Today* 7, no. 1 (1986): 59–72.

his money back. The devastating effects on Edgar and Mary, however, indicate the impracticality of redress. *Edgar Huntly* dwells on the inevitability and the disastrous consequences of miscommunication, especially where writing is involved. But its single experiment with successful communication is no more auspicious. Brown's silencing of the Indians seems a matter of necessity: whites cannot afford to understand what the Indians have to say.

“SOME MOMENTOUS AND INTIMATE
CONNECTION WITH . . . HISTORY”

I conclude with reference to current discussions about the relations between literary and historical studies. A historicist essay on *Edgar Huntly* may not seem like a promising way to bridge the “trade gap” between the disciplines that Eric Slauter analyzes in the forum “History, Literature, and the Atlantic World” that was simultaneously published in 2008 in *Early American Literature* and the *William and Mary Quarterly*. I believe I have brought forward evidence and interpretations that diminish the case for a sympathetic reading of the novel, but the questions that have preoccupied the large body of scholarship on *Edgar Huntly* may be of little significance to historians. As Slauter rightly points out, “Putting a text in a historical context can matter a great deal for literary analysis, but it can have only a minimal appeal to historians, especially when the context is stitched together from existing historiography.”¹²⁰

I do hope that in its use of primary sources, including manuscripts and nineteenth-century local newspapers and historical writing, this essay has illustrated that literary historicism is not necessarily “derivative”—that it can be, as Slauter also contends, “a context-generating enterprise similar to legal, social, and economic history.”¹²¹ Literary historicism, however, is also dissimilar from those specializations in the type of context it generates: as I understand it, the context for *Edgar Huntly*'s composition (let alone its reception) is the welter of associations, personal and popular recollections, and references available to Brown in 1799. In other words, literary language, with its multiple levels of signification and diverse valences, is itself “context-generating”: it is unique in the occasion it gives scholars, individually and collectively, to stitch together a world out of legal, social, economic, scientific, cultural, military, micro- and macro-histories. *Edgar Huntly*'s

120. Eric Slauter, “History, Literature, and the Atlantic World,” *Early American Literature* 43, no. 1 (2008): 173.

121. *Ibid.*, 175.

value to historians may be less in its representations than in its evocation of the coordinates of a late eighteenth-century American consciousness. What do William Penn, Edward Marshall, Hannah Freeman, Federalism, somnambulism, Easton, Dublin, Madeira, Bengal, bills of exchange, the Elm, and the years 1682, 1737, 1755, and 1785 have in common? The answer, in 2010 as in 1799, is *Edgar Huntly*.