

1961

# A survey of the novels of Charles Brockden Brown

George C. Longest

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/masters-theses>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Longest, George C., "A survey of the novels of Charles Brockden Brown" (1961). *Master's Theses*. 1219.  
<http://scholarship.richmond.edu/masters-theses/1219>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact [scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu](mailto:scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu).

A SURVEY OF THE NOVELS OF  
CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN

A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of English  
University of Richmond

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by  
George Calvin Longest  
August, 1961

Approved for the  
Department of English and  
the Graduate School by

Laurel F. Ball  
Director of Thesis

Laurel F. Ball  
Chairman of the English Department

Dean of the Graduate School

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN—BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. BROWN'S PLOTS: SIGNIFICANT SOURCES AND INFLUENCES ...	13
III. ALCUIN AND THE NOVELS .....	34
IV. CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN AND THE GOTHIC NOVEL .....	47
V. BROWN'S SIMILITUDE IN CHARACTERIZATION .....	59
VI. CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN: A CRITICAL EVALUATION .....	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	78
APPENDIX .....	81

A CHRONOLOGY OF BROWN'S NOVELS

- 1798--Wieland; or, the Transformation.
- 1799--Ormond; or, the Secret Witness, Arthur Mervyn (Part I), and Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker.
- 1800--Arthur Mervyn (Part II).
- 1801--Clara Howard and Jane Talbot.
- 1822--Carwin the Bilquist (English edition).

Fielding, Richardson, and Scott occupied pedestals. In a niche was deposited the bust of our countryman, the author of Arthur Mervyn.

Nathaniel Hawthorne

## CHAPTER I

### CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN—BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

Before 1790 there had been little fiction written in America. Since Charles Brockden Brown was the first American to rely on his pen for an income, the term "Father of American Literature" belongs logically to him.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Brockden Brown was born on January 17, 1771, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His parents were Elijah and Mary Armitt Brown, both of whom were of good Quaker stock.<sup>2</sup> Charles was his parents' fifth son, and he was named for Charles Brockden, an official of the city of Philadelphia for more than fifty years and Elijah Brown's own uncle.<sup>3</sup>

At a very early age Brown's philosophy was greatly influenced by "the liberal thinking of the Friends." Even as a child Brown developed broad humanitarian concepts:

It is incumbent upon a generous-minded person to hate war and dueling, to support the anti-slavery movement, to ameliorate the plight of the underprivileged, to strive for social justice, and to strike off ancient fetters abridging human freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Brown's paternal and maternal ancestors were devout Quakers. The Quakers believed in "the right of private judgment and the rejection of

---

<sup>1</sup>F. L. Pattee, Introduction to Charles Brockden Brown, Wieland; or, the Transformation (New York, 1926), p. ix.

<sup>2</sup>"Charles Brockden Brown," Dictionary of American Biography, 1929, III, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup>Harry R. Warfel, Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist. (Gainesville, 1949), p. 21.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

sectarian beliefs—baptism, the doctrine of the Trinity, all sacraments, forms, and ceremonies." They sought to return to the spirituality and simplicity of the early Christians, and emphasized "humane ideas and philanthropic actions." Among Quaker goals were the abolition of slavery and prison reform. The Browns as members of this sect were typical—simple, devout and highly moral.<sup>5</sup>

As a child, Brown was "mystical, meditative, and noncombative." These traits were undoubtedly the result of his own delicate health, which ultimately forced him to turn to reading and abandon the outdoor activities of his own companions. It was also his physical frailty that forced him to leave the famous school of William Proud at Philadelphia.

Upon his withdrawal from Proud's school, Brown, on the advice of both physician and schoolmaster, set out on a walking tour of the Pennsylvania countryside:

I preferred to ramble in the forest and loiter on the hill; perpetually to change the scene; to scrutinize the endless variety of objects; to compare one leaf and pebble with another; to pursue those trains of thought which their resemblances and differences suggested; to inquire what it was that gave them this place, structure, and form, were more agreeable employments than ploughing and threshing. My frame was delicate and feeble. Exposure to wet blasts and vertical suns was sure to make me sick.<sup>6</sup>

William Proud had urged a higher education for Brown, and the University of Pennsylvania was only a few blocks from Brown's home, but Brown never commenced a higher education, for his parents, like

---

<sup>5</sup>David Lee Clark, Charles Brockden Brown, Pioneer Voice of America (Durham, 1952), p. 16.

<sup>6</sup>William H. Prescott, Biographical and Critical Miscellanies (New York, 1845), pp. 4-5.



all good Quakers, had an abhorrence for classical and scientific knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

In his adolescent years Brown led a retired life, reading, walking, and studying:

. . . the rapture with which he held communion with his own thoughts amid the gloom of surrounding woods, where his fancy peopled every object with ideal beings, and the barrier between himself and the world of spirits seemed burst by the force of meditation.<sup>8</sup>

It was about this time that Brown first began writing. At the age of sixteen he produced three epic poems, now lost, on Columbus, Pizzaro, and Cortez. These three works were the first to demonstrate his youthful ability as a poet.<sup>9</sup>

Brown's first published work was a series of papers entitled "The Rhapsodist," which were contributed to the Columbian Magazine (Philadelphia, August-November, 1789), and devoted to the "glorifying of the romantic revolutionary soul."<sup>10</sup>

In 1787 Brown was apprenticed to Alexander Willcocks, a Philadelphia lawyer, and he embarked upon a career in law with all the enthusiasm of which he was capable. While studying under Willcocks, he joined the Belles Lettres Club and thus was able to pursue the training necessary for his profession and at the same time devote himself to his growing interest in writing.<sup>10</sup>

Brown's entrance into the Belles Lettres Club was at the invitation of a youth named Davidson, a fellow law student. At the

---

<sup>7</sup>Clark, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup>Prescott, pp. 4-5.

<sup>9</sup>Pattee, pp. x-xi.

<sup>10</sup>"Charles Brockden Brown," p. 107.

first meeting Brockden Brown addressed the group on the objects of the society—it was a trite, high-flown exhortation to his fellows "to ornament the mind as well as to improve the understanding." At later meetings Brown spoke on "the relation, dependence, and connection of the several parts of knowledge." The speech was comprised of generalizations instead of precise factual information; "descriptive artistry did not sharpen the outlines of somewhat nebulous concepts." These weaknesses permeated Brown's writing to the end of his career.<sup>11</sup>

From 1789 to 1791 he worked as a copyist for Willcocks, who was the City Recorder. This monotonous occupation was by no means in accord with his creative soul:

"The task assigned [me] was technical and formal," he complained. "I was perpetually encumbered with the rubbish of the law, and waded with laborious steps through its endless tautologies, its impertinent circuities, its lying assertions and hateful artifices. Nothing occurred to relieve or diversify the scene. It was one round of scrawling jargon."<sup>12</sup>

In 1793 he gave up law for literature. This choice brought upon him the sharp disapproval of both parents and friends.<sup>13</sup> But Brown felt he was not suited to a career in law:

He professed that he could not reconcile it with his ideas of morality to become indiscriminately the defender of right or wrong; thereby intimating, if not asserting, that a man must, in the practice of law, not only deviate from morality, but become the champion of injustice . . . .<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup>Warfel, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>13</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, p. 107.

<sup>14</sup>Clark, p. 31.

With his entrance into literature as a career, he drifted back and forth from Philadelphia to New York.<sup>15</sup> It was in New York that he first met Dr. Elihu Hubbard Smith, noted Hartford Wit, who combined the duties of a medical profession with the joys of writing prose and rhyme. It was Dr. Smith who brought Brown into the Friendly Society of New York, where he came into contact with such men as Samuel Lathram Mitchell, James Kent, and William Dunlap (his later biographer). Brown remained here in residence from 1798 to 1801.

As early as April 29, 1792, Brown was writing odes, and they were read by William W. Wilkins, a fellow law student. Wilkins in one of his letters to Brown compares the young poet to Pindar.<sup>17</sup>

Brown intended to publish a series of essays in dialogue form on the rights of women. In order to give Dr. Smith some idea of what his essays were like, Brown sent him the first two parts of Alcuin in August, 1797. Smith later published the work at his own expense on April 27, 1798, in order to further Brown's literary career. The Philadelphia Weekly Magazine later printed Part I and a portion of Part II under the title The Rights of Women.<sup>18</sup>

Sky-Walk; or, The Man Unknown to Himself was placed in the hands of the publisher James Watters, who died of the yellow fever in Philadelphia in 1798. The executors of Watters' estate refused to finish the publication or to sell the portions that had been published. Brown

---

<sup>15</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, p. 107.

<sup>16</sup>Prescott, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup>Clark, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup>Warfel, p. 81.

was really pleased with their decision, for he knew he could incorporate the lost work into later novels. 19

While in New York Brown contracted the dreaded yellow fever in its milder form. William Johnson, Brown's roommate, wrote to Dunlap on September 21, 1798:

Charles has gone to my brother's in Greenwich Street. Since Sunday he has stayed with Dr. Miller. He is languid and pale, but having taken medicine by the advice of Dr. M. he wants only to be restored to strength. I wish to get out of this hateful city. As soon as Charles is strong enough to bear the fatigue of travelling, shall either visit you at [Perth Amboy?] or go to Middleton.<sup>20</sup>

Brown's first piece of published poetry was probably "An Inscription for General Washington's Tombstone." It was published on February 26, 1789, in The State Gazette of North Carolina:

The shade of great Newton shall mourn,  
And yield him Philosophy's throne.  
The palm from her brow shall be torn,  
And given to Washington alone.

His brows ever shall be adorn'd  
With laurels that never decay;  
His laws mighty nations unborn  
And ages remote shall obey.

Him liberty crown'd with her wreath;  
Philosophy shew'd him her plan,  
Whilst the Muses inscrib'd underneath  
The hero, the sage, and the man.

Let candour then write on his tomb:  
Here America's favorite lies,  
Whose soul for the want of due room,<sup>21</sup>  
Has left us to range in the skies.

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>20</sup>Clark, p. 127.

<sup>21</sup>Warfel, p. 32.

Brown had also planned at one time to seek his future in drama. William Dunlap, who had achieved some success as a playwright, endeavored to set Brown on a career in drama. When Dunlap's tragedy, The Fatal Deception; or, The Progress of Guilt, was presented on October 29, 1794, Brown definitely turned from the dramatic form: "My sufferings during that evening the play really was a poor example of drama were such as to make me unalterably determined never to be an author."<sup>22</sup>

Brown, however, is primarily known as a novelist. His first and most successful novel, and probably the best of his six, was Wieland; or, The Transformation. It was finished on September 6, 1798, and published shortly thereafter.

Arthur Mervyn, his second novel, was begun in Philadelphia in 1798, but completed and published in two parts in 1799 and 1800. The novel also appeared in installments in the second volume of The Weekly Magazine. The scenes of depression caused by the yellow fever in the novel are particularly reminiscent of Brown's own withdrawal from Philadelphia to avoid contagion in 1793, and the death of Dr. Smith in 1798 by the same disease.<sup>23</sup>

Brown's next novel was Ormond; or, the Secret Witness (1799). In mid-December Brown wrote the following to his brother in Philadelphia:

Some time since, I bargained with the publisher of Wieland for a new performance, part of which only was written: and the publication commencing immediately, I was obliged to apply with the utmost diligence to the pen, in order to keep pace with the press.

I call my book Ormond; or, the Secret Witness. I hope to finish the writing and publication together, before new-year's-day.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 52-53

<sup>23</sup>"Charles Brockden Brown," p. 107.

<sup>24</sup>Pattoe, pp. xci-ccii.

Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker was also produced in 1799. Written in serial form, the novel first appeared in The Monthly Magazine and American Review, of which Brown was the editor. In the May issue of the same magazine Brown began the Memoirs of Stephen Calvert, also serially published, but he abandoned it in December, 1800, because of financial failure.<sup>25</sup>

The year 1801 witnessed the publication of Brown's two epistolary novels, Clara Howard; or, the Enthusiasm of Love and Jane Talbot, both inferior works written without literary or psychological enthusiasm. Moreover, these were Brown's last two novels, for financial failure as a writer turned him more and more away from fiction; and Philadelphia and his brothers turned him more and more towards the practical:

From the regions of poetry and romance, records Dunlap, from visionary schemes of Utopian systems of government and manners, Mr. Brown, like many others, became a sober recorder of things as they are.

The novelist within him died with the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

Brown had also tried the political romance at an earlier time, for on October 17, 1796, Brown read to Smith Sketches of a History of Carsol. Very little information on this romance remains. We do know, however, that it was a pseudo historical novel on King Arthur and his return to the island of Carsol in 1650-1680 in order to restore the island to the state of independence it had enjoyed under his ancestor, Charles Martel, in 1300. It was a very poor and immature work, for there was no description or conversation, and it was highly generalized and chaotic.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. xciii.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. xciii-xciv.

<sup>27</sup> Warfel, pp. 71-72.

Since his novels had earned him very little money, Brown next turned to the magazine as a career. The first magazine he had written for was the Monthly Magazine and American Review (New York) founded by the Friendly Society in April, 1799; but its success was short-lived, and it passed out of existence in December, 1800.<sup>28</sup> In 1803, however, Brown met with slightly better success in Philadelphia, where he started The Literary Magazine and American Register, which gave the current news and reviewed American literature. After five years of some success, Brown abandoned this Philadelphia magazine to write a comprehensive year book and encyclopedia (The American Register) and several pamphlets—on the Louisiana Purchase, British treaties, and foreign commerce (discussed in the appendix of this work).<sup>29</sup>

In November, 1804, Brown married Elizabeth Linn, the daughter of Dr. William Linn (a noted Presbyterian minister of New York) and sister to the American poet, John Linn. The couple settled in Philadelphia, where Brown was attempting to win a living from his production of magazines.<sup>30</sup>

Charles and Elizabeth Linn settled at Brown's small house on Eleventh between Walnut and Chestnut Streets. Thomas Sully, the famous American artist, left this description of Brown:

I saw him a little before his death. I had never known him, never heard of him, never read any of his works. He was in a deep decline. It was in the month of November—our Indian summer—when the air is full of smoke. Passing the window

---

<sup>28</sup>Prescott, pp. 108-109.

<sup>29</sup>Pattée, p. xxiv.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. xxv.

one day I was caught by the sight of a man, with a remarkable physiognomy, writing at a table in a dark room. The sun shone directly on his head. I never shall forget it. The leaves were falling then—it was Charles Brockden Brown.<sup>31</sup>

Joseph Neal, the author, left this description of the Browns' house: "a low, dirty, two-story brick house, standing in a little from the street with never a tree or shrub near it."<sup>32</sup>

In 1805 Brown began Sketches of the History of Carrils and Ormes. It was even more chaotic than Carsol. The work sought to trace the history of religious nationalism in England from the establishment of Christianity by Arthur in 70 A. D. to the present (1805). A complicated series of events was presented.<sup>33</sup>

Brown was a bookish person, always reading. Books comforted him. Depression, melancholy, and gastric trouble no doubt turned him to reading. Although, he was denied normal social pleasures, Brown loved conversation. "As soon as a friend started a topic, Brown prattled endlessly, not so much pleased at his eloquence as relieved from bodily aches."<sup>34</sup>

Brown's reading was extensive. He read through the encyclopedia and not only maintained memberships in several libraries, but also acquired a large personal library. Milton was his favorite poet; Shakespeare was constantly reread.

Brown was not a handsome man, but was "short and dumpy" and had light eyes and slightly sandy hair. His face expressed not his intellect, but his ill health. The lines of his forehead appeared to be "corroded by consumption."<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup>"Portrait," The Critic, XLVII (September, 1905), p. 230.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>33</sup>Warfel, p. 72

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 9.



Although Brown's attitude on life was basically cheerful, his stories were sadder. This antithesis between his personality and his writings he once explained to John Bernard:

I am conscious of a double mental existence. When I am sufficiently excited to write, all my ideas flow naturally and irresistibly through the medium of sympathies which steep them in shade, though the feelings they bring are so pleasing as to prevent my perceiving it. The tone of my works being thus the necessary result of the advancement of those truths or discoveries which lead me to composition, I am made so happy by it for the time as to be ignorant of its real effect upon my reader. This is, therefore, my imaginative being. My social one has more of light than darkness upon it, because, unless I could carry into society the excitement which makes me write, I could not fall into its feelings. Perhaps the difference of the two may be thus summed up: in my literary moods I am aiming at making the world something better than I find it; in my social ones I am content to take it as it is. <sup>36</sup>

Brown possessed the soul of a writer; when he was writing, he experienced his greatest happiness--"This employment," he told a friend, "was just as necessary to my mind as sustenance to my frame." But because of the pressing financial needs of his wife and four children, Brown was eventually forced to abandon writing altogether and join his brothers' mercantile house. With the loss of a large cargo at sea, the firm faced bankruptcy in 1804 and was finally dissolved in 1807. <sup>37</sup>

At the age of thirty-nine, Brown developed a dangerous pulmonary disorder further complicated by tuberculosis. By this time, he was disillusioned and impoverished. A previous letter to a friend recalls

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.10

<sup>37</sup> Charles Brockden Brown, pp. 108-109.

the pathos of his life:

When have I known that lightness and vivacity of mind, which the divine flow of health, even in calamity, produces in some men? Never—scarcely ever. Not longer than half an hour at a time since I have called myself a man.<sup>38</sup>

Brown was constantly urged by both friends and family to undertake a sea voyage for the sake of his health. But, since his financial situation would not allow him to be accompanied by his wife and children, he remained in Philadelphia, where he died on February 22, 1810, of tuberculosis.<sup>39</sup>

The exact location of Brown's grave was not known for many years until Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer located and revealed it in his Literary History of Philadelphia. Brown was buried in "Grave 16, Row 18 in the Southern District" of the Arch Street Meeting House Yard.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup>"Portrait," p. 231.

<sup>39</sup>Prescott, p. 49.

<sup>40</sup>"First American Novelist," The Bookman, XXV (March, 1907), pp. 3-5.

## CHAPTER II

### BROWN'S PLOTS: SIGNIFICANT SOURCES AND INFLUENCES

The plots of Brown's novels are extremely complicated; they often become deeply involved with extraneous subplots and superfluous narrative and description. On the whole, however, the creation of an exciting story was Brown's greatest asset.

The plot of Wieland; or, the Transformation was built upon a terror motif. This motif was the mysterious and inexplicable super-vention of spontaneous combustion, which caused the death of the first Wieland who came to America, and the extraordinary biloquism of Carwin.

A small summer house, which stood upon a precipice close by the Wieland mansion, was the frequent scene of terror in the novel. Clara Wieland, the sister of the hero, and the narrator of the novel as well, was one of the first to meditate upon the appearance of an unexplained light at the summerhouse:

Within the columns he beheld what he could no better describe, than by saying that it resembled a cloud impregnated with light. It had the brightness of flame, but was without its upward motion. It did not occupy the whole area, and rose but a few feet above the floor. No part of the building was on fire. This appearance was astonishing. He approached the temple. As he went forward the light retired, and, when he put his feet within the apartment, utterly vanished.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the mystery which frequently shrouded the little house in the garden, Clara, her brother Wieland, and Wieland's wife, Catharine, lived together very happily. This happiness, however was short-lived, for the mysterious commands which were heard by the members of the family kept them in a constant state of terror.

---

<sup>1</sup>Wieland, p. 19

Eventually these voices, which are later revealed to be the products of the sinister Carwin's ventriloquism, bring about the defamation of Clara Wieland's character; and Wieland, through an extraordinary zeal to obey the voices of his "daity," goes insane after murdering his wife and four children.

Clara Wieland, the true and virtuous Richardsonian heroine of the novel, manages to save her own life from Wieland's madness by exposing to him his own betrayal by Carwin. The enraged Wieland then seeks to revenge himself on Carwin, but the notorious bilquist was able to escape and wander off into the wilds of the Pennsylvania countryside.

Ultimately Clara does manage to save her good name and effect a reconciliation between herself and the estranged Pleyel, the object of her affections. After her marriage to Pleyel, Clara Wieland reveals the essential moral of the novel:

If Wieland had framed juster notions of moral duty, and of the diviner attributes; or if I had been gifted with ordinary equanimity of foresight, the double-tongued deceiver (Carwin) would have been baffled and repelled.<sup>2</sup>

Brown hinted at a source for the plot of Wieland in his "Advertisement": "If history furnishes one parallel fact, it is a significant vindication of the writer; but most readers will probably recollect an authentic case, remarkably similar to that of Wieland.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 273.

This historic case was probably the account of a similar murder which appeared in the New York Weekly Magazine.<sup>3</sup>

The title of this sensational news article was "An Account of a Murder Committed by Mr. J \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_, upon his Family in December, A. D. 1781."

J \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_, the prototype for Wieland was a farmer living near Tomhannock, New York, who belonged to "one of the most respectable families in this State," and who, "though he was not in the most affluent circumstances . . . . maintained his family (which consisted of a wife and four children), very comfortably."

J \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_, moreover, was described by the account in such a fashion as to provide Brown not only with his plot for Wieland, but also with his basic characterization of the hero.

J \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_ was depicted by the magazine as being gentle, industrious, sober, and upright.

One Sunday, as the article stated, J \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_'s sister visited him to participate in worship with the family. Mrs. J \_\_\_\_\_ n, as she was referred to by the article, was probably the original for Clara Wieland. In any event, Mrs. J \_\_\_\_\_ n found her brother grave and affectionate as usual.

After the J \_\_\_\_\_ ns had gone, a spirit appeared and commanded J \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_ to destroy his idols and burn his Bible. J \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_, however, forced his wife to burn the Bible. A second spirit, possibly the voice of his own conscience, tried to dissuade him from following the dictates of the first apparition, but he steered himself into following what he thought to be his duty. The first of \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>3</sup> Volume II, p. 20 (July 20, 1796) and Volume II, p. 28 (July 27, 1796)

his "idols" to be destroyed was his favorite horse. The spirit then demanded the sacrifice of more idols; so he decided to murder his four children.

Mrs. J\_\_\_\_\_ Y\_\_\_\_\_, realizing her husband's apparent madness after he had so ruthlessly taken the life of one of their children, then fled from the house. Her husband, however, soon pursued her and killed the "babe" in her arms with an axe. "Without further hesitation Y\_\_\_\_\_ dashed out the brains of his two sleeping boys. . . ." The same brutal method was used to sacrifice his last idol, his wife-- "I repeated the blows till I could not distinguish one feature of her face."<sup>4</sup>

Y\_\_\_\_\_ then decided to burn his own house and blame the murders on Indians, but felt he could not tell a "horrible lie." His next move was to track down his sister and sacrifice her to complete the expiation of his sins, but Mrs. J\_\_\_\_\_n was able to overpower and sufficiently bind him as to render any future attempts at violence futile.

The authorities were soon notified, and J\_\_\_\_\_ Y\_\_\_\_\_ was removed to the nearest penal institution. Like the maniacal Wieland, he managed to escape from his confinement several times and posed a constant threat to his sister's life. He was eventually confined in the mental hospital at Albany.

It was later reported that the madman would address his spirit in this manner--"My father, thou knowest that it was in obedience to thy commands, and for thy glory that I have done this deed." Wieland, up until his realization of his own duplicity, would in a similar manner address his "deity."

---

The similarities between Wieland and this historic account are, indeed, pronounced. The heroes in the actions of both stories were exalted in spirit. Both men felt their actions had stemmed from some angelic and not satanic force, and they both resented with vigor their resulting infamy. Wieland and J \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_, moreover, professed to be obeying the dictates of their "fathers."

Wieland followed the actual murder closely. Wieland, like J \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_, murdered his wife and four children and attempted to destroy his sister. In both cases, the sister was the instrument in bringing the murderer to justice.<sup>5</sup>

Brown, however, did vary his plot somewhat. He did not, for instance, use the episode of J \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_ forcing his daughter, Rebecca, to dance around her mother's body. He also rejected any plan for Wieland's burning his own home to destroy evidence. In addition, Brown's madman escaped from prison three times, not twice like J \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_.

One of Brown's aims in Wieland was to show that evidence gained through one sense is untrustworthy. Brown felt that the "will is the tool of understanding, which must fashion its conclusions on the notices of sense." Theodore Wieland allowed his senses to be overrun by religious mania; Clara was overcome by terror, and Pleyel by disgust. Theodore, moreover, violated the laws of rationalism by letting his senses lead him astray, refusing to accept any solution but supernaturalism, and by ignoring the counsel of those who tried to help him.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>Ibid

<sup>6</sup>Harry R. Warfel, "Charles Brockden Brown's German Sources," Modern Language Quarterly, I (September, 1940), p. 364.

German literature also played an important part in Wieland, for Brown "reflected the heightened British interest in things German in the late 1790's." Such famous literary men as Henry Mackenzie, Thomas Holcroft, Matthew Gregory Lewis, and Sir Walter Scott, whom Brown in all probability must have read, gave great publicity to the extraordinary "Sturm und Drang" literature imported from Germany. The most famous German translation of the time was Christianne Naubert's Hermann von Unna (1788), which was translated into English in 1794.

H. Caritat, who published Wieland, kept a circulating library in New York City, where Brown spent a great deal of his time between 1796 and 1800. Brown also passed much of his life in Philadelphia, which brought him into contact with one of the largest German settlements in America and ultimately brought about his interest in German literature.

In his letter to William Wood Wilkins (1793) Brown quoted from Wieland's Oberon (Canto VII, 52-53). Brown had also read a series of criticisms on Christopher Martin Wieland's Samliche Werke and Leopold Stolberg's Travels Through Germany. The character Baroness Theresa de Stolberg was evidently taken from Stolberg's work and used by Brown in Wieland as a minor rival for Clara in her pursuit of Pleyel.<sup>7</sup>

It was Cajeton Tschink's Geisterseher (1796-1797) that provided the theme for Wieland. The character of Carwin undoubtedly came from The Victim of Magical Delusion, where a character strikingly similar to Wieland is led astray by the machinations of Miguel.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 363-364.



Brown was extremely close to the thoughts of the author of The Victim of Magical Delusion, or at least to the thoughts of a later translator of the work. Brown might have gone so far as to lift the preface of the work bodily into his own novel:

The sources from which we derive the knowledge of what is good and true, originate from Sensation, Experience, Reflection, Reasoning, and from the genuine accounts we receive of the observations and the experiences of others; and we cannot miss the road leading to the Sanctuary of Truth, if we make a proper use of all these different sources of knowledge. If we, however, conceive an exclusive attachment to one of them, and for instance, confine ourselves merely to sensation and experience, if we desire to see and feel those things which cannot be perceived by the senses, but are known to us only through the medium of our understanding; if we, for example, are not satisfied with what the contemplation of nature, and the gospel teach us of God, but desire to have an immediate and physical communion with the invisible; we then cannot avoid the deviations of fanaticism, and are easily led to confound our feelings and ideas with external effects; the effects of our soul with effects produced by superior beings; we believe that we see, hear, and perceive what exists no where but in the imagination; we stray from ourselves and from the objects around us to a world of ideas which is the workmanship of our fancy, and are misled by the vivacity and strength of our feelings, and mistake for reality, what is merely ideal. Thus we dream while we are awake, and sooner or later find ourselves woefully deceived. All pretended apparitions, every communication with superior beings, the belief in witches, sorcerers, and in the secret power of magical spells, owe their existence to this species of fanaticism. . . .<sup>9</sup>

Aside from the German influence, Wieland was most affected by Godwinian philosophy. Godwin's belief that no human virtue was secure from degeneracy was the very basis for the plot of Wieland, especially as it was exemplified in Theodore Wieland and his sister, Clara.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 364-365.

<sup>10</sup>Pattee, p. xxxvi.

William Godwin's Caleb Williams also had a strong effect on Wieland, particularly in the characterization of the villain, Carwin, Carwin, like Caleb Williams, was defended by Brown despite his misdeeds, and the pity of the reader is solicited by Brown for this evil character.<sup>11</sup>

The Richardsonian influence on the novel, however, was as pronounced as that of Godwinianism. The novel is told in the first person and is addressed "in the epistolary form, by the lady whose story it contains, to a small number of friends."<sup>12</sup>

A certain Radcliffian element also pervades the work in that the villain Carwin is somewhat reminiscent of Mrs. Radcliffe's Italian Schedoni in The Mysteries of Udolpho.<sup>13</sup>

Thus was the plot of Wieland evolved. The central action of the novel was inspired by a famous news account of the eighteenth century; the characters' names were taken from famous German novels translated at that time, and Brown's underlying thought for the novel was in all probability borrowed from The Victim of Magical Delusion.

According to Dunlap, Brown was working on his Memoirs of Carwin the Bilquist in September, 1798. Because of the presence of the plague, the sequel to Wieland was abandoned.

---

<sup>11</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>  
Wieland, p. 4

<sup>13</sup>  
Pattes, p. xxvii.

The English edition of the work, however, did appear in 1822 with the following preface:

The deep interest excited by the works of this Author, already known in England, arises chiefly from the skill with which he has developed the hidden springs and complicated machinery of human actions; and from the talent he has displayed in tracing the intricacies of the chain which connects causes apparently trivial with stupendous events. Unlike most other writers, his modes of thinking, the systems of ratiocination with which he invests his characters, and the peculiarities arising from the state of society in which his scenes are laid, are more the objects of our admiration or attention than the incidents or themes of his fictions. The incomplete state, in which the following posthumous pieces have been left is therefore the more to be regretted.<sup>14</sup>

Because Brown had promised in Wieland to satisfy the reader's curiosity as to Carwin's background, Carwin, the Bilquist is the diary of Frank Carwin. The scene of this novel, like Wieland is principally laid in the eastern district of Pennsylvania.

Written in the first person, Carwin the Bilquist is the detailed account of the notorious life of the villain of Wieland. The plot revolves around Carwin's birth in rural Pennsylvania, his early childhood, and his pilgrimage to Europe.

Carwin, the second son of a Pennsylvania farmer, was a fairly well-educated youth. At a very early age, however, he demonstrated a meditative and pensive sort of personality. The most extraordinary event in his life was his discovery that he was the possessor of the art of mimesis of any human voice as well as the ability to "throw" such a voice.

---

<sup>14</sup>Clark, pp. 159-160.

After discovering his great gift, Carwin abandoned the farm life he so much despised and set out to seek his fortune in the world. One of the first people that Carwin came upon was the somewhat mystical character, Ludloe.

Ludloe eventually persuaded Carwin to embark with him for the continent. The account then reveals the many adventures of Carwin in Europe. Ludloe, for some unknown purpose and at his own expense, began to educate Carwin and eventually helped him to attain the position of a gentleman.

The ultimate goal that Ludloe set for Carwin was a marriage with an affluent and noble Irish woman, Mrs. Bennington, Ludloe's own cousin. Ludloe also promised to introduce Carwin into a strange, mystical, and somewhat terrible secret society.

Possibly the best quality of Carwin was Brown's use of psychology. To Brown, Carwin was a man of great potential, and like himself, he was quiet, meditative, and noncombative.

Carwin's insatiable desire to meddle in the affairs of other people and to bring ruin upon those who came to know him was the result of his disillusionment with the world in general and the strange influence exerted over him by Ludloe.

In reality, the novel, if it had been finished, would probably have rivaled Wieland, because its plot was far less-complicated, and the action moved faster. Moreover, the setting unlike that of Wieland, was varied from time to time (Pennsylvania, Ireland, and Spain).

Carwin, moreover, was made more of a heroic figure to be pitied in this sequel, and was endowed with more human qualities than he possessed in Wieland. His ventriloquism was a gift which he used for his own pur-

poses, and it provided for the injection of some humor.

The novel, as the preface to the English edition indicated, was very popular throughout Europe. It was a frequent influence on many later writers, and among its admirers were Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe and Mary Shelley.<sup>15</sup>

Brown's love of a moral, as well as his didactic tendency, was the very basis for Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793:

The evils of pestilence by which this city [Philadelphia] has lately been afflicted will probably form an era in its history. They have not been less fertile of instruction to the moral observer to whom they have furnished new displays of the influence of human passions and motives.

Amidst the medical and political discussions which are now afloat in the community relative to this topic, the author of these remarks has ventured to methodize his own reflections, and to weave into an humble narrative such incidents as appeared to him most instructive and remarkable among those<sup>16</sup> which came within the sphere of his own observation.

Arthur Mervyn, like Carwin, was written in the form of a diary. The plot, an extremely complicated one, began with a youth, Arthur Mervyn, being taken in to the home of Dr. Stevens, the narrator of the novel. Mervyn, who was sick from the plague, then related his adventures to Dr. and Mrs. Stevens in order to allay their curiosity and partially repay his debt of gratitude to them.

Like the character Carwin, Mervyn preferred as a young boy to spend his time in reading, philosophizing, and studying nature. But when his widowed father married their notoriously infamous serving-girl, Mervyn left home.

---

<sup>15</sup>Memoirs of Carwin the Bilquist (New York, 1926), p. 275.

<sup>16</sup>Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793 (Philadelphia, 1889), p. 3.

Mervyn's main adventures, however, began when he became the companion of Welbeck, a conniving, dangerous seducer. Taken in by Thomas Welbeck, Mervyn soon managed to rise to the position of a gentleman of leisure, but the happiness did not last long, for he soon discovered the villainous character of his benefactor-employer.

Also under the protection of Thomas Welbeck was a French immigrant, Mademoiselle Clemenza Lodi. Mademoiselle Lodi and her fortune had been entrusted by her brother into the hands of Welbeck. Welbeck, in the role of the typical Brownian seducer, soon managed to convert both the fortune and the girl to his own uses.

Eventually Arthur Mervyn abandoned the home of Thomas Welbeck, and Mervyn's employer very shortly faced financial ruin. Clemenza Lodi, however, provided still another adventure, for Mervyn, because of his absurd nobility, was determined to set her on a course for future happiness and rectitude.

After Welbeck's financial ruin, Mervyn placed Mademoiselle Lodi in the custody of the Villars. The ladies of the Villars household were shortly discovered by Mervyn to be the operators of an infamous brothel. Since Mervyn entertained a great admiration for Mademoiselle Lodi, he finally managed to obtain more respectable lodgings for her in the home of the affluent Mrs. Wentworth.

The remainder of Arthur Mervyn was fairly insignificant. Ultimately, Mervyn became a doctor and married the respectable and fashionable Aescha Fielding. Thomas Welbeck, after long eluding the authorities, was finally captured and sent to prison, where he later died.

The greatest influence on Arthur Mervyn was undoubtedly Brown's own life. It was probably Brown's own autobiography, for Brown was a frequent analyst of his emotions and a student of his own life--"I have not been deficient in the pursuit of that necessary branch of knowledge, the study of myself."<sup>17</sup>

Brown's description of the yellow fever that ravaged Philadelphia was an actual experience that he had lived through, for Brown had not only fled Philadelphia in 1793 to avoid the contagion of the plague, but had experienced its terrible powers while he nursed Dr. Elihu H. Smith, who later died of the plague in New York in 1798.

Aside from the autobiographical influence on the novel, the plot of Arthur Mervyn is indebted, like Wieland, to Caleb Williams. Arthur Mervyn followed in the same pattern as did Caleb Williams, a youthful innocent lost in the hands of a patron turned enemy.<sup>18</sup>

Brown's philosophy also played an important role in the novel, for it struggles to expound the idea of vanquishing terror during the pestilence. Brown knew this terror was the most evil manifestation of the disease. Equally philosophical in the novel were Brown's own ideas on the punishment of crime; the woman's place in society, which he had long and arduously defended; and the perfection of marriage.<sup>19</sup>

Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker followed shortly after Arthur Mervyn and dealt chiefly with the phenomenon of somnambulism, the

---

<sup>17</sup>Prescott, p. 11

<sup>18</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, " Dictionary of American Biography, p. 107.

<sup>19</sup>Harry R. Warfel, "Charles Brockden Brown's German Sources," loc. cit., p. 360.

adventures of the hero, Edgar Huntly, and his encounters with the frontier Indians of Pennsylvania. Brown's preface to the work reveals the purpose and over-all scope of the novel:

The flattering reception that has been given, by the public, to Arthur Marvyn, has prompted the writer to solicit a continuance of the same favour, and to offer to the world a new performance.

America has offered new views to the naturalist and politician, but has seldom furnished themes to the moral painter. That new springs of action and new motives to curiosity should operate,—that the field of investigation, opened to us by our own country, should differ essentially from those which exist in Europe,—may be readily conceived. The sources of amusement to the fancy and instruction to the heart, that are peculiar to ourselves, are equally numerous and inexhaustible. It is the purpose of this work to profit by some of these sources; to exhibit a series of adventures, growing out of the condition of our country, and connected with one of the most common and most wonderful devices, [somnambulism] or affections of the human frame.<sup>20</sup>

Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker was written in the form of a single epistle. The hero and narrator of the events that take place in the plot is Edgar Huntly, who communicates his adventures to his sweetheart, Mary Waldegrave: "To keep thee in ignorance of what has happened would justly offend thee. There is no method of informing thee except by letter, and this method, must I, therefore, adopt."<sup>21</sup>

The novel began with the hero, Edgar Huntly, endeavouring to bring justice the killer of Mary Waldegrave's brother, who had been shot just outside his lodgings. While Huntly was inspecting the scene of the crime, he happened upon a man who was frantically digging for

---

<sup>20</sup>Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker (Philadelphia, 1887) pp. 3-4.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 6



some object: "Here I more deliberately reviewed the incidents that had just occurred. The inference was just, that the man, half clothed and digging, was a sleeper . . . ." <sup>22</sup>

Huntly's immediate conjecture was that this man, Clithero Edny, formed some connection with the murder of Waldegrave. When he decided to follow him, he was led through the wilds of Norwalk, a vast, uninhabited and pseudo-romantic frontier region of Pennsylvania.

After he learned that Clithero had nothing to do with the death of Waldegrave, Huntly then discovered that Clithero had isolated himself in the wilderness of Norwalk because of an unhappy love affair. At this point Huntly returned to his house, unhappily leaving Clithero to his fate.

Brown then plunged into a scene where Huntly was lost in the endless caverns of Norwalk. No explanation for Huntly's being there prepared the reader for this shock, but Brown later revealed that Huntly, too, was a victim of noctivagation, and it was this sickness that had brought him to the wild caves of Norwalk.

Huntly finally managed to escape from the caves, but this time he ran into even more dangers. After several encounters with some rampaging Delaware Indians, Huntly eventually managed to return home. Here, in seeking to bring about a reconciliation between Clithero and his beloved patroness, Mrs. Lorrimer, he almost brought about disaster, for it was later proved that Clithero intended to murder her.

Eventually, the mysteries of the novel were cleared up. The murder of Waldegrave had been committed by an Indian, and Clithero Edny

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

drowned while trying to escape from the ship that would have taken him to a mental institution.

The most notable influence on Edgar Huntly was that of Brown's previous unpublished novel, Sky-Walk. Brown used those fragments of Sky-Walk that he could remember by incorporating them into later novels. In Edgar Huntly, for example, the description of the wild district of norwalk was virtually taken from the unpublished novel.

Like most of Brown's novels, Edgar Huntly had a distinct moral. Although Brown did not point out this moral until near the end of this work, he did strive to demonstrate the folly of unconsidered, rash attempts to do good.<sup>23</sup>

Ormond; or, the Secret Witness was also written in the form of an epistle and was addressed to Brown's friend E. I. Rosenberg:

You are anxious to obtain some knowledge of the history of Constantia Dudley. I am well acquainted with your motives, and allow that they justify your curiosity. I am willing, to the utmost of my power, to comply with your request, and will now dedicate what leisure I have to the composition of her story.<sup>24</sup>

The over-all goal of Ormond was the perfection of woman as displayed in the characterization of Constantia Dudley. The novel, itself, was built around the adversities and misfortunes to which Constantia Dudley was subjected.

Stephen Dudley, the father of Constantia, was the artistically inclined son of an apothecary. When his father died, Stephen Dudley was forced to become an apothecary. For several years he managed his little shop very well, but when he allowed his apprentice, Thomas Craig, to assume more power, the apprentice ran off with the entire Dudley fortune and thus reduced the family to penury.

---

<sup>23</sup> Harry R. Warfel, "Charles Brockden Brown's German Sources," p.360.

The family then moved to a small cottage on the edge of town in order to reduce their living expenses. After the death of his wife, Mr. Dudley went blind from cataracts, and Constantia leased a less expensive house in Philadelphia. The income for the family was derived from Constantia, who managed to earn enough for their needs as a seamstress.

The action of the novel really began at this point. The yellow fever soon began to take hold of the city. For a while the Dudleys remained unaffected, but soon their neighborhood became infected, and it was only through Constantia's perseverance and foresight that the family was saved from death.

As Constantia was travelling through the streets one day, she happened to recognize the instrument of all her woe, the somewhat altered Thomas Craig. She followed him in hopes of demanding his aid and eventually met Ormond, the height of opulence and affluence.

Through Ormond's insistence, his mistress, Helena Cleaves, hired Constantia as her seamstress, and the two women soon became the best of friends. Eventually Helena committed suicide when she realized that Ormond would never love her. Her estate then devolved upon the Dudleys.

With their restoration to prosperity, the Dudleys underwent marked changes. Mr. Dudley regained his sight, and happiness once more reigned in the household, but this happiness was of short duration, for Ormond, realizing he could never overcome Stephen Dudley's dislike for him, gained admittance to the old man's bedchamber and killed him.

When Constantia's friend, Sophia Westwyn Courtland, urged her to flee from the mad Ormond, Constantia began to plan a trip abroad.

While stopping at her country estate, however, she was confronted by Ormond, who threatened her chastity, and Constantia, having no alternative, stabbed him in self-defense.

Brown's obvious debt to Caleb Williams again appeared in Ormond. Constantia Dudley, like Arthur Marvyn, represented the innocence of youth at the mercy of a benefactor turned enemy. It is this similarity of situation that makes Brown's novels so much akin to Caleb Williams.<sup>25</sup>

The Richardsonian influence on the novel was also a marked one, for Ormond delights in the triumphs of its heroine, Constantia Dudley, over every possible kind of adversity. Constantia, like Clarissa Harlow, was an intelligent and rational woman.

The autobiographical significance of the novel, however, is what makes it better than some of Brown's other novels (Jane Talbot and Clara Howard), for Brown had experienced many of the calamities of his heroine and was therefore able to endow his plot with more realism.

The episode of Constantia Dudley, for instance, saving her father's life, as well as her own, and that of their unpaid and loyal serving-girl, by a special diet is particularly reminiscent of the statement that Dunlap made of Brown's method of avoiding the contagion while he nursed Dr. Smith—Brown had "an habitual abstemiousness of diet."<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, Brown drew upon his knowledge of the plague years and his knowledge of human nature to devise the plot for Ormond. The setting was also vividly depicted because it embraced the Philadelphia and New

---

<sup>25</sup>"Charles Brockden Brown," The Dictionary of American Biography, p. 108.

<sup>26</sup>Prescott, p. 27.

York Brown knew so well.

Clara Howard; or, the Enthusiasm of Love (1801) was an epistolary novel in which the letters were collected and catalogued by the hero and sent to his young lover: "You ask me how all these things [his change of fortune] came about. The enclosed letters, which I have put into a regular series, contain all the information you wish."<sup>27</sup>

Clara Howard was Brown's most sentimental novel. Here again, Brown undoubtedly turned to Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe. Mary Wilmot, the betrothed of Philip Stanley, was deeply in love with Philip, but when she discovered that he was attracted to Clara Howard, she disappeared to leave the two to pursue their own happiness.

Clara Howard, however, could not bear the thought of having brought pain to anyone; so she ordered Philip to pursue Mary and marry her:

I never will be yours while Mary's condition is unknown. I never will be yours while she is single, unmarried to another, and unhappy. I will have no intercourse with you. I will not grant you even my esteem, unless you search for her [Mary], find her, and oblige her to accept your vows.<sup>28</sup>

This in turn led Philip to many travelling adventures, which were in reality the basis of the story.

Eventually after many long, sentimental epistles, Mary Wilmot decided to marry an old suitor, Sedley; and Clara Howard finally gave in and married Stanley. Brown's extremely poor ending for the novel was a double wedding for the two couples.

---

<sup>27</sup>Clara Howard; or, the Enthusiasm of Love (Philadelphia, 1887), p. 228.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 291

Jane Talbot was another epistolary novel by Brown that appeared in 1801. Its plot revolved around the heroine's struggles to marry her beloved suitor, Henry Colden. Henry Colden, however, was unable to gain the approval of Jane's benefactress, Mrs. Fiedler, because of his rumored Godwinism:

These letters showed Colden as the advocate of suicide; a scoffer at promises; the despiser of revelation, of Providence and a future state; an opponent of marriage, and as one who denied (shocking?) that anything but mere habit and positive law stood in the way of marriage between brother and sister, parent and child.<sup>29</sup>

Also important in the novel, however, was the fact that Jane's brother, Francis, was a notorious schemer who brought about the complete financial failure of Jane's father and absconded with a portion of her own small patrimony:

It was Tuesday evening on which I had lent the money to Frank. He had given me reason to believe that his embarrassments arose from his cotton-weaving scheme, and that the sum demanded from me was to pay the wages of craving but worthy labourers.<sup>30</sup>

Eventually, however, Jane managed to convince her benefactress of her suitor's sincerity and spotless character. Her brother Francis, who had long been a thorn in her side, left America to join the French Republican army. Ultimately, Jane, like Clara Howard managed to obtain the much-sought spiritual state of marital bliss by her marriage to Colden.

The only other incident of any significance in the novel was the appearance of a letter which found its way into Mrs. Fiedler's hands and indicated that Jane was guilty of some indiscretion: "But the letter,

---

<sup>29</sup>Jane Talbot (Philadelphia, 1887), p. 70

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 40

--that was a most disastrous accident. I had read very frequently this fatal billet. Who is it that could imitat your hand so exactly?"  
[Henry Colden to Jane Talbot]

The mystery was later cleared up by Colden, who proved that it was undoubtedly a work of forgery by a bitter rival of Jane's, Polly Jessup. Miss Jessup, in order to thwart Jane's chances, had written the letter in Jane's style and left it at Mrs. Fiedler's house to work Jane's ruin.

Aside from the influence of Richardson, Brown's own life played a large part in the contrivance of Jane Talbot. The incident of the letters that caused so much trouble to the hero and heroine is strongly reminiscent of Brown's relationship with his own fiancée, Elizabeth Linn. When Brown fell in love with Elizabeth Linn, she, like Jane Talbot, returned all of his romantic epistles, probably because of his own Godwinism. They were later reconciled, however, and their marriage was a "very happy and unusually tranquil one."<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup>Tranaine McDowell, "Unknown Parent," The Saturday Review, XXVI (April 4, 1953), p. 36.

## CHAPTER III

### ALCUIN AND THE NOVELS

Alcuin; a Dialogue was first published on April 27, 1798, at the expense of Dr. Elihu Hubbard Smith. Although Dr. Smith did not agree with some of the sentiments in the work, he was eager for its success.<sup>1</sup> Smith had the following to say of the publication of Alcuin in the "Advertisement" prefaced to it:

The following dialogue was put into my hands, the last spring, by a friend who resides at a great distance, with liberty to make it public. I have since been informed that he has continued the discussion of the subject, in another dialogue. The reception which the present publication shall meet will probably determine the author to withhold or print the continuation.

E. H. Smith<sup>2</sup>

New York, March, 1798

Alcuin is not really a dialogue; it begins as fiction, and only after some vacillation does it settle into the dialogue form." The opening portions of Part I comprise a "biographical portrait of Alcuin, a respectable schoolmaster of limited means and social experience, who has been invited by Dr. Waring to join a circle of friends."<sup>3</sup>

In reality, it was this circle of friends that acted as Brown's frame for the introduction and publication of his own ideas on the rights of women. Alcuin reveals the situation when he states:

I called last evening on Mrs. Carter. I had no previous acquaintance with her. Her brother is a man of letters, who, nevertheless, finds little leisure from the engagements of a toilsome profession.

---

<sup>1</sup>Warfel, p. 81

<sup>2</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, Alcuin; a Dialogue (New York, 1798). p. A2.

<sup>3</sup>Warfel, p. 82.



He scarcely spends an evening at home, yet takes care to invite, specially and generally, to his house, every one who enjoys the reputation of learning and probity. His sister became, on the death of her husband, his house-keeper. She was always at home. The guests who came in search of the man, finding him abroad, lingered a little as politeness enjoined, but soon found something in the fortunes and accents of the lady, that induced them to prolong their stay. . . .<sup>4</sup>

After repeated visits by Alcuin and other guests, whom Brown does not name, the Waring house was transformed into an assembly for the literati of the day: "The house became at length, a sort of rendezvous of persons of different ages, and conditions, but respectable for talents or virtues. It was the resort of the liberal and ingenious."<sup>5</sup>

According to Alcuin, Mrs. Carter furnished the assembly with "rational discourse, and agreeable repasts." Moreover, she was not only a woman of great intellect, but an efficient housekeeper as well, but "this office might not be servile, merely because it was voluntary."<sup>6</sup>

Many of the statements made by Alcuin during the course of the meetings bear great similarity to Brown's characterization of Arthur Mervyn:

I [Alcuin] hate a lecturer. It [conversation] blends, more happily than any other method of instruction, utility and pleasure.<sup>7</sup>

Money, to give me leisure; and exercise, to give me health; these are all my lot desires. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Brown's presentation of his liberal ideas on the rights of women actually begins when Alcuin is seated by Mrs. Carter and he asks her, "Pray, Madam, are you a federalist?" Alcuin realizes that it is a

---

<sup>4</sup>Alcuin, p. A3.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

strange question that he has asked, but Mrs. Carter candidly replies, "What in the name of decency have we [women] to do with politics."<sup>9</sup>

The discussion of politics then leads the two into the discussion of the role of the woman in the world of work. Mrs. Carter asserts that women are denied the right to work, but Alcuin disagrees by saying, "Most men have trades; but every woman has a trade. They are universally trained to the use of the needle, and the government of a family."<sup>10</sup>

The female cause is furthered by Mrs. Carter who says that women are discriminated against by men in matters of employment solely on the basis of sex. Alcuin partly agrees with her when he says that women are disqualified from such fields of endeavor as law, chemistry, and medicine. Alcuin feels this discrimination stems from the idea that women are most efficient when kept in the home.

Alcuin, however, partially defends the male sex by saying that there is no law forbidding women to do the work they choose. A woman, even though it would be extremely unusual, can be a blacksmith or any other sort of worker she may wish. He feels that the strength of the individual is the deciding factor in the selection of anyone's career.<sup>11</sup>

Alcuin then states that women can find employment in "accounting houses," mercantile firms, and medicine. He prefers that women leave the study of law to men; he does not give his reasons for this opinion.

The next question that arises is the education of women. Mrs.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 23

Carter asks, "What think you of female education? Mine has been frivolous".<sup>12</sup> She feels that men are helped to attain an education, but women are hindered. Moreover, "they [men] think a being of this sex is to be instructed in a manner different from those of another."<sup>13</sup>

Alcuin responds by saying that a college education is not necessary. Mrs. Carter later says that women are not sufficiently educated at seminaries for women because they are not allowed to study such things as Latin, chemistry, and geometry. "Nothing," according to Mrs. Carter, "has been more injurious than the separation of the sexes."<sup>14</sup>

The next topic pursued by the two conversationalists is marriage. Mrs. Carter feels that women are generally subjected to the complete domination of their husbands. She candidly admits, however, that married women enjoy a greater degree of freedom in America than they do in Europe.

Near the end of Part I Mrs. Carter asks, "Are women as high in the scale of social felicity and usefulness as they may and ought to be?" Alcuin, in answer to her question, replies, "To this there can be but one answer: No."<sup>15</sup>

Part I presented many of the arguments for and against the rights of women. Although both viewpoints are set forth concerning woman suffrage, Brown in his novels, like Alcuin, seems to feel there is room for improvement in the area of women's rights.

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

Part I ended with Mrs. Carter's question on the attainments of women in general. Part II begins when Alcuin again asks Mrs. Carter if she is a Federalist. Mrs. Carter replies that by law she is not entitled to a political opinion.

This statement then leads to one of the strongest arguments in Alcuin. In order to prove that she is entitled to no political opinion, Mrs. Carter cites various groups of people who are not allowed to vote. Among these politically excluded people are those under twenty-one years of age, those who have not been citizens of the United States for two years or more, Negroes, women, and those who are unable to pay a voting (poll) tax. Mrs. Carter then says, "I am a woman. As such, I cannot celebrate the equity of that scheme of government which classes men with dogs and swine."<sup>16</sup>

Alcuin is inclined to agree with Mrs. Carter but replies, "No government is independent of popular opinion."<sup>17</sup> Mrs. Carter, however, does not allow Alcuin's explanation to thwart her:

Say what you will (cried the lady), I shall ever consider it as a gross abuse that we are hindered from sharing with you in the power of choosing our rulers, and of making those laws to which we equally with yourselves are subject.<sup>18</sup>

Alcuin fails to agree with Mrs. Carter because he feels one should be qualified in order to vote.

As the dialogue continues, Alcuin digresses on the female sex as

---

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 59

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

a whole. "In grace, symmetry, and melody, the preference is due to women."<sup>19</sup> The dialogue then comes to an end because, as Alcuin states, it was interrupted by another guest who wished to contribute to it.

The more Utopian second dialogue was published posthumously by Dunlap in his Life of Brown (1815). Parts III and IV were not separated by Dunlap. It is evident that Dunlap was familiar with the first dialogue, for he recorded in his Diary (April 28, 1797): "Read today Smith's publication of Brown's Alcuin, 1 and 2 parts." "In a later entry (August 6, 1797) Dunlap records: "there is much truth, philosophical accuracy, and handsome writing in the essay."<sup>20</sup>

The Dunlap Alcuin begins when Alcuin revisits Mrs. Carter's house and states that he has just returned from a visit to the paradise of women. According to Alcuin the inhabitants of this island speak English, but "their buildings show traces of Greek and Roman models."<sup>21</sup> The people who dwell in this island paradise are "absorbed in musing silence, or engaged in sprightly debate,"<sup>21</sup> and there is no separation of the sexes.

Mrs. Carter then demands more information concerning life on the island. Alcuin glowingly reports that there is no distinction in dress between the sexes. Women participate on an equal basis with men in all recreational activities, and there is no discrimination on the basis of sex in the areas of art, poetry, science, or debate.

Alcuin then states that his guide through this paradise had inquired

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>20</sup>Clark, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

of him the condition of the outside world. Alcuin says that he told his guide of the nonexistence of coeducation, differences in dress, occupation, and marriage. Alcuin's guide heartily condemned this sort of social code.<sup>22</sup>

Alcuin, in talking to his guide, holds, along with Locke, that man is born in a state of complete ignorance, that his ideas are derived from the senses, and that our knowledge broadens with our experience. Thus, man has not been given any distinction in the sexes by nature. "Education and Environment are the deciding factors in one's career, and the proper educational ideal is a 'curious' mind in a sound body."<sup>23</sup>

The next subject that arises is marriage. Alcuin explains to Mrs. Carter that there is no marital system in the paradise. Mrs. Carter, recognizing radical tendencies, accuses Alcuin of sympathizing with "that class of reasoners lately risen, who aim at the deepest foundation of civil society." She thus champions the institution of marriage and denounces Godwin and his followers.<sup>24</sup>

Alcuin then discusses at great length the relationship between property and the family. Alcuin feels that since the family must have a head, the logical choice is the man. Mrs. Carter thoroughly disagrees on this point and feels that marriage is sacred, "but iniquitous laws, by making it a compact of slavery, by imposing impracticable conditions and extorting impious promises have, in most countries, converted it into

---

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

something flagitious and hateful." Mrs. Carter favors a system of divorce like that in France at that time. Moreover, any marriage with affections that continue beyond reason is a "groundless and obstinate attachment."<sup>25</sup>

Alcuin, acting on Mrs. Carter's preceding statement, dares to suggest that marriage after all is but the result of custom. Mrs. Carter, however, rejects this theory and terminates the dialogue by recapitulating her views on the subject: "Marriage, she says, is a union founded on free and mutual consent; it cannot exist without friendship and personal fidelity; it will cease to be just when it ceases to be spontaneous."<sup>26</sup>

Alcuin was Brown's first serious publication. The style of the work is "simple, easy, and forceful, the descriptions vivid and accurate, and the arguments persuasive."<sup>27</sup> The organization of the work, however, is chaotic, and it fails to deal effectively with the material at hand. Characterization is poor, for neither Mrs. Carter nor Alcuin is properly delineated.

The atmosphere of the work in general is cold and artificial, the language stilted. Brown wastes too much time in the conversation with the many extensions of etiquette, and the presence of other people at the scene of the dialogue remains unfelt by the reader.

The promotion of such liberal ideas at such an early date is the most unusual aspect of the essays. Although coeducation and the right of a woman to select her career have been largely realized today, in 1798 such things were practically unheard of.

---

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

Alcuin, however, appears not to have been very effective in the United States. One of the readers of the dialogue, a Mrs. Seth Johnson, actually felt that the claims of women had been presented merely for the sake of ridiculing them and placing further barriers in the way of reform.<sup>28</sup>

Even among Brown's own friends, according to David Lee Clark, the work was probably "received but coldly." The Smith Alcuin must have enjoyed but a small circulation, for only eight copies are now known to be in existence, and it is one of the rarest American books. Even the run enjoyed by the Smith Alcuin in the Philadelphia Weekly Magazine must have been unobtrusive, for it had little effect on the newspaper's readers.<sup>29</sup>

Although Dr. Smith hinted at the publication of Parts III and IV if the first two parts were well received, it must be noted that the second half of the dialogue remained unpublished until 1815. Evidently Brown realized that his talent was being wasted in the area of dialectics, for he soon turned to the writing of fiction.<sup>30</sup>

It is impossible to determine Brown's point of view in Alcuin, for the political and sociological issues he presented were, for the most part, inconclusive. Alcuin, however, did anticipate much of the philosophy used in Brown's novels. The novels, moreover, are far more revealing and argumentative on the rights of women than Brown's essays.

Wieland, for example, more clearly represents the rational woman, for Clara Wieland, is the only member of her family who manages to escape

---

<sup>28</sup>Warfel, p. 87.

<sup>29</sup>Clark, p. 125.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.



the ill effects of religious mania and the belief in the supernatural. Clara's brother, though intelligent, does not possess the ability to rationalize and solve her problems as his sister does, and he is ultimately brought to ruin for this reason.

Wieland very clearly expresses Brown's ideas on marriage. One of the essential discussions in Alcuin was on the head of the family. Wieland, in answer to this, seems to imply that the head of the family should be its strongest member; the Wieland family was brought to ruin because its head was weak.

In matters of power, Mrs. Carter in Alcuin had reached the conclusion that in marital contracts, "The will of her [the wife's] husband is the criterion of all her duties."<sup>31</sup> Alcuin was unable to answer Mrs. Carter's theory, but Brown in Wieland justly asserts that though this may be found true in many marriages, it works against the marital state and is to be avoided as much as possible.

Where Alcuin failed to conclude its brief arguments on sexual intercourse because of Mrs. Carter's sensitivity, Wieland adequately finished them. The novel also stressed the importance of maintaining a reputation without blemish and hailed the institution of marriage as the basis of the family and society.

Ormond also sought to conclude another important question from Alcuin: the woman's place is not necessarily in the home. This idea was one of the essential arguments of later reform groups, and its converse was the basis for reform opposition. Ormond undoubtedly proves that women are capable of running a household and at the same time providing for a family.

---

<sup>31</sup>Alcuin, p. 42.

The unresolved question in Alcuin as to who should be the head of the family was discussed not only in Wieland but in Ormond as well. Though Brown probably felt the role of the household administrator belonged to the man of the family, this novel champions the theory that women can be more effective than men in times of duress.

Constantia Dudley also answers another question posed in Alcuin: "What think you of female education?"<sup>32</sup> Constantia, under the excellent tutelage of her father, acquired a broad and liberal education. It was Constantia's educational attainments coupled with her sense of reason that enabled her to triumph over adversity and regain her former position of affluence.

Equally important in the novel is its exploration of sexual morality. Even under the most trying conditions, the heroine, Constantia, refuses to regain her former opulence by a sacrifice of virtue. Like Richardson's Pamela, Constantia finds that her virtue is ultimately rewarded, and Helena Cleaves, Ormond's mistress, is brought to ruin for her abandonment of morality.

Arthur Mervyn actually has far less to say on the subjects dealt with in Alcuin than Wieland or Ormond. Like most of Brown's novels, however, it does strive to glorify the virtues of women and denounce the debauchery found in men.

That marriage is a means of attaining happiness and securing the position of the family and its role in society is without a doubt one of the novel's chief maxims. Marriage for true spiritual love and intellectual compatibility is the real basis of matrimony. Although no marriage may succeed on the basis of money and position alone, these can enhance the state of matrimony.

---

<sup>32</sup>Alcuin, p. 36.

Another important problem in Arthur Mervyn is that of sex. The novel is filled with allusions to the importance of purity, and those who, like Clemenza Lodi, fail to retain their virtue are strongly reprimanded.

Mademoiselle Lodi is an example of female education. Although her degeneracy was probably due to her own moral weakness, Brown undoubtedly sympathizes with her fall because of a weakness in her education. Mademoiselle Lodi was evidently the product of a French seminary for women and, as Mrs. Carter once suggested, "Nothing has been more injurious than the separation of the sexes."<sup>33</sup>

Edgar Huntly presents no parallel with Brown's work in dialectics. The work, though one of Brown's best novels, avoids existing social conditions and derives its fame as a novel of adventure.

According to Warfel, the main theme of Clara Howard, and one that justly follows those ideas in Alcuin, is that "Wealth is desirable as a means of attaining happiness, but marriage merely to secure money is unwise; love alone must determine one's decision."<sup>34</sup> This theme parallels closely the statement Mrs. Carter made that marriage "cannot exist without friendship and personal fidelity."<sup>35</sup>

Jane Talbot was even closer than Clara Howard to the theories in Alcuin. The idea that "nature ordains no tie so strong as that between the sexes"<sup>36</sup> was evidently Brown's own viewpoint, and in this he is in complete accord with Mrs. Carter. The belief that marriage is and

---

<sup>33</sup>Alcuin, p. 41.

<sup>34</sup>Warfel, p. 193.

<sup>35</sup>Clark, p. 125.

<sup>36</sup>Warfel, p. 200.

ought to be a perpetual institution is here again championed just as it was in Brown's earlier novels.

Ultimately, Brown's novels answer several inconclusive arguments in Alcuin. In the first place, it is obvious that Brown felt women could and should work when necessity dictated it. As far as the usefulness of marriage was concerned, to Brown it was an institution to be maintained; and morality, or chastity before marriage, was equally necessary.

Brown's most radical question, however, the right of women to vote was not successfully resolved. As it stood in the dialogue, there is reason to conjecture that, though Brown did not favor a universal voting privilege for women, he would have favored extending the benefit to those few who, like Mrs. Carter, proved themselves worthy of it: "Shall we annex no condition to a voter. . . ." <sup>37</sup>  
The novels fail to offer any adequate answer to the problem.

---

<sup>37</sup> Alcuin, p. 66.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN AND THE GOTHIC NOVEL

Charles Brockden Brown is often called a Gothic novelist, and he is one of the few American writers who can justly qualify for this title. Although many critics do not feel that Brown was a thoroughgoing Gothic novelist, it is evident that he did at least feel the influence of this powerful and enormously popular school of writers.

The question arises, however, as to just what the Gothic novel was. To define it briefly is almost impossible, for it embraced every conceivable theme from maniacal religion to the curse of eternal life. The basic components of the Gothic novel are somewhat clearer; they were mystery and wonder, fear and suspense, sensation and terror. These were the vital areas of human weakness upon which the Gothic tradition was built.<sup>1</sup>

The rather absurd term "Gothic" may be applied both to those writers who contented themselves with a discreet use of fear and suspense, and to those who sought the vicarious thrills of presenting sheer terror and brutality to the reader to make the flesh crawl. Also influential in the evolution of the Gothic romance was the influx of German folklore into England during the eighteenth century, such as Christianne Naubert's Herman of Unna (1794).

Gothic mood was generally produced by the same technique. First of all, gloomy scene painting was used; and violent emotions, exciting

---

<sup>1</sup>Ernest A. Baker, The History of the English Novel (London, 1942). V, 175.

adventures, castles, dungeons, and monasteries were used to provoke terror in the reader who sought such ghastly thrills. Incest, seduction and other similar examples of depravity were frequently employed as terror devices.<sup>2</sup>

The most Gothic of Brown's six major novels was undoubtedly Wieland. The setting of Wieland, as in most of Brown's novels, was the sparsely settled region of the Schuylkill in Mettingen, Pennsylvania. The Gothic love of the remote is easily seen in Brown's description of the Wieland temple (summerhouse):

At the distance of three hundred yards from his house, on the top of a rock whose sides were steep, rugged, and incumbered with dwarf cedars and stony asperities, he built what to the common eye would have seemed a summerhouse. The eastern verge of this precipice was sixty feet above the river which flowed at its foot. The view before it consisted of a transparent current, fluctuating and rippling in a rocky channel, and bounded by a rising scene of corn fields and orchards. The edifice was alight and airy. It was no more than a circular area, twelve feet in diameter, whose flooring was the rock, cleared of moss and shrubs, and exactly levelled, edged by twelve Tuscan columns, and covered by an undulating dome. It was without seat, table, or ornament of any kind.<sup>3</sup>

There were essentially three major Gothic devices used by Brown in his introduction of the Gothic novel into America. The first device was easily adaptable to any country. This contrivance was none other than the spontaneous combustion of Wieland, the father of the two main characters (Theodore and Clara): "Meanwhile, the disease thus wonderfully generated betrayed more terrible symptoms. Fever and delirium terminated in lethargic slumber, which in the course of two hours gave place to death."<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Wilbur I. Cross, The Development of the English Novel (New York, 1927), p. 158.

<sup>3</sup>Wieland; or, the Transformation, pp. 12-13.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

The spontaneous combustion of Wieland in all probability was derived from the description of the death of Don G. Maria Bertholi which appeared in the London Literary Magazine of May, 1790.<sup>5</sup> If Brown's knowledge of spontaneous combustion did not come from this source, it was probably evolved from Dr. Elisha Smith, who more than likely studied the phenomenon as a medical case history. A third likely source for this device might have been Merille, Chirurgical a Casu.

The ventriloquism, or biloquism as Brown called it, of Carwin was the most horrifying of the Gothic contrivances that Brown used. Carwin, who had discovered his very strange and equally rare gift, used his powers to terrify and bring about the ruin of the entire Wieland family. To Brown's readers, the power of mimesis of voice and Carwin's ability to direct his sounds were not only virtually unheard of, but connoted something of the supernatural as well.

The first occurrence of Carwin's ventriloquism was in the form of an unexplained voice (possibly from Heaven) to warn Wieland not to go to his temple-- "Stop, go no farther. There is danger in your path."<sup>6</sup> This voice also occurred several times to warn Clara of approaching danger. When Clara, for example, escaped from her cottage to avoid the attacks of bandits (but what was really a feigned situation by Carwin), she fled to her brother's home and fainted at the doorway. Carwin's voice then aroused the household to her aid-- "Arise! arise! hasten to succour one that is lying at your door."<sup>7</sup>

Brown's use of ventriloquism as a Gothic device was undoubtedly taken from the Encyclopaedia; or a Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences.

<sup>5</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup>Wieland; or, the Transformation, p. 37.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

which was published in 18 volumes in Philadelphia. This work recorded the strange power of a man named Brodeau in the sixteenth century who was noted for his powers of biloquism.<sup>8</sup>

The religious mania of Wieland was the third major Gothic contrivance used by Brown. Wieland's devotion to his deity ultimately led him to fanaticism, and eventually to the murder of his wife and children. As has already been mentioned, Brown's source for Wieland's fanaticism was undoubtedly the news article that appeared in the New York Weekly Magazine in July, 1796.

Brown equals Maturin in his use of insanity as a supernatural effect. The religious mania of Wieland proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that "Brown knew the effect of mystery and dread on the human mind, and by a slow, cumulative suggestion, he makes us feel a creeping awe that the unaided machinery of pure Gothicism never could achieve."<sup>9</sup> The deranged mind of Wieland far excelled the contrivances of monastic sadism and revengeful spectres. Wieland's realization of his own duplicity brought forth the familiar Gothic pathos, such as found in Walpole's Castle of Otranto.

Brown reverted to the study of psychology in his novels because a young American offered no medieval ruins, superstitions, or legendary curses. The human mind was Brown's best area of Gothicism in Wieland: "the dark labyrinths of insanity, the gloom-haunted passages of the human mind, are more terrible to traverse than the midnight windings of Gothic dungeons."<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>Pattée, pp. xxx-xxxi.

<sup>9</sup>"The American Pioneer of the New Psychic Romance," Current Opinion, LXIV (April, 1918), p. 278.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.



Carwin the Biloquist followed the same sort of Gothicism that was found in Wieland. Ventriloquism and the secret cult of Ludloe were the chief Gothic elements of Carwin.

The secret organization to which Ludloe belonged was probably an inspiration to a later writer, Edmund Bulwer-Lytton, for his Zanoni. Brown, however, kept secret the tenets of Ludloe's organization in order to terrify the reader further: moreover, Brown revealed only enough of the cult to stimulate the imagination of his readers:

After a little pause, he reminded me, that he [Ludloe] was only one among many, engaged in a great and arduous design. . . . when they [personal feelings and affections] can be kept alive and be brought into play, in subordination and subservience to the great end, they are cherished as useful. . . .<sup>11</sup>

According to Carl Van Doren, Carwin was a villain who sinned, not, "as the old morality had it, because of wickedness, but because of the driving power of the spirit of evil which no man can resist and from which only the weak are immune."<sup>12</sup> This was Brown's best case of "speculative pathology," which he knew best to have the "reality of dream and passion."

Thus in Wieland and Carwin was attention focused on the villain Carwin, just as Walpole had focused attention on the evil Manfred in 1765. Moreover, it is Carwin that brings to the two novels the presence of "the driving power of the spirit of evil."

Arthur Mervyn employed several distinct Gothic devices. Moreover, it was Brown's utilization of American Gothicism that excelled in the novel.

---

<sup>11</sup>Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist, p. 346.

<sup>12</sup>"The American Pioneer of the New Psychic Romance," p. 278.

Brown's primary Gothic contrivance in Arthur Mervyn was his use of the yellow fever, which had stricken Philadelphia during his own lifetime. Through Brown's penetrating descriptive powers, the disease assumed the form of a murderous and erratic phantom, ever-lurking and omnipresent. The universal fear by which the fever was greeted was employed by Brown as the terror motif for the novel:

. . . these [passersby in the streets] were ghost-like, wrapped in cloaks, from behind which they cast upon me glances of wonder and suspicion, and, as I approached, changed their course, to avoid touching me. Their clothes were sprinkled with vinegar, and their nostrils defended from contagion by some wonderful perfume.<sup>13</sup>

This play upon the sensational and the horrible effects of the malignant epidemic was used again and again by Brown in order to create an atmosphere of stark terror and brutality:

One of them [city-undertakers], as he assisted in thrusting the coffin in the cavity provided for it, said "I'll be damned if I think the poor dog was quite dead."<sup>14</sup>

I wandered over this deserted mansion, in a considerable degree, at random. Effluvia of a pestilential nature assailed me from every corner. The sheets were tinged with yellow, and with the substance which is said to be characteristic of the disease, the gangrenous or black vomit.<sup>15</sup>

Brown's Gothic tendencies led him in turn to a rather pointed social justice writing. In Arthur Mervyn, for example, Brown seems to urge more public sympathy for the poor and sick as witnessed in this description of the Philadelphia hospital for the victims of the

---

<sup>13</sup>Arthur Mervyn, p. 140.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

disease:

The atmosphere was loaded by mortal stenches. A vapour, suffocating and malignant, scarcely allowed me to breathe. No suitable receptacle was provided for the ejaculations produced by medicine or disease. My nearest neighbor was struggling with death, and my bed casually extended, was moist with the detestable matter which had flowed from his stomach.<sup>16</sup>

The idea of a lovely, young woman lost in the hands of a notorious seducer had long been a popular theme in the Gothic romance. Brown, who evidently had great faith in the nobility of the female sex, used this device in connection with Thomas Welbeck and Clemenza Lodi:

She [Clemenza Lodi] was the dupe of the most audacious sophistry and grossest delusion. I was the slave of sensual impulses and voluntary blindness. The effect may be easily conceived. Not till symptoms of pregnancy began to appear were our eyes opened to the ruin which impended over us.<sup>17</sup>

Banditry and murder contributed to the terror in Arthur Mervyn. Welbeck, forced into a trying situation, not only murdered his friend-turned-enemy but robbed him afterward.

Ormond exemplified several terror elements which ultimately lead to Gothicism. The use of the disease in Ormond was closely akin to Arthur Mervyns

Meanwhile, the season advanced, and the havoc which the fatal malady produced increased with portentous rapidity. In alleys and narrow streets, in which the houses were smaller, the inhabitants more numerous and indigent, & the air pent up within unwholesome limits, it raged with greatest violence. Few of Constantia's neighbors possessed the means of removing from the danger. The inhabitants of this alley consisted of three hundred persons. Of these, eight or ten experienced no interruption of their health. Of the rest, two hundred were destroyed in the course of three weeks.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Brockden Brown, Ormond, p. 47.

Constantia's contact with the disease was morbidly depicted to increase the momentum of terror in the work:

The floor was moistened and stained by the effusion from her [Constantia's neighbor's] stomach. Constantia touched her hand, and endeavoured to rouse her. It was with difficulty that her attention was excited. Her languid eyes were scarcely opened before they again closed and she sunk into forgetfulness.<sup>19</sup>

By and large, the disease was the basic terror ingredient in Ormond, but Brown used several other themes to excite and baffle the reader's curiosity. The idea of the seducer of women was one of the more important of his terror devices.

Ormond was the representation of seduction. Driven by some overpowering sexual impulse; Ormond sought to seduce Constantia Dudley, and he actually did succeed in bringing about Helena Cleaves' loss of chastity by restoring her to her lost social position. Indirectly Ormond caused the death of Helena, for when she discovered herself to be a little more than a mistress to him, she took her own life.

In so far as Constantia was concerned, Ormond used every possible method to bring her to yield to his will. Eventually, his own life was lost because Constantia, rather than yield her chastity, mortally wounded him with her small penknife.

Ormond's extraordinary knowledge of the affairs of the Dudleys was gained through the contrivance of secret passages and "listening holes" in the walls of the Dudley's home. By placing himself in such an advantageous position, Ormond was able to gratify his satanic curiosity and overhear the family conversations of the Dudleys in their sitting room.

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

Also important in Brown's Gothic mechanisms was the murder of Mr. Dudley. When Ormond realized that the old man was an obvious impediment to his designs for Constantia, Ormond stealthily entered Mr. Dudley's bedchamber at midnight, approached his bed, and murdered him as he slept. Thus to all concerned but Ormond, the murder was completely inexplicable. Ormond, however, later confessed to Constantia his method of entry.

In the preface to Edgar Huntly, Brown more clearly demonstrated his feelings toward the prevailing school of Gothic writers:

One merit the writer may at least claim--that of calling forth the passions and engaging the sympathy of the reader by means hitherto unemploy'd by preceding authors. Puerile superstition, and exploded manners, Gothic castles and chimeras, are the material usually employ'd for this end. The incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the western wilderness, are far more suitable; and for a native of America to overlook these would admit of no apology. These, therefore, are in part, the ingredients of this tale, and these he has been ambitious of depicting in vivid and faithful colors. The success of his efforts must be estimated by the liberal and candid reader.<sup>20</sup>

C. B. B.

Brown, of course, avoided the traditional English Gothic elements because he set his novels in America. Thus, Brown's choice of setting made it impossible for him to draw upon "Gothic castles and chimeras," but he consciously substituted newer and equally terrifying horror ingredients.

The chief device of terror that Brown employ'd in Edgar Huntly was somnambulism. Brown, however, did not limit himself to just one case of somnambulism, but chose to invest two of his characters with this very rare psychological disturbance.

---

<sup>20</sup>Edgar Huntly, pp. 3-4.

The first case occurred with Clithero Edny, the villain of the novel. Edny's apparent psychological disturbances stemmed from a guilt complex, for he was deeply troubled by his past actions in connection with his benefactress, Mrs. Lorrimer.

The hero of the novel, Edgar Huntly, was also troubled with the same indisposition. It was Huntly's sleep-walking that brought him away from the protection of his own home and led him into the wilds of the Pennsylvania frontier, where he became involved with a multiplicity of Indian adventures.

Although noctambulism today is nothing that readily lends itself to terror, in the latter part of the eighteenth century it was probably still looked upon as some manifestation of the abnormal, if not the occult. In any event, Brown's use of sleep-walking ultimately provided him with a mechanism that easily accommodated itself to many hair-raising and thrilling events of terror.

In replacing traditional Gothic portents Brown turned to something that equally evoked terror and brutality in the minds of his readers. In 1789, the date of publication of the novel, there were still a great many semihostile Indians living near the eastern boundary of Pennsylvania. It was to the Delaware Indians that Brown turned to achieve the brutality and excitement needed for the embellishment of his novel.

"A Gothic novel seeks above all else to arouse emotions of terror."<sup>21</sup> By this hypothesis Edgar Huntly was a Gothic novel. Brown's description of the setting differed little from Mrs. Radcliffe's Alpine scenes; the northern portion of the Delaware River was pictured by Brown as a desert, "with shrub oaks and dwarf cedars as emblems of its sterile and uncultivated state."

---

<sup>21</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist, p. 155.

The background of the novel was easily adaptable to ghastly events. Indian cruelty and the presence of wild animals comprised a part of the background. Moreover, it was a gory novel; Indians soared with delight at the possibility of ravishing and mutilating both men and women.

The action of the novel generally took place at night since "intense dark is the parent of all our fears." Even Huntly's wanderings began after sundown because "a nocturnal journey in districts so romantic and wild as these. . . is more congenial to my temper than a noontday ramble."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, it is the night that increases the gloom of the wilds of the romantic, mysterious, and treacherous Norwalk.

Equally important in the novel is the fact that the caves of Norwalk replaced the maze of secret passages and subterraneous vaults of Otranto and Udolpho. After retiring one night, for instance, Huntly next found himself lost in the treacherous caverns of Norwalk, where he had unfortunately been led in his somnambulistic ramblings.

Clara Howard; or, the Enthusiasm of Love was not a Gothic novel. Written in the epistolary form it sought to prove that "Wealth is desirable as a means of attaining happiness, but marriage merely to secure money is unwise." Moreover, the novel was dominated by Richardsonian ideas of sentiment, justice, and morality, and it was this domination that led the novel to be more a work of imitation than one of originality.

In addition, Brown abandoned his most distinctive and appealing substance:

---

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 156-157.

Gone is abnormal psychology, including sex perversion and evil manifesting itself in brutal force and in diabolical intellectual cunning; gone are those strange medical phenomena of ventriloquism, sleepwalking, identity of fate in twins, spontaneous combustion of humans, and epidemic disease; and gone are the wild elements of nature--the red man and the panther. Horror and terror, not love and romance, were Brown's proper precinct. By withdrawing from the areas of terror, he became merely another purveyor of romantic narrative. However close to Bage and Godwin he remained in his moralizing, he lost the Gothic excitement which had given strength and interest to his better books.<sup>23</sup>

With the publication of Clara Howard and Brown's apparent rejection of Gothicism, he became less a novelist and more a moralizing imitator.

Jane Talbot, which followed shortly after Clara Howard, was Brown's last complete novel, and here, again, Brown rejected Gothicism and turned to the psychological romance. It is this turning away from the atmosphere of terror and his adoption of an overly sentimental style of novel modeled after those of Richardson that causes it to fail.

---

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 193.



## CHAPTER V

### BROWN'S SIMILITUDE IN CHARACTERIZATION

Certain distinct character types are found in nearly all of Brown's six novels. Though several of his characters appear in entirely different settings and must struggle with different forms of adversity, they generally react in the same way and ultimately exemplify certain specific character traits.

Clara Wieland, for example, provided Brown with a basic prototype. Clara, the real protagonist of *Wieland*, was the embodiment of reason and sensibility. When the mysterious and unexplained voices first appeared at the temple of her brother's deity, Clara hesitated to attribute these sounds to the supernatural, and after the murder of her sister-in-law and nephews and nieces, she did not fail to discover the real perpetrator of the crimes (Carwin).

This heroic backbone constituted an integral part of Constantia Dudley's character. Constantia, the contrived perfection of woman-kind, withstood with the greatest fortitude the evils of adversity. It was Constantia, strong, yet sentimental, who preserved her family and herself from penury, starvation, and pestilence.

With Constantia, however, sentimentalism often tempered reason. When she was confronted by Ormond, Constantia had one of two choices—submit herself to rape by Ormond or defend herself: "She remembered that to inflict death was no iniquitous exertion of self-defence, and that the penknife she held in her hand was capable of this service. This resource was, indeed, scarcely less disastrous and deplorable than any fate from which it could rescue her."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Ormond, p. 233.

It was this process of thinking and reasoning that entered into the characters of both Constantia and Clara Wieland. Although sentimentalism seldom won out, Constantia and Clara rarely acted in moments of passion.

In the characters of Jane Talbot and Clara Howard, however, sentimentalism vanquished reason. Jane Talbot, for example, was never really able to make up her mind. Although she was forbidden by her benefactress to continue her relationship with her lover, she continued to correspond with him, and it required a great deal of letter writing for her to terminate her relations with him:

What a little thing subverts my peace,---dissipates my resolutions! Am I not an honest, foolish creature, Hal? I uncover this wayward heart to thy view as promptly as if the disclosure had no tendency to impair thy esteem and forfeit thy love. that is to devote me to death,---to ruin me beyond redemption.<sup>2</sup>

Clara Howard, in a similar manner, exemplified the same spirit of sentimentalism that Jane Talbot did. Clara always put herself last and constantly worried about the reactions of others to her decisions:

I never will be yours while Mary's condition is unknown. I never will be yours while she is single, unmarried to another, and unhappy. I will have no intercourse with you. I will not grant you even my esteem, unless you search for her, find her, and oblige her to accept your vows. [Clara Howard's epistle to Philip Stanley] <sup>3</sup>

The kindly benefactor or benefactress also played an important role in several of Brown's novels. Generally trying to establish the security of their wards, these characters were the height of nobility.

---

<sup>2</sup>Jane Talbot, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Clara Howard, p. 291.

The narrator of Arthur Mervyn, for example, was undoubtedly one of Brown's best benefactors and probably the model for his later ones. Dr. Stevens, Mervyn's benefactor, was a generous and noble doctor. When Arthur Mervyn, friendless, and helpless, fell sick of the plague just outside the Stevens' home, the kindly doctor took him in, nursed him back to health, heard his confessions, and through his counsel, put him on the road to successful living.

Mrs. Lorimer in Edgar Huntly was not quite as successful in her benevolence. When she took Clithero Edny into her household in Ireland and raised him to the position of a gentleman, Edny later proved the villain by trying to murder both her and her lovely niece, to whom he was betrothed.

Mrs. Fiedler in Jane Talbot met with the same sort of experience. When Jane's mother died, and her brother proved himself a degenerate wastrel, Mrs. Fiedler took Jane in and made her heiress to her considerable estate. Jane's frequent association with Colden, however, brought a great deal of anguish to Mrs. Fiedler.

Brown used the benefactor as not only an instrument of good, but one of evil as well. In at least three novels the benefactor later turned evil and sought the ruin of his subject.

In the Memoirs of Carwin it is largely the villainy of Ludloe that sets Carwin on the path of treachery. Moreover, it was Ludloe that sought to introduce Carwin into his secret society, and it was Ludloe who was bent on reforming the world to suit his own warped philosophy. To what extent Ludloe molded the character of Carwin, is impossible to tell, since the novel is only fragmentary. But, it is obvious that at least a part of Carwin's degeneracy is due to his benefactor.

The benefactor turned villain, which is particularly reminiscent of Caleb Williams, was also present in Arthur Mervyn. When the young Mervyn came to town, he was taken in by Thomas Welbeck, who later proved the most villainous of all Brown's characters. It was Welbeck who led Mervyn into a variety of dangers and nearly caused the youth's own imprisonment for complicity in his master's crimes. Eventually, however, Mervyn, unlike Carwin, was able to withstand his benefactor's evil influence and remain an essentially decent man.

Ormond also tells of a benefactor turned villain. Constantia Dudley, who had attracted the attention and admiration of the villain Ormond owed, unknowingly, her change in fortune (from penury to opulence) to Ormond. Ormond first appeared to Constantia as a gentleman of some rectitude, but she later discovered him to be little more than a notorious murderer and debaucher of women. Only Ormond's<sup>4</sup> early history excelled his present life for brutality:

A youth of eighteen, a volunteer in a Russian army encamped in Bessarabia, made prey of a Tartar girl, found in the field of a recent battle. Conducting her to his quarters, he met a friend, who on some pretence, claimed the victim. From angry words they betook themselves to swords. A combat ensued, in which the first claimant ran his antagonist through the body. He then bore his prize unmolested away, and having exercised brutality of one kind upon the helpless victim, stabbed her to the heart, as an offering to the manes of Sarsefield, the friend whom he had slain. Next morning, willing more signally to expiate his guilt, he rushed alone upon a troop of Turkish foragers, and brought away five heads, suspended, by gory locks, to his horse's mane. This youth was Ormond . . . .<sup>4</sup>

It is altogether possible that Brown took the name (and perhaps some of his brutality) from Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered:

---

<sup>4</sup>Ormond, p. 218.

She then the whole conspiracy displayed  
The treacherous web unwinding, fold by fold;  
"Eight warriors are there of the court," she  
said, "In this insidious band of guilt enrolled,  
Of whom the most renowned is Ormond, base as  
bold."<sup>5</sup>

Judloe in Carwin and Walbeck in Arthur Mervyn were two of Brown's most similar characters. Both were members of secret organizations and were determined to reorganize society. In regard to sex, they were equally notorious seducers, and their depravity in general was their outstanding quality.

Arthur Mervyn provided Brown with yet another prototype. Mervyn, who eventually found himself involved in a multitude of troubles, was led into this state by his own insatiable curiosity. His very first escapades were the result of his inquisitive nature, and he ultimately found himself assailed by disease and accused of complicity in his master's crimes, and he ended up in a house of ill repute.

Arthur Mervyn was the prototype for Edgar Huntly. Huntly's avid curiosity, like Mervyn's led him into a variety of adventures—Indian battles, starvation, and vast, unexplored caverns. Huntly, himself, admitted his own weakness when he said, "I was not, however, to be diverted from my purpose. Curiosity like virtue, is its own reward."<sup>6</sup>

A similarity in characterization again occurred in Brown's presentation of Helena Cleves and Clemenza Lodi. Both of these women owed their downfall principally to a weakness of sexual restraint. Helena

---

<sup>5</sup>Harold Hooper Blanchard, Prose and Poetry of the Continental Renaissance (New York, 1959), p. 976.

<sup>6</sup>Edgar Huntly, p. 165.

Cleves, who lacked the courage to face life without the power of money allowed herself to become Ormond's mistress to regain her former wealth. Clemenza Lodi, was either too naive or stupid to recognize evil, prostituted herself for Thomas Welbeck.

The characterization of Carwin was to contribute yet another prototype for Brown's novels. Carwin, who deliberately and maliciously brought about Wieland's insanity and the death of his wife and children, seems to have committed motiveless evil; and Brown offers no explanation for Carwin's malevolence other than a vague desire for power over the destinies of others: "I was actuated by ambition. I was delighted to possess superior power; I was prone to manifest that superiority, and was satisfied if this were done, without much solicitude concerning consequences."<sup>7</sup> Thus it was that Carwin became the instrument of woe to the characters of two novels.

Clithero Edny was in part modeled after Carwin. Having been adopted by a wealthy patroness and raised to the position of a gentleman, Clithero intended to become the murderer of his patroness and her niece, and he actually did succeed in killing Mrs. Lorrimer's brother. Clithero, like Carwin, had no motive in his pursuit of murder, and when he realized that his patroness still lived, he decided to continue his plans: "If she be alive, then am I reserved for the performance of a new crime. My evil destiny will have it so. If she be dead, I shall make thee [Edgar Huntly] expiate."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Edny, like Carwin was an "unparalleled, unheard-of, thankless miscreant!"<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>Carwin, p. 289.

<sup>8</sup>Edgar Huntly, p. 276.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 252

Of all Brown's characters, Wieland was probably the most original, even though inspired by a famous newspaper account. Moreover, there is little similarity between Wieland and Brown's later characters.

Like Brown, himself, Wieland was a quiet, contemplative, and moral man, but one led astray by his religious mania; and the real mystery of the novel was focused on Wieland who was "crushingly impelled to crime by a mysterious voice, which, however, but germinates seeds of frenzy already sleeping in his nature."<sup>10</sup> It was Wieland's years of constant brooding on the family tragedy, not Carwin's voice, that led him to commit murder. To Brown these were "cases of speculative pathology" which he knew best to have "the reality of dream and passion."<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>The American Pioneer of the New Psychic Romance," p. 278

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER VI

### CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN: A CRITICAL EVALUATION

Wieland; or, the Transformation was undoubtedly Brown's finest novel. Reveling in the weird, the occult, and the psychoanalytic, the novel sought to display the wild passions of a man overcome by religious mania and too ready to accept what was natural for the occult.

Moreover, it was Wieland that give Brown the epithet of the "veritable forerunner of the new psychic fiction as practiced by the adherents and disciples of the psychoanalytic school." It was in this novel that Brown succeeded in devising a "contexture of facts capable of suspending the faculties of every soul in curiosity."<sup>1</sup>

Another merit that may be claimed by the novel is its setting, for Brown laid the scene of the action on the banks of the Schuylkill. In so far as setting is concerned, Wieland excelled in its expression of the picturesque wildness of the Romantic period. The eastern area of Pennsylvania that Brown knew so well furnished him with ample material for the setting of Wieland with its dark and mysterious terrain, its raging cataracts, its caverns, and melancholy banks.

Brown also excelled in his characterization of Wieland. Here was something almost entirely new at the time: the subterranean windings of Gothic castles were ingeniously replaced by the baffling intricacies of the human mind.

---

<sup>1</sup>"The American Pioneer of the New Psychic Romance." p. 278.



Carwin, however, failed because he represented the total embodiment of evil. His motiveless evil, though inspiring, does not capture the essence of reality. Drifting about, he very spasmodically brings about the ruin of those with whom he comes into contact.

The real importance of Wieland, however, was not its characterization, but its historical nature. By basing the novel on an actual event and coloring it with the imagination, Brown succeeded in creating a moving and powerful dramatic situation.

Moreover, it is the realistic plot of Wieland that so readily lends itself to the advantageous element of pathos, especially in the deaths of the Wieland family and the ominous evil of Carwin that foreshadowed the heroine's own life.

The most unusual aspect of Wieland, however, was its Gothic nature. The Gothic school of writers that had reached its height of development with Walpole's Castle of Otranto in 1765 often employed certain stereotyped components. Dennis, a Philadelphia contemporary of Brown says of the Gothic mode:

Horrible description predominates. The authors go out of the walks of nature to find some dreadful incident. Appalling noises must be created. Ghosts must be manufactured by the dozens. A door is good for nothing, in the opinion of a romance writer, unless it creaks. The value of a room is much enhanced by a few dismal groans. A chest full of human bones is twice as valuable as a casket of diamonds. Every grave must have its quiet disturbed by the devil, in some shape or other. Not a bit of tapestry but must conceal a corpse; not an oak can grow without sheltering banditti.<sup>12</sup>

Wieland, nevertheless, was indeed a product of this school.

---

<sup>2</sup>F. L. Pattee, p. xxvii.

It was Brown's variation of traditional Gothicism, however, that lent such excitement to the novel. The extraordinary and the horrible were the foundations upon which Wieland was so excellently constructed.

One of Brown's greatest<sup>3</sup> virtues was his use of contemporary American, not English, setting. It required a great deal of artistry "to give a homely setting in which strong effects could be produced only by a vigorous imagination."<sup>3</sup>

Brown's imagination was one of his most terrifying Gothic elements, for it revealed in "the weird, occult and supernatural; his stories are tinged with the sadness of his own nature; few there be who have the patience to read one volume through today, yet in all . . . are to be found passages of great power, and descriptions strikingly vivid and picturesque."<sup>4</sup>

Although Wieland has "awkward narrative, strained probabilities, and premature solution," it does have "shuddering power." Brown, a psychological novelist, seems to be of the same school as Dostoyevsky of a later age. Moreover, Brown was a romancer interested in "ideas and obtruse mental states."<sup>5</sup> He romanticized his characters and saw "in man a dignity which only the days of hopeful revolution can bestow."<sup>5</sup>

There are several respects, however, in which Brown completely failed in Wieland. In the first place, the style of the work is too ornate and rambling. Instead of being wealthy, for example, Brown's characters are the height of "affluence" or "opulence," and instead of "the wind blew" Brown says "the elemental music was remarkably sonorous."<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>"First American Novelist," pp. 3-5.

<sup>4</sup>"Portrait," The Critic, XLVII (September, 1905), p. 230.

<sup>5</sup>"The American Pioneer of the New Psychic Romance," loc. cit., p. 278

<sup>6</sup>Pattee, xli-xlii.

Another of Brown's defects was exemplified in his use of the character of Louisa Conway. Louisa, who was taken into the Wieland family as a child and reared with Clara and Theodore, was present during most of the family gatherings. But, her presence in the story is not justified because Brown failed to show any relationship or reaction between her and the events of the novel.

Brown does not fully utilize conversation in Wieland. When it does occur, it is somewhat stilted, and is found then only in Wieland's confession. Description tends to be "general and expository rather than pictorial," and Brown did not fully take advantage of his opportunities for moving scenes such as Clara's statement at the discovery of the bodies of the five murdered children: "Why should I protract a tale which I already begin to feel is too long?"<sup>7</sup>

The main story of the novel, however, did move with "steady crescent to a powerful climax." As Thomas Love Peacock once said, it is "one of the few tales in which the final explanation of the apparently supernatural does not destroy or diminish the original effect."<sup>8</sup> Brown focused so much attention on Clara Wieland, and the reader so closely identifies himself with her fate, that Carwin's confession of his villainy does not detract, but increases the balance to Clara's mental state and life.

In addition, Brown's plot developed very skillfully. The beginning chapters set the somber, tragic atmosphere for the novel, and the small group of characters, so closely united, deeply engage the attention of the reader.

---

<sup>7</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist, p. 104.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

If Brown had finished Carwin the Bilquist, it would probably have been one of his best novels if not his best. But, because of its similarity to Caleb Williams and the already published Arthur Mervyn, Brown abandoned the novel.

One of the outstanding assets of Carwin the Bilquist was its simple and direct narrative which was less burdened by Brown's circumlocutions and extraneous subplots. The main plot also moved faster than that of Arthur Mervyn.

Even more significant for the novel's possibilities is the fact that Brown had already raised some interest in the reader's mind as to Carwin's past life and his evil destiny: "The memoirs of Carwin, alluded to at the conclusion of the work [Wieland], will be published or suppressed according to the reception which is given to the present attempt."<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, Carwin was not a distinct character, and the antagonist-protagonist relationship between Ludloe and him would have been difficult to achieve on "ideological or psychological grounds because both have similar utopian notions."<sup>9</sup> There was no conflict of beliefs, and Carwin did not offer the "theme of importance of Wieland."<sup>10</sup>

Carwin also lacked the force or gusto that is necessary for the hero of a novel. For the most part, his malice has no motive, but strikes at random, and Carwin himself rolls with the tides.

In Arthur Mervyn Brown's descriptive powers reached their height. The brilliant description of the step-by-step growth of the plague is

---

<sup>9</sup>Wieland, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist, p. 114.

comparable to Defoe's Journal of the Plague.<sup>11</sup>

Brown's characterization of Arthur Mervyn, however, was somewhat mediocre. Like Constantia Dudley, Mervyn was absurdly noble. Fighting the perils of the disease, rescuing women in distress, and eternally meddling in the affairs of other people, he was a total failure as the hero of a novel. The following serves to demonstrate the utter triteness with which the character of Mervyn was invested: "Ah!" thought I, "Sweet, artless, and simple girl! how wouldst thou have fared, if Heaven had not sent me to thy succor?"<sup>12</sup>

In his treatment of Thomas Welbeck, Brown succeeded in creating a more realistic character. Here, Brown invested a character with real degeneracy, one completely overcome by an insane desire for wealth, power, and women. Of the two characters in the book Welbeck, not Mervyn, was Brown's better-drawn character.

Of the two sections of the novel, Part I is probably the better because it is "an exciting, self-contained unit beginning and ending with the hero leaning against a wall in Philadelphia." It also excels because Mervyn was more a victim of fate and less a walking, talking moralizer.<sup>13</sup>

Like most sequels Part II failed to maintain the excitement of the first part. The mood changes from that of Part I in that it abandons the terror so characteristic of the former and seeks to create indignation at the hero's foes and pathos for the victims of evil. These emotions, "which are capable of sustaining long fiction, are likely to be, as they are here, rendered ineffective when preceded by events striking upon nerves taut with fear."<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup>Extracts from Wieland, "The Chautauquan, LXIV (September, 1911) pp. 99-102.

<sup>12</sup>Arthur Mervyn, p. 68.

<sup>13</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist, pp. 145-146.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 146-147.

Probably one of the greatest weaknesses of the novel was its goal of presentation of a moral. Often the moral takes precedence over the action of the plot. Some of the maxims of Arthur Mervyn are:

Sincerity is always safest.  
Life is a trivial sacrifice in the cause of duty.  
The past is without remedy; but the future is, in some degree,  
within our power to create and fashion.  
Honest purposes, though they may not bestow happiness on others,  
will at least secure it to him who fosters them.  
If cities are the chosen seats of misery and vice, they are likewise the soil of all the laudable and strenuous production of mind.  
Indignation at wrong is the truest test of virtue.<sup>15</sup>

One of the best elements of Ormond was its pathos. Constantia Dudley is seen constantly struggling against poverty and pestilence, but her most ominous evil is the presence of the seducer Ormond. Moreover, it is the pathos of her situation and her struggle to maintain dignity and virtue that is the basis for the novel. Her conquests, however, often border on the absurd, and she ultimately becomes more an abstraction and less a woman.

Ormond, however, was a much better character. He, like Thomas Welbeck, was a villain in the truest sense. Following his satanic and maniacal exploits provided Brown with ample material for his novel. Although the allusion to Ormond's past life borders on the ridiculous, he remains one of the most villainous of Brown's characters.

Harfel says:

In Ormond each character is a personification of an abstract quality, virtue, or vice, and the actions of each person constitute a lesson in conduct. The choice of names for Sophia and Constantia is not the sole clue to this interpretation; the characters illustrate the injunction

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 147-148.

that it is better to teach by example than rule. Brown the moralist again exemplifies in a novel some important truths regarding the moral constitution of man.<sup>16</sup>

There are several other obvious defects in Ormond. The various morals in the work do not by any means expiate the technical weakness in narration. Even though many of the events in the novel relate to its theme, they are hurriedly and very poorly introduced. If many of the scenes were more thoroughly handled, if there were more conversation and description to heighten the drama of the novel, and if there were a better balance between Constantia's early life and her troubles with Ormond, the novel would be much stronger.<sup>17</sup>

These outstanding flaws are derived principally from Brown's desire to provide instruction instead of entertainment, and in seeking this end Brown labored over his morals, but hurried through years of action in a paragraph. His language, like that of many Gothic novels, is highly Latinized, and his pronoun reference is often indistinct. Frequently characters are not named until long after they have been introduced, and their connection with the plot is not always immediately clear.

Despite these several defects, Ormond did treat well the social problems of poverty, the horrors of an epidemic, the perseverance of integrity in the face of deceit, and the evils of international subversive organizations. Although the novel contained little local color and no precise description of characters or places, it did present an excellent portrayal of the plague and a dramatic and terrifying climax.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

Local color abounded in Edgar Huntly. The penetrating descriptions of the wilds of Norwalk with its vast, unexplored caves and savage animals were among the novel's finest features, equaled only by its picture of the brutality of the Delaware Indians.

Of all Brown's many characters, however, Edgar Huntly was the most imperfectly delineated, for he was inconsistently handled. When Huntly believes he has discovered the murderer of his dearest friend, he piously thinks: "He [Clithero] indeed," said I, "is the murderer of Excellence; and yet it shall be my province to emulate a father's clemency, and restore this unhappy man to purity and peace."<sup>18</sup> Even though Huntly is so noble as to forgive and try to "restore" the supposed murderer of his friend, he later lacks the decency and courage needed to rescue a helpless frontier girl from the Indians:

There was now an interval for flight. Throwing my weapons away, I might gain the thicket in a moment. I had no ammunition, nor would time be afforded me to reload my piece. My antagonist would render my poniard and my speed of no use to me. Should he miss me as I fled, the girl would remain to expiate, by her agonies and death, the fate of his companions.<sup>19</sup>

Thus Brown at one time shows Huntly to be the noblest of his heroes, and at another, he is the frailest of men.

Edgar Huntly, none the less, was a superb version of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel:

The setting is in the "western wilderness" among the rugged mountain tops of the Upper Delaware River Valley, where ravines and waterfalls are numerous, where gray cougars skulk among caves, and where Indians make incursions upon settlements. Here are the three romantic themes of the American frontier used for the first time: rugged scenery, wild animals, and savage redskins.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Edgar Huntly, pp. 32-32.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist, p. 155.



Although James Fenimore Cooper, in the preface to The Spy, disliked the cave scene in Edgar Huntly containing "an American, a savage, a wildcat, and a tomahawk, in a conjunction that never did, nor ever will occur."<sup>21</sup> many of his own Leatherstocking Tales have incidents that are quite similar to this scene.

One of the greatest contributions of Edgar Huntly was that it successfully employed the American wilderness as a setting for an American novel and added great impetus to the movement for "picturing native scenery and native characters." At the time of the writing of this novel, native setting was almost entirely nonexistent.

Another of the novel's virtues was its psychological nature. The villain, Clithero, was a man who felt his life ruled by fate and the supernatural; he was tormented by his delusions of guilt; and the hero, Huntly, also represented a psychological probing, for he was a man ruled by his avid curiosity.<sup>22</sup>

Of all Brown's novels, Jane Talbot and Clara Howard were the worst. The heroines of the two novels were overly refined, blushing, fainting creatures of the stereotyped Richardsonian school.

Moreover, very little ever happens in either novel. Jane Talbot did employ some degree of excitement in the fraudulent plan of Francis Howard to abscond with his family's money, but, by and large, the plot drags rather than progresses because of the long, extended, and totally ridiculous plight of Jane's love affair.

The same general defect is apparent in Clara Howard. Only one episode enlivens the novel, that of Philip Stanley's search for Mary

---

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

Wilmot. But, the very idea of Clara giving up the man she loved because she could not bear to hurt his fiancée is too much to ask the reader to believe, and the novel drags on and on with very little happening.

One virtue, however, may yet be claimed by Jane Talbot—that of a psychological approach. There is a great deal of "self-searching" by the characters, and they ponder their own qualities and moralize at great length.<sup>23</sup>

The reason for the degeneration of Brown's last two novels was obviously his turning away from Gothicism and terror and adaptation of an overly sentimental type of novel. Brown's best ability lies in a novel of adventure or intrigue, not in the romantic novel.

Of his major novels, Wieland, Ormond, Arthur Mervyn, and Edgar Huntly were undoubtedly Brown's best. Clara Howard and Jane Talbot remain his worst and most immature works.

In his own day Brown did not meet with the financial success that he had hoped for:

Bookmaking is, as you observe, the dullest of all trades, and the most that any American can look for in his native country is to be reimbursed for his unavoidable expenses.<sup>24</sup> [Brown's letter to his brother, Philadelphia, 1800]

This financial failure was in all probability the result of ineffective copyright laws.

For the most part, Brown is today greatly underestimated, for he "would have been a notable figure in any country and in any age."<sup>25</sup> His novels have never lost their appeal, for they entertain and terrify all who read them.

---

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>24</sup>"Portrait," loc. cit., p. 231.

<sup>25</sup>"First American Novelist," loc. cit., pp 3-5.

His three most glaring defects were unmistakably his sentimentalism, his circumlocutions, and at times his characterization. The first point, that of sentimentalism, can be defended, for his audience craved sentiment, often approaching sentimentality. This defense only serves to show that reading audiences change. Brown wrote for an eighteenth-century audience, not a twentieth-century one.

Above all else, Brown's greatest literary achievement and legacy was his influence on later writers. Such writers as Cooper, Hawthorne, and Poe ultimately felt the genius of his writing, and even English writers were not without their debt to Brown. Peacock records that Percy Bysshe Shelley had read Brown's four best novels, and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is peculiarly reminiscent of Wieland:

Had I not rashly set in motion a machine, over whose progress I had no control, and which experience has shown was infinite in power? Every day might add to the catalogue of horrors of which this was the source.<sup>26</sup>

Even though he is today greatly underestimated, it is obvious that Brown exerted considerable influence on many of his contemporaries as well as later writers. Equally important in his literary achievement is the fact that he was not only popular with American reading audiences, but with those in Europe too.

---

<sup>26</sup>Wieland and Frankenstein," American Literature, II (May, 1930), pp. 172-173.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "The American Pioneer of the New Psychic Romance." Current Opinion, LXIV (April, 1928), p. 63.
- Baker, Ernest A. The History of the English Novel. London: H. F. & C. Witherby, Publisher, 1942.
- Blanchard, Harold Hooper. Prose and Poetry of the Continental Renaissance in Translation. New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1959.
- Brown, Charles Brockden. An Address to the Government of the United States . . . . Philadelphia: John Conrad & Company, 1803.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Alcuin; A Dialogue. New York: T & J Swords, 1798.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793. Philadelphia: David McKay, 1839.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The British Treaty . . . . London: Joseph Stockdale, 1898.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Clara Howard; or, the Enthusiasm of Love. Philadelphia: David McKay, Publisher, 1839.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker. Philadelphia: David McKay, Publisher, 1839.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Jane Talbot. Philadelphia: David McKay, Publisher, 1839.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1926.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Monroe's Embassy . . . . Philadelphia: John Conrad & Company, 1803.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Ormond; or, the Secret Witness. New York: American Book Company, 1937.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Wieland; or, the Transformation. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1926.
- Clark, David Lee. Charles Brockden Brown, Pioneer Voice of America. Durham: Duke University Press, 1952.

Cross, Wilbur L. The Development of the English Novel.  
New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927.

"Extracts from Wieland." The Chautauquan, LXIV  
(September, 1911), pp. 99-102.

"First American Novelist." The Bookman, XXV  
(March, 1907), pp. 3-5.

Johnson, Edward, editor. "Charles Brockden Brown."  
Dictionary of American Biography (1929), III, pp. 107-109.

Mc Dowell, Tremain. "Unknown Parent." The Saturday Review,  
XXVI (April 4, 1953), p. 36.

"Portrait." The Critic, LXVII (September, 1905), p. 230.

Prescott, William H. Biographical and Critical Miscellanies.  
New York: Harper & Brothers, 1845.

Van Doren, Carl. "Early American Realism." The Nation,  
CXIX (November 12, 1914), pp. 577-578.

Warfel, Harry R. Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist.  
Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 1949.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Charles Brockden Brown's German Sources."  
Modern Language Quarterly, I (September, 1940)  
pp. 357-365.

"Wieland and Frankenstein." American Literature, II  
(May, 1930), pp. 172-173.

## **APPENDIX**

Brown in later years developed a deep interest in politics. On January 19, 1803, his first political pamphlet was issued.<sup>1</sup> The title was long: An Address to the Government of the United States on the Cession of Louisiana to the French, and on the Late Breach of Treaty by the Spaniards: Including a Translation of a Memorial, on the War of St. Domingo and Cession of the Mississippi to France. Drawn up by a French Counsellor of State.

The essential argument of the pamphlet was relatively simple. With the retrocession of Louisiana by Spain to France in January, 1802, Brown added his voice to others in America to demand United States possession of this territory:

FROM YOU, assembled Representatives do we demand that you would seize the happy moment for securing the possession of America to our posterity: for insuring the harmony and union of these States: for removing all obstacles to the future progress of of our settlements: for excluding from our vitals the most active and dangerous enemy [France] that ever before threatened us: for gaining the affections of your western citizens by enforcing their rights: by rescuing their property from ruin. Give us not room to question your courage in a case where courage is truly a virtue; to doubt your wisdom when the motives to decide your conduct are so forcible. The iron is now hot. Command us to rise as one Man, and STRIKE!<sup>2</sup>

Brown was adamant against any purchase by the United States of the Louisiana territory from France. On March 3, 1803, in order to point out the uselessness of Monroe's embassy Brown published Monroe's Embassy, or The Conduct of the Government in Relation to our Claims to the Navigation of the Mississippi.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup>An Address to the Government of the United States . . . (Philadelphia, 1803), p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist, p. 215.

This second pamphlet was also equally strong in its attacks on President Jefferson:

In ordinary cases, therefore, what could we expect but that the President would hesitate; pause; shrink; tremble at the sound of war. What else could be expected by those who regard him as a weak visionary, timorous and irresolute: Whose hand is well enough qualified for the nice adjustment of quadrants and telescopes, but far too feeble and unsteady for managing the helm of government.<sup>4</sup>

Brown, as he states in the pamphlet, much preferred the outright seizure of the land in question to the legal purchase of it:

If the French, therefore, should be willing to sell the province for a sum far inferior to the cost of invading and preserving it, that man is a silly calculator as to the value either of money or of taxes who should think the purchase cheaper than seizure.<sup>5</sup>

With the purchase of the Louisiana territory, Brown dropped the issue, but turned to another.

Partially embittered by his own failure in the mercantile business, and blaming this failure on the poor protection offered by the U. S. navy to merchant vessels at sea, Brown issued The British Treaty of Commerce and Navigation in 1806. This pamphlet presented a step-by-step analysis of the Jay Treaty (1794) and the Treaty of 1806 in an effort to prove that the former, "although denounced by the Jeffersonians as a betrayal of the United States,"<sup>6</sup> was superior to the latter.

According to Brown, The Treaty of 1806 had not fully secured many of the basic rights inherent to merchantmen at sea. He states that "our vessels trading to India must now sail direct from ports of the United States. Formerly they could be fitted out and laden in Europe."<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Monroe's Embassy . . . . (Philadelphia, 1803), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist, p. 217.

<sup>7</sup>The British Treaty . . . . (Philadelphia, 1808), p. 46.



Ultimately this provision would give Great Britain an unfair advantage over U. S. merchant vessels.

In January, 1809, Brown published An Address to the Congress of the United States, on the Utility and Justice of Restrictions upon Foreign Commerce: With Reflections on Foreign Trade in General, and The Future Prospects of America. It was the most unbiased pamphlet of his four. He abandoned the personal criticisms that he had used in 1807 and avoided placing blame on France or England.

Brown sought here to explain American reasons for the Embargo and traced the differences between Europe and America to their source. He further stated that "all restrictions on foreign commerce . . . . are not warranted by justice, policy or honor." A long analysis of the development of maritime law convinced him that each nation has acted only from the point of view of its own advantages, and he urges that America return to a system of international commerce, since trade is the livelihood of all nations.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist, p. 218.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

## VITA

George Calvin Longest is the son of Mr. and Mrs. William G. Longest, Sr., of Richmond, Virginia. He was born in Richmond on February 17, 1938, and was graduated from John Marshall High School in June, 1956. He entered Richmond College of the University of Richmond the following September.

In June, 1960, he received his B. A. in English from the University of Richmond. In September of the same year he was accepted as a candidate for the Master of Arts degree in English at the University, from which he expects to graduate in August, 1961. While he was a student at the University, Mr. Longest was elected to Kappa Delta Pi, an honorary fraternity in education, and was a member for three years of Phi Delta Theta Social Fraternity.

Mr. Longest's particular interest in English literature lies in the area of the novel, and he has done considerable research on the Gothic romance. His study of Charles Brockden Brown originated from his work in an English seminar under Dr. Lewis F. Ball of the English Department.