Charles Brockden Brown's place within the gothic and the influence of early America's social issues on Brown's writing

Shirley Ann Regis

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CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN'S PLACE WITHIN THE GOTHIC
AND THE INFLUENCE OF EARLY AMERICA'S SOCIAL
ISSUES ON BROWN'S WRITING

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Shirley Ann Regis
June 2007
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AND THE INFLUENCE OF EARLY AMERICA'S SOCIAL

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ABSTRACT

Charles Brockden Brown's novels Wieland, or the Transformation and Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker create a Gothic Fiction that is largely influenced by the American Revolution and incidents that come after it. In this thesis, I attempt to draw on revolutionary era print culture and the history of the time itself in order to suggest that Brown created a Gothic Fiction that was intended to be a critique on the American Revolution. Brown takes instances from and after the revolution and weaves them into his storyline. Not only does Brown use history to create his Gothic novels, but he uses murder narratives present during the time to create his characters. Gothic Fiction consists of many elements, for Brown these include; setting, archetypal characters, terror, emotion, psychological turmoil, and language use.

In my thesis, I examine how Brown has drawn on history and Gothic theory to construct his novels. I do all of this using a combination of theoretical approaches including Cultural Studies and New Historicism. Brown's writing is both Gothic Fiction and social commentary. For Brown, the social commentary comes through in his isolationist characters, Theodore Wieland and Edgar Huntly.
respectively. Brown uses these characters to illustrate that two things occurred during and as a result of the revolution; one is "familicide" and the other is "savagery." I state that Brown is utilizing the murder narratives in order to create his gothic characters and to point out that the revolution had damaging effects on the population.

The point of this thesis is to contribute new information about how he used the murder narratives and history to create his Eighteenth Century gothic novels. I want to point out how his novels fit within gothic theory, and how he creates his commentary of revolutionary society.
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Brown's Life and Historical Implications

The violence of the American Revolution consumed late eighteenth century America, and this had an impact on many authors of the time. It is not only in the newspapers that one can find records of important events such as the French Revolution or the political tumult in Philadelphia after and during the American Revolution. Fiction records this as well. Novelist Charles Brockden Brown wrote his novels during this tumultuous time in history. In the thesis, I intend to look at Brown's novels Wieland, or the Transformation and Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker in connection with the historical climate in which they were written. The American Revolution and even more specifically its impact on the Quaker community in which he was raised was an event that significantly impacted Brown's writing. Another event that influenced Brown was the French Revolution, which provided an example of disturbing political change that got terribly out of hand.
Brown was raised a Quaker, and this is an important point because the ostracization of the Quaker community in the 1770s and 1780s would impact him directly. During the American Revolution Quaker society was victimized by the same country that wanted to create a free nation. As Peter Kafer points out in his book *Charles Brockden Brown’s Revolution and the Birth of American Gothic*, part of the problem facing the Quaker community has to do with the fact that they would not swear allegiance, serve in militias, or contribute to the war effort (35). It is the pacifism of the Quakers that caused their ostracism from revolutionary America, which includes Brown’s Philadelphia. By not participating in the war the Quakers illustrated their stance against violence. These are a people that do not believe that violence is the way to freedom, and this was an unpopular political stance in the 1770s. Pacifism would separate Brown and his Quaker family from the emerging republic, and it would continue to cause problems during his young life.

Disaster loomed for those Quakers who did not obey the early laws by which people were called up to take part in militias and also required to sell their goods at a set price or to the army. The Quaker community was seen as
outcasts due to their unwillingness to cooperate with either Continental Congress' formation of militias, or the businesses and public that served the army through the establishment of set prices and the idea of goods being set aside for militia use. Kafer points out that anyone who was unwilling to serve in the militias was subject to arrest (35). With the Quakers' pacifism, then, came their own persecution by the people that wanted their support. The leaders of the Revolution made an example of seventeen Quakers by arresting them for their lack of participation in the Revolution, further separating them from the rest of Philadelphia (35). The Continental Congress' laws on service in the Revolution caused the Quaker community to become separated from the whole. The Quaker community became "the other" within the city.

The public response to Quaker non-cooperation also spilled over into the streets, into violence. Kafer calls this unrest the "Pennsylvania Revolution" (34). As Kafer explains:

The Philadelphia Meeting, for its part, forbade militia service, payment of fines and war taxes, and taking the oath. In the face of these Quaker principles, Revolutionary 'committeemen' forcibly
entered the houses of noncomplying Friends and distrained property” (35).

The Pennsylvania Revolution affected Brown in a particularly immediate way. Brown’s father Elijah became the object of scrutiny by the men that organized the militias, the committeemen. The primary source of the scrutiny was the rejection of price controls by Brown’s father: “That there was recalcitrance on (Elijah) Brown’s part seems evident—and indeed he must have continued to ‘sell’ (flour) in the wake of this threat, because he was ultimately arrested” (36). Brown’s father could have been arrested for not taking the oath, but instead he was arrested for his lack of obedience to pricing laws. It was illegal for a merchant to sell supplies that were supposed to be either set aside for the militias and army, and it was illegal to sell items for more than the government’s set price. When Brown was six his father was sent to prison, and soon after the government agents that imprisoned him were replaced by the occupying British army (38). This kind of upheaval caused Brown to live in a life of uncertainties during his childhood. Because of Elijah’s arrest Charles went without his father for a time, and his family lost its provider as a result. Fear of arrest was
thus supplemented by fear of starvation. Upon the release of Brown's father in April of 1778, the committeeemen that destroyed his life returned, and this brought back the hatred and renewed the events of the past (38). Charles' father ended up in prison a second time due to his debts and stealing (43). Charles would never know what it was like to have a complete family, or to have a father for a good stretch of time. Elijah's stints in prison would serve to ostracize him from the Quaker community as well through his inability to pay his debts, and his lack of traditional Quaker values. It is this type of upheaval and displacement that Brown would use to create his literature.

In addition to his father's experiences, Brown witnessed the isolation of his friend and teacher, the 'Tory' Robert Proud, which would help him further to cultivate an interest in the theme of ostracization. Being a 'Tory' means being a British loyalist during the American Revolution. Loyalists were imprisoned for their inability to commit to the Revolution just as the Quakers were. Kafer points out that Brown's teacher Robert Proud was a "Tory" loyalist and talks about his distaste for Revolutionaries (47). This man played an important part in
Brown’s life by not only teaching him as a student, but by showing him how others suffered at the hands of revolutionaries. Kafer points out that Brown’s Friends’ Latin School years were never free from the tumult of the 1770s atmosphere or events (47). Proud’s choice to be a British loyalist served to show Brown that British loyalists were categorized as “other” just like his Quaker community was. As Kafer points out, Proud thought that he would be arrested for his very vocal protesting against the “American Whigs” (47). However, this did not happen. Proud was not exiled like the rest of his comrades in 1777, but in this way the revolutionaries separated him from his comrades. The American Revolutionaries isolated Proud by not making him appear as important as his more active friends (47). In many ways, then, these troublesome years in Philadelphia would help Brown to develop his writer’s imagination, and approach to the American Gothic.

The descent into Revolution within America was an issue for Brown, but the French Revolution was an equally strong influence on his developing imagination. For Brown, the French Revolution became a part of history that mirrored the American Revolution that he grew up within. This provided Brown with another first-hand view of the
uncertainty created by revolution. Peter Kafer discusses the French Revolution in his text. In particular, he discusses how the news of the Revolution reached America in 1793 with the execution of Louis the XVI (64). Events such as the execution of the King of France would serve as an example of governmental instability. This type of instability within one government could create a fear of governmental instability for an American such as Brown, who recognized that the American Government was young and fragile. Indeed his biographical experiences served only to reinforce his sense of political anxiety. The experiences that Brown had lived through with his father suggested a parallel between his persecuted father and the image of Louis XVI as a persecuted father. Brown went through the hardships of survival, and survived without having his father at home. This disruption within the country, France, and his home became potential material for his writing. Brown went on to tackle the multifaceted subject of the uncertainty following Revolution in his later writing (64).

Kafer goes on to point out other ways the French Revolution reached American shores and influenced Brown. Citizen Genet was the ambassador of France in 1793 and he
represented the new Jacobin government. His desire was to create an alliance between the United States and France because England was at war with France. Genet wanted both American sympathy and money. Kafer points out that French Revolutionary sentiments spread to America with the visit of Citizen Genet, and with the news of the slave revolt in Saint Domingue which coincided with the yellow fever panic and epidemic of 1794 (105). In pamphlets and articles Brown saw the deterioration of the French Republic, and the upheaval caused by the angry citizenry. Genet's presence in the United States created concern that such upheaval could migrate to American shores. For Brown, these kinds of events further incited fear, though this fear would provide him with new material for his writing. While the French Revolution has the marks of tragedy, there happens to be a positive side to it, at least for Brown. Brown could find plenty of material to use in his novels just by looking at a newspaper or pamphlet.

A final event of importance that Brown would have read about with fearfulness was the storming of the Bastille. Ken Adler points out in his essay "Stepson of the Enlightenment: The Duc Du Châtelet, The Colonel who 'Caused' the French Revolution" that this event is what
won the battle for control of Paris (3). For Brown, however, this popular victory provided just another hint of the potential dangers of democracy. When the Bastille was stormed, the crowd pushed back the royal soldiers (4). A crowd with this kind of power could overtake a country and cause anarchy in the streets, not to mention produce a huge death toll. If a crowd could overtake a prison the likes of the Bastille, then a mad crowd could do anything. Something like this would concern Brown because it could happen in his own land. The French mobs that carried torches and dragged citizens to prison and the guillotine probably reminded Brown of the insane mobs that caused noise and panic in the streets of Philadelphia during the Philadelphia Revolution. It was the Philadelphia mobs that took Brown's father away, and it was these same mobs that accosted the Quaker community. With such a background, the mobs in Paris would stimulate the mind of someone like Brown, and cause him to look at the psychological darkness that causes such behavior. Many recent critical works reinforce this conclusion. In her essay "On Writing the History of Violence," for example, Rachel Hope Cleves discusses the similarities between the French and American Revolution. Cleves points out that the societal order that
France had known prior to the Revolution was disbanded by the everyday citizen (641). This type of dissent had implications for the United States and the rest of the world. Cleves goes on to point out that the prominent citizens of the American colonies were afraid of the human tendency to commit vicious acts of violence (644). It would be these sorts of events that would stimulate Brown’s creative processes.

Living through the American Revolution and having acquired information on the French Revolution seems to have caused Brown to embark upon his literary career. Kafer points out that, in some ways, Brown saw his years without his father’s guidance as allowing a kind of freedom. During this period he became interested in writing epics, because of his own readings and what he had experienced (48). Without paternal influence, and feeling the need for self-discovery, Brown started out in search of himself. Initially, Brown began an apprenticeship in law (48). Ironically, it was in the law office that Charles’ literary training began (51). The writing profession was not seen as proper for a typical Quaker young adult. For Charles, however it was writing that he desired to pursue (49). Brown’s conscious decision to
become a writer had to do with a search for personal happiness. The "Belles Lettres Club" which he joined in approximately 1787 became his literary outlet (49). Despite pressure to pursue a legal career Brown was still attracted to literature and thought, and this was the course that would change his life forever. The experiences of his life including those of his years in the legal profession served initially to shape his writing. But it was the politics of Philadelphia and Revolution that caused Brown’s writing to develop. His experiences as an adult and child would be what caused his perceptions to change. He used an understanding of upheaval and displacement to create his literature.

All of the events that Brown lived through would cause him to choose to work out his inner demons through his fiction. The gothic proved the best choice for his literary endeavors because he lived through many dark experiences, and these events would stay with him throughout his life. It was these experiences that caused him to write novels that question madness, conventional religion, revolution, and the true nature of the human soul. One who has lived through times like those that Brown did would be able to see the darker side of the
human spirit. The gothic looks at the dark side, and because of this it would help Brown to look at the little known sides of the human spirit and mind.

The Gothic

In order to understand what is distinctive about Brown's fiction, it is useful to first develop a sense of the general features of 18th century Gothic writing. One important aspect of the gothic consists of how characters are characterized. Linda Bayer-Berenbaum points out in her text *The Gothic Imagination: Expansion in Gothic Literature and Art* one element present in gothic fiction is "recurrent character types" (20). Gothic writers tended to employ archetypal characters such as the murderer, the insane individual, the heroine, the savior, the doppelganger, or the seeker. These types of characters are seen very early on in the creation of gothic fiction. This tradition of employing archetypal characters that present themselves again and again began in Europe in the mid to late eighteenth century in novels by Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, and Charles Maturin (20). Archetypal characters such as those present in the gothic novel also serve to influence the structure of the novel.
As Bayer-Berenbaum points out, archetypal characters, because of their familiarity, are used to create an impression of reality within a type of novel that is not entirely realistic, as well as to convolute the mind of the reader (24). The characters help to anchor the novel in a reality, and to make it tangible to the reader. The archetypal character also plays a specific, consistent role in the novel, which further helps the reader to accept the validity of the 'world' being depicted in a Gothic Novel.

Another common feature of gothic fiction is the inclusion of supernatural elements, such as ghosts. It is important to recognize, however, that a gothic novel is not the same as a ghost story. Bayer-Berenbaum points out that ghosts were often used in Gothic fiction to convey a sense of timelessness (33). Ghosts are a part of the gothic supernatural, and they serve to illustrate "rejections of time in that they live on indefinitely [...]" (33). Along with ghosts comes haunting. Here the purpose seems to be to challenge limited, rationalist views of human experience. Haunting involves the "materialization of the spiritual," which further involves the idea that the ghost appears because of a belief that
there is more present in the world than humans (Bayer-Berenbaum 33). Both Marshal Brown and Bayer-Berenbaum see the ghost as having a purpose that consists of presenting the idea that the characters in the texts are haunted by more than just ghosts. The characters are haunted by the entity present before or around them, and they are haunted by their own minds. One early element of gothic fiction consists of the haunted house or the dark setting. Bayer-Berenbaum points out that the settings of these early novels are often cemeteries, dark castles with mysterious passages, prisons, and dark towers (21). The supernatural setting helps to establish the importance of the irrational in Gothic writing. Both Bayer-Berenbaum and Botting point out that the dark settings were characteristic of gothic fiction in its early years. The dark settings help to establish the psychological world in which the characters must live, and they help with the story line.

Within the gothic the psychological plays a huge role starting in the mid to late eighteenth century. The novels within this genre tend to focus on psychological tensions related to a conflict between reason and madness. Bayer-Berenbaum points out that: "Mental and nervous disorders
are excellent themes for Gothic stories because the illusions of the deranged often resemble traditional beliefs and superstitions” (38). The psychological content ties to the supernatural in that the supernatural often causes a battle between rationality and irrationality. Another point that Bayer-Berenbaum makes is this: “Madness is often portrayed as a highly developed sensitivity to a reality that normal people are too dull to perceive” (38). Both Brown and Bayer-Berenbaum also see the depraved or disrupted mind as an aspect that is present in gothic fiction, and they see it as something that people have a difficult time dealing with. Bayer-Berenbaum points out that some gothic writers toy with the idea of “night consciousness,” which illustrates how a sleep deprived individual can be easily manipulated (26). This almost has the ring of hypnosis wrapped around it. Mental disturbances activate the “night consciousness” (26). Here the supernatural can come in and manipulate the character’s mind. Within the gothic the mind constantly battles between sanity and insanity in conjunction with the supernatural influences that cause this battle. Consequently, Marshall Brown points out in his text The Gothic Text that gothic novels should be viewed as test
grounds for the ability of humans to reason (12). Logic does not factor into the gothic novel, and in fact logic eventually becomes non-existent. The gothic novel does not seek to be logical, but instead to explore the fatal flaws within the human psyche. Flaws within the human psyche can cause insanity and murder, and the gothic novel seeks to identify these aspects.

Another feature of gothic novels is that they shift continually, not only in plot structure, but also in regard to their effects on the reader. Bayer-Berenbaum points out that the gothic novel often employs a shifting plot structure (20). This shifting plot structure is frequently constructed by a character that relates a memory when they are in the middle of a moment of turmoil, or, as in the case of William Faulkner, when narrators change to relate past events or current events. Usually in a Gothic text the current plot line will shift when a character encounters something that reminds them of another moment in their life. Both Fred Botting and Bayer-Berenbaum see the shifting plot structure as something that manipulates the emotions of the reader. One minute a gothic novel might have happiness, as in hearts and flowers, and the next there might be a voice whispering in
the night. These effects are designed to disrupt the reader's sense of place, and to perpetuate a sense of disjointed mental function. With gothic novels comes a kind of see-saw effect, and the reader will have this with them throughout the course of the text.

As the Gothic develops in America a few changes take place within the genre. One change that takes place has to do with the idea that the setting of the novel and the location of psychological disruption becomes the ordinary home, the woods, or even the religious center as opposed to the stereotypical castle or ruin. Botting points out that the settings of American gothic become more and more rural: "Eighteenth-century Gothic machinery and the wild landscapes of Romantic individualism give way to terrors and horrors that are much closer to home, [...]" (113). Instead of the cave and the monastery in Lewis' work, the setting becomes the small community or the old-fashioned house like that presented in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The House of the Seven Gables. The reader is never sent back to the haunted castle.

Another difference in American Gothic fiction has to do with a greater historical focus in its depiction of the idea of disruption. Botting points out that American
Gothic is quite different from European Gothic: "In the American context a different geography and history were available to writers: romantic adventures could take place in the wilds of an uncharted continent or horrors could be found in the Puritan witch trials of Salem in the seventeenth century" (114). The point being made by Botting is that the American Gothic focuses on the inside of a person and the society that they live within. Kafer points out that the disruption stems from the idea history haunts the individual in the present (201). Both Botting and Kafer see the sins of the past as something that influences the American Gothic novel, and this stems from the idea that the past haunts. If one cannot deal with the past, then it becomes a specter in the mind of a character or person. Hawthorne’s picture of Colonel Pyncheon that always stares at Hepzibah becomes the specter of the past for her, and his injury of the Maule family plagues her. The American Revolution and the French Revolution would be examples of these historical ‘disruptions’. Atrocities occurred during both revolutions, and this caused a change in the newly formed American Gothic. Botting and Kafer see each of these as a central part of the American Gothic.
In the American Gothic religion plays a particularly strong role as well. Botting points out that American writers often saw religion as a source of disruption (115). Religious fanaticism, such as that exhibited during the Salem Witch Trials, would be an example of this. Similarly, Hester Prynne in Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter is the victim of religious persecution because she disrupts the order of the society. This impulse to persecute brings insanity into the Puritan village in the form of Roger Chillingworth. Within the American Gothic religious fanaticism and even religious delusions are often depicted as sources of insanity and disruption. The psychological focus of the American Gothic then, appears different from the European Gothic; mental 'disorder' either starts with religious delusion, disease, revolution, or victimization. This creates one of the most important aspects of the American Gothic.

Finally, it should be noted that within the gothic the sublime becomes particularly important during the eighteenth century because of the republication or publication of works by Longinus, Kames, and Burke in Europe. As Fred Botting explains, gothic fiction stems from both the Romantic texts that drew on Medieval lore,
and theoretical works focusing on the sublime (23-4). According to Botting, the sublime aspects of Gothic fiction are tied to both issues of structure and content. The gothic novel disrupts the structure and content of the novel by looking at degeneration and by taking people to a place where the reader believes that the characters and places are real, even though the elements of the novel are not completely realistic and the novels only create a convincing fictional reality through representation (30). Degeneration creates terror, and helps to create the feeling of sublimity that is associated with the gothic. Samuel H. Monk adds to our understanding of the gothic aesthetic by noting its sublimity usually resides outside of the ornate (36). The gothic endeavors to get down to the ordinary reader’s level, and this means that heightened language is completely unnecessary. Both Botting and Monk see the gothic sublime as something that causes terror and the idea that the sublime has a sense of simplicity to it that helps it to easily render terror. The gothic needs to create a world in which ordinary people live through the text, but where they encounter issues having to with the supernatural or extraordinary. Longinus’ ideas on the sublime can help us better
understand Gothic fiction’s affects on readers. David Punter explains that Longinus sees the sublime as having the ability to "'entrance’" (37). The idea here is that literature should captivate, and that it can do so through terror. Another point that Longinus makes has to do with the types of emotion a sublime work evokes in a reader. The sublime, according to Longinus, consists of a specific classification of emotion, "strong and inspired emotion" (326). Looking at the sublime this way causes a revelation about the Gothic. Gothic texts like Brown’s tend to inspire strong emotion, the two most common being terror and sympathy. The reader can sympathize with the narrator, or a specific character. One can also feel a sense of awestruck fear as the narrator or character confronts irrational or disorienting experience.

Longinus also points out that imperfections in a text in themselves are sublime. This provides another insight into Gothic aesthetics. The sublime is made more wonderful by observing the nature of defects and cracks within it (331). Similarly, that the imperfections within a gothic text create the sublime. Inconsistencies within a narrative enhance its sublime. The manipulations of time, and the unreliable narrator provide examples of this.
Longinus also goes on to point out that a writer separates themself from the sublime when their goal becomes the pleasing of others (324). In order to remain consistently within the sublime, writers like Brown would write what they believe to be relevant regardless of how disturbing the content might be. Brown observes the difficulties within the human spirit to create his texts, and this does not take into account what society believes is pleasing.

Longinus discusses “amplification” as another aspect of the sublime. “Amplification” can be defined as a rhetorical device in which specific language is used to accentuate, embellish, or lengthen which enhances the sublime (Cuddon 32). The sublime in relation to “amplification” is achieved once the text is enhanced by the specific uses of language that comprise it. In his text, Longinus points out that “amplification” can create heightened emotions, emphasizes events, and evoke pleasing emotions (331). These effects create the sublime, in a general sense. The gothic creates the sublime by creating a more emotional and terror filled text. Melodramatic twists within the gothic can create varying degrees of heightening. If the principle character is alone in a dark castle and hears a voice down the hall, this causes a
heightened sense of fear. If one hears, said voice in a
dark hall with a single candle present it still creates an
amplified sense of fear or terror. Sometimes
"amplification" involves plot elements, and at other times
it deals with small details within the novel.

Lord Henry Home Kames' influential Elements of
Criticism explains sublimity in a new light. It is Kames
that gives us more of a 'technical' instruction than
Longinus on how to evoke the sublime. That is also helpful
for our understanding of the gothic aesthetic. Kames
points out that the goal of the author should be to
promote images that stand out and present themselves with
vigour (174). An example of this in the case of Brown's
work (as I will discuss later) would have to do with the
images of the Wieland family sanctuary or even Clara's
response to her surroundings. If a dark house that has
supposed voices within it consists of vivid images of the
objects in the house and the tenor of the voices, then, as
Kames theory suggests, the sublime will be even more
effectively evoked. For Kames, sublimity has a lot to do
with the author's attention to detail within a text.

Kames' point about the importance of vivid
representation goes beyond 'images', however, and includes
depictions of the actions of characters. In his text Kames states: "[...] the action, with all its material circumstances is represented so much to the life, that it could not be better conceived by a real spectator; and it is this manner of description which contributes greatly to the sublimity [...]" (177). Through the author's depiction of characters, then, the reader gets a different and more lively view of what is horrifying or terrible. Brown provides the vividness required through his narrators, such as Edgar in *Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker* and Clara in *Wieland, or the Transformation*. Sublimity for Brown and Kames resides in vividness.

Kames agrees with Longinus that another important element of the sublime consists in the structure within a text, though he explains this in a somewhat different way. How the author narrates the text creates its sublimity. Kames points out that the author must take themselves out of the text, and make the characters the central means of conveying an impression (197). Brown takes himself out of his texts by allowing his principal, first person narrators to be women, men with psychosis, or troubled characters in general. The point for Brown rests in his ability to create a convincing story without employing an
omniscient narrator. The struggles that the first person narrator has with conveying their story present further examples of Kames' point that the removal of the author is essential.

A final eighteenth century writer whose views on the sublime are helpful in our understanding of the Gothic is Edmund Burke. Samuel Monk points out that Burke sees terror as the key to the sublime: "Terror fills the mind with great ideas, and the soul delights in the experience" (87). Terror excites the mind and produces a rush of adrenaline. Monk points out that Burke has a notion called the "terrible sublime" (105-6). Burke makes many important points about the notion of terror: "Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror, be endured with greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look on anything as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous" (101). Burke points out that whatever we fear can be viewed as sublime because it excites terror. Brown uses fear of voices and murder to insight terror in both Clara and his readers. Terror happens to be one of the most prevalent things in the gothic sublime and Burke goes on to point out: "Indeed terror is in all cases
whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime" (102). Burke wants to create the realization that terror in itself produces the most effective notions of the sublime. Burke also points out that terror creates the force known as power or accompanies it (108). One has power when they are able to exert mental strength, and because of it control their lives. As Burke describes it power stems from the “degree of strength of its ability to hurt [...]” (108). This creates a situation in which the ability to create pain of any magnitude, causes one to become powerful. Now, in the case of a gothic novel this can be the villain creating the pain or the novel creating pain in the reader. Pain in these cases can be mental or physical. The gothic aesthetic for Burke consists of the ideas of terror, mental disruption, and the sublime.

One thing that Burke does successfully in his descriptions of the sublime is to discuss the human mind. David Punter points out that Burke establishes the idea of Psychological speculation (39). For Burke, psychological speculation is the idea that terror and literature are interrelated. This idea directs writers as to how to portray normalcy, insanity, and how to disrupt the
reader’s mind. Burke turns greater attention than Longinus and Kames, to the Psychological, as the focus of Longinus and Kames is more on the technical and the formal. Punter goes on to point out that another facet of this notion is that the Psychological dynamics of fear can be investigated (135). One facet has to do with fear in the reader, and the other has to do with fear in the characters. The psychological elements of the gothic sublime are never fixed and remain ever-changing.

Passion is also a central issue for Burke in relation to the sublime. When one thinks of passion in the gothic context it immediately connects itself to crimes of passion which is something that Brown does not necessarily deal with in all of his texts. Burke points out that passion creates "Astonishment" (101). By this Burke means that passion creates a flood of feelings so deep that they can become in a sense disturbing. This is central to the gothic. The explanation of passion as given by Burke is: "The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and Astonishment is the state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror" (101). Burke continues to point out that
passion creates horror, and my belief is that this stems from realizing that it can in fact produce knowledge of the darker side of humanity. In other words, passion secures the idea that as humans we are capable of the most horrific things because of it. Burke states: “Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree [...]” (101). The sublime causes us as humans to come into contact with the repressed, the darkness, and the issues that are not addressed readily in the scheme of life. Brown writes within the vein of the unaddressed.

While Burke’s major focus is on the psychological and emotional aspects of sublimity he does offer some helpful reflection on the ‘formal’ elements of sublime art. Burke points out that “magnificence” can consist of the beautiful and perfect, as well as the imperfect and confused (119). The idea that imperfection can create a sense of sublimity relates back to Longinus’ work. Things such as a badly painted fence, or a dented car could have a sense of sublimity to them. What Burke wants the world to realize is that the imperfect or the damaged is sublime. Thus, the shifting narrative structure of a gothic novel would also become sublime, by Burke’s
Burke's ideas about the sublime have their impact on the American Gothic.

Burke's sublime not only helps us to look at the European Gothic, but the American Gothic as well because writers such as Brown utilized terror, the psychological, and passion to create their fiction. Brown along with other writers draws on the terror of the times, the psychological, and passion to perpetuate a reaction in the reader. James Dawes explains in his article "Fictional Feeling: Philosophy, Cognitive Science, and the American Gothic" that his study will deal with what transpires when the reader reads a gothic text (437). Basically, what Dawes wants to look at is what happens when aspects of Burke's ideas are confronted by the reader of a gothic text. Evidently, Dawes sees the sublime in the experiences of the reader. Dawes points out that readers respond to the gothic novel because it exemplifies and accentuates their own suppressed desires (442). If the gothic novel acts on desires that humans as a whole repress, then they become a vent for the imagination. The imagination can engage in all sorts of dark things due to the gothic novel, and the repression of them can be cast aside while reading the text. This ties right into Burke's sublime.
The Following Chapter

Building on this overview of Brown's biography and gothic aesthetics, Chapter 2 will ask what is sublime about Brown's novel *Wieland, or the Transformation*. The chapter will also seek to understand how events that occurred within Early American society became sources for Brown's novel, and how the sources operate through the novel and the characters of Clara, Wieland, and Carwin. Revolutionary society will be examined in regards to its connections to the novel. The idea of revolution in connection with the tumults going on inside of the two principle characters (one of which is the first person narrator) is a part of this examination. The novel's influences from the social times and the mind of the author are another element of importance. Another important aspect of the novel will be its structure. The novel as a whole from character to structure is the subject of this chapter, and the historical influences and Brown's mind are some of the elements that are necessary when looking at Brown's novel. This chapter seeks to find out how the sublime plays a role in Brown's text, and what impact his world and its surroundings has on his novel.
CHAPTER TWO

WIELAND, OR THE TRANSFORMATION;
FAMILICIDE AND THE GOTHIC AESTHETIC

The conventions of Gothic Fiction provided Charles Brockden Brown with a way to explain to his readers the impact of Revolutionary anxieties on the American public. For Brown, on a personal level, this anxiety stems from the sound of gunfire and the mobs that came into the Quaker community bent on destruction. But also for Brown, the American Revolution not only impacted his community, but the rest of the colonies as well. As Kafer points out, Brown used Wieland, or the Transformation as a way to illustrate that the Revolution brought "family trauma" with it (114). One of Brown's main issues in his own life was the destruction that the Revolution created within his own family and the ever present danger of its reoccurrence. Not only was the destruction of family central to his illustration of the effects of the Revolution, but the ostracization of individuals by choice or force became part of his gothic world as well. In Wieland, or the Transformation, Brown's depiction of 'familicide' represents his attempt, (drawing on non-
fiction crime narratives for inspiration), to use gothic conventions to illustrate the disruptive effects of Revolution. Brown’s father became separated from the Quaker community, and similarly Wieland chooses to separate himself from the society that he grew up within. This separation became an issue that Brown used the darkness of the gothic to explore, and he did this through his exploration of the insanity that unmoored individuals can perpetuate during a time of social upheaval—insanity such as the acts of the destructive mob or the murdering father. The darkness that the Revolution perpetuated caused Brown to look differently at the family dynamic, and society in general.

In order to understand the connections between *Wieland, or the Transformation* and the Revolution, one must first know the story of the narrative. The novel *Wieland, or the Transformation* gives the reader an unreliable narrator, Clara, and through her eyes we get the story of her family trauma. Clara points out that her family lives on an isolated farm with a center for meeting and contemplation. It is Clara’s brother Wieland that for the most part has withdrawn from society, and he seeks his and his family’s betterment through his own unique brand
of religion. The family becomes involved with a traveling ventriloquist by the name of Carwin. Carwin’s ability to imitate others drives Wieland insane and brings Clara’s sanity into question. Wieland believes that he hears the voice of God telling him to kill his family (161). This voice causes him to go from sane to insane, and by extension to become a threat to the narrator as well. However, Wieland in the end destroys himself via suicide. The madness circles back and swallows itself with his death. Clara ends the tale with an explanation of how her life has returned to normalcy.

The family drama depicted in Wieland is an example of a category of criminal behavior of great concern to Americans during the Revolutionary period—Familicide. Familicide means for one member of a family to perpetuate the act of murder on his or her immediate family, thus killing many members of the family. The role that “familicide” played in the Revolutionary and Post-Revolutionary period was a huge one. As Karen Haltunnen points out, “the popular literature of domestic murder reveals a pervasive if unspoken resistance to the new values and practices of sentimental domesticity, offering a darker perspective on American family life in this
period" (161). In this period, the social anxiety regarding this type of crime was caused by an actual increase in real occurrences of "familicide". According to Haltunnen: "Beginning in the late eighteenth century, nonfictional accounts of domestic murders grew increasingly popular, expanding in both number and variety" (137). These accounts often focused on what the motivation of the accused was, and how the murder was performed. Unusual family murders became a pre-occupation after the Revolution because people viewed it as a result of the Revolution, and as a result of the struggles with the instability of the times. Haltunnen lists several murderers that killed their family members, including "John Lewis," "Mary Cole," "William Beadle," "James Yates," and "Benjamin White" (138-139). The point here is that "familicide" was not uncommon after the Revolution, and that these kind of narratives interested the public. Consequently, Brown was able to find plenty of source material for his novel in popular fiction.

The political rhetoric of the time also focused on the metaphor of "familicide". Revolutionary political rhetoric used the metaphor of "familicide" as a way of discussing both rebellion against political authority and
the need for virtuous leaders to guide and protect the citizens of a republic. For my purposes, the art that holds the most importance is literature, but the metaphor pervaded through many areas. In his text *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* Jay Fliegelman points out that the dream present within the American during the Revolution involved the idea that the citizen wanted to have both a divine father and the promised inheritance of the divine kingdom (198). At the same time, the people expressed a desire for political fathers that they could trust and believe in. The idea of having a father that takes care of them, such as George Washington (in contrast with King George III) becomes prevalent (199). The political father, ideally, does not control, but rather helps the people to receive their ultimate civic inheritance. Fliegelman goes on to point out how the idea of the political father operates metaphorically: "Joseph Tuckerman, applying Lockean categories, made it clear that Washington is a parent 'who has sacrificed his own to prove our enjoyment, our father, who has found his highest satisfaction in promoting our felicity'" (200). This positive ideal of fatherhood finds its opposite expression in the idea of
"familicide;" instead of the father perpetuating the happiness and security of the family we have annihilation through interfamily violence. Fliegelman continues to point out how the positive patriarch was viewed: "Historically, the Protestant tradition had declared a man might successfully imitate Christ only in his passive obedience and his human suffering; for his divine character was above imitation" (205). The metaphor here is that the human must come as close to the divine as possible. Man must obey the "good" father in order to obtain the life of the ideal, or the divine result. According to Fliegelman the myth of the sacrificing, virtuous father (father of the nation) and what he will provide was circulated through sermons and educational texts (209). At the same time, though, the image of the tyrannical father, whose indifference to his children leads to violence was being advanced. To sum up, then, the literary arts became a way of perpetuating both the idea that the father (the father of the nation) should see to it that his children were cared for, and the disturbing possibility that rule tyrannical fathers (like the British King) would lead to the destructive violence of familicide. Both of these ideas come up through Brown's
research for and writing of the novel. The depiction of both sacrificial and murderous fathers becomes essential to Brown’s text.

Some sources germane to the discussion of Brown’s novel were the murder narratives of the time. The murder narratives that Brown appears to have utilized for his narrative are the stories of the familicides of James Yates and William Beadle. Each of these narratives have significant elements that would have interested Brown. The first involves style. Samuel Monk explains the idea of the sublime style in his text *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England*. The Yates family atrocity contains an element of the gothic sublime in that it renders the murders in less than ornate light, which is what Monk states is necessary to the construction of the gothic narrative (36). A point that Monk is trying to make has to do with the idea that simplicity is necessary for the ordinary reader. This sublime style of popular crime narratives was of great interest to Brown. A simple vocabulary, including words such as “smashed” and “left” illustrate that the Yates narrative was constructed for the general public to read (2). This commonality of simple, non-flowery language pervades through the Beadle
narrative as well. The Beadle narrative employs simple descriptive phrases such as “carrying with him the axe and knife” and “leaving marks of his footsteps in blood on the stairs” to evoke the kind of unease commonly associated with the gothic (9). This is common gothic language, and this helps to illustrate that there is a connection between this murder narrative and elements of the gothic.

The Yates and Beadle narratives were also sensational, and thus they demonstrated another aspect of the gothic sublime. Newspapers were frequently laced with these types of stories because they included sensationalistic elements and detail. The Independent Ledger states in no uncertain terms that when Yates killed his family he clubbed them to death and smashed their skulls in; he killed his animals in the same way, and he left his axe in his cow (2). Longinus would call this repetition of extreme detail “amplification”. This kind of description is designed to incite a possible physical and emotional response in readers (331). The response would be one tied to the terror of such an event, conveyed through its description in such simplistic language. The sensational, emotional response incited by the Beadle narrative relies upon the fact that the images of the
victims and scene are rendered simplistically. According to the Beadle narrative, which was written by Stephen Mix Mitchell, the scene was one of ashen bloodless bodies, and there was blood everywhere (10). These words are simple and straight to the point, with no excessive description, just simplicity. As Kames points out, sublimity resides in the power of words to communicate swiftly and to use realistic images that are full of life, in order to connect individuals to society in social situation (208). The simple language of the writers and the descriptions serve to get these narratives straight to their readers' hearts and minds, which is the essence of "sensational" prose.

Another element of the sublime that comes through in the murder narrative of the Yates familicide is how it centers around the creation of terror. This point connects the narratives to Edmund Burke's influential reinterpretation of the sublime. Burke, we should recall, sees terror as the heart of the sublime, and that this terror gives the mind a certain fuel for thought (87). In Brown's case, the ability of religious imagery (a central element in the Yates narrative) to create terror seems to have been a particularly important idea. Alan Axelrod
points out in Charles Brockden Brown: An American Tale that a symptom of Yates's problem was that he had a terrible religious vision of two angels (53). The angels tell him that he has to destroy his family (53). The Yates narrative, as reproduced by Axelrod, focuses on how Yates tossed his eldest son against a wall with a great amount of power, dashed his young son's head to bits in the fireplace, axed his wife and staked her with a fence pole, and then he killed his daughter Rebecca by splitting her head open with an axe (54). Such violent detail creates particular terror because it becomes painfully obvious that a religiously motivated retreat into the self, and by extension the madness, led to these horrific crimes.

Disgust represents another element of the sublime. According to Burke, the terror of sublimity is often stimulated through the sight of objects that are disgusting or harmful (101). This kind of descriptive, yet terrible imagery interested Brown, and it helped him to construct his novel. One source of such disgust in the Beadle narrative involves its depiction of Beadle as the abnormal loner. The narrative begins with him being sane, then shows him isolating himself, and finally depicts him becoming separated from organized religion (10). This
separation is presented in a tone of disgust. One moment that illustrates disgust is when Beadle executes his family: "he smote his wife and each of the children with the ax on the side of the head as they lay sleeping in their beds" (9). Indeed, the disgust conveyed in this narrative illustrates how a man that leaves society can be dangerous, and can even destroy his family. Murder is one of the horrible deeds that can be committed; revolution would be another. Brown realized the social and political implications of this type of event and the terror it incites through disgust.

Another element of the sublime that is apparent in the Yates murder narrative has to do with its depiction of the psychology of fear, which represents another link back to Burke. As Punter points out, Burke believes that Psychological Speculation is a part of the sublime (39). Psychological speculation refers to another way in which writing can create the experience of terror. Gothic writers, according to Burke's model, can achieve their effects by contrasting examples of "normalcy" and "insanity" in order to create disruption within the mind of the reader. This "psychological" facet of the literary sublime appears most clearly in the descriptions of Yates'
supposed insanity, and the murders. Yates appears normal as the narrative begins, "that the said James Yates had nothing remarkable in his character, which was rather an insignificant one, and that he had never discovered the least signs of insanity" (2). As the narrative starts the murderer in question does appear normal, and the narrative illustrates that he is in fact sane. The slip into insanity comes much more abruptly in the narrative: "the morning on which this tragedy was perpetrated, he ran naked about half a mile to the house of his father and mother, who were ancient people, and told them that he had killed his wife and children [...]" (2). The way in which fear is being perpetuated in the reader in examples such as these is something that interested Brown. Readers’ innate fear of insanity would be one issue; such anxieties are raised by the narrative’s discussion of Yates hearing voices and seeing angels (53). Indeed, the narrative makes concerns about the effects of religious mania very viable.

Bayer-Berenbaum’s point about the psychological effect of “supernatural” is also relevant to both the Yates and Beadle narratives (33). Fear of extreme religious beliefs; triggered by “supernatural” experiences and turning into reasons for murder, provides one
explanation for the public interest in these crime stories. In an America where superstitious folk belief and faith in "miraculous" occurrences was still strong among a significant portion of the population, the fear that these types of murders perpetuate (the fear that anyone can commit such a crime) was quite real. Such elements are clearly on display in the crime stories themselves. It is apparent that Yates is going through a period of mental distress and that Beadle has his religious issues as well. Beadle's faith in a kind of providential force guiding him to murder is revealed through his preparation of a special meal on the horrible night: "'I have prepared a noble supper of oysters, that my flock and I may eat and drink together, thank God and die.'" (8). It's as if Beadle is preparing a "last supper" which is uncannily reminiscent of executions and the last supper of Christ. A fear inducing aspect of this has to do with the idea that Beadle has a Christ complex; apparently he believes that he has some sort of divine connection to God. Both Yates and Beadle perpetuate these kind of acts (acts with both vague and explicit supernatural components) that make them frightening. The fact that the common Christian could
perpetuate such an act becomes startling to the public, and to Brown.

Finally, on a formal level, two unifying elements present within the texts are the idea of the recurring character types and the out of the way setting. Both of these seem to have inspired Brown when writing Wieland, or the Transformation Beadle lived with his family on an isolated farm, as did Yates. The two men have separated themselves from typical society. Another element that they share is that they both seem to represent recurring character types, stereotypes even. Both men are religious deviants, and both men believe that they have a special connection with God. Beadle does his "last supper" (8). Yates believes that he can see and hear angels (53). Not only has religious isolation caused them to appear deviant, but their crimes do as well. The out of the way settings seem to perpetuate the idea that becoming solitary and moving away from society can cause the mind to breakdown, and this can result in familicide. Another point seems to be the idea that separating oneself from organized religion can be damaging. The recurring character types in these narratives seem to be the murderous fathers and the victimized families, types that
have particular political significance (as we have seen). The fathers are ushered into their crimes by a divine voice or lack there of. The wives and children become the victims of what the follower or murderous father believes to be the path to their salvation as well as his. Both murders shared things, and the similar elements of both narratives were of great interest to Brown.

Having surveyed some of the gothic elements Brown likely absorbed from his source material, it remains to explore just how he incorporated these elements into his gothic novel of "revolution." First of all, we should notice that Brown wrote Wieland, or the Transformation in a style that ties directly to the gothic sublime. This first element of style mentioned by Monk, we should recall, was the simple and clear style of the sublime's writing (36). This element is frequently utilized by Brown, as it is in the murder narratives of both Beadle and Yates. Brown's text is dominated by use of simple phrasing, and clear, concise structure throughout his novel:

A gleam diffused itself over the immediate space, and instantly a loud report, like the explosion of a mine followed. She uttered an involuntary shriek, but
the new sounds that greeted her ear quickly conquered her surprise. They were piercing shrieks, and uttered without intermission. (21)

In this section of the story Clara is relating the scene of her father's spiritual encounter and demise. This section illustrates how Brown, through Clara, utilizes common language to relate a disturbing scene. Another example of Clara's simple language comes through in scenes involving her brother Theodore: "He advanced to me, and, after another pause, resumed:--'Poor girl! a dismal fate has set its mark upon thee. Thy life is demanded as a sacrifice. Prepare thee to die.'" (209). At this point in the narrative, Wieland has found Clara in her home with Carwin and desires to finish his divinely ordained task. The simple language presents a scene of frightening ominousness, and conveys this through its wording and emphasis. This use of simple language appears to parallel that of the murder narratives because of its emphasis and simplicity. Brown having read the murder narratives knew that his writing would appeal more to the public if he made it less ornate.

Another similarity to the crime narratives is that Brown depicts the murders in his novels in a way that
seeks to provoke a “sensational” response from the reader. In other words, Longinus’ notion of “amplification” also fits in well with his text (331). The “amplification” progresses through the whole of the narrative. Brown carefully builds suspense through simplistic language to incite terror in his audience. One example of this sense of “amplification” presents itself when Carwin suddenly appears in Clara’s doorway after having been seen at a distance. Clara’s initial impression of Carwin is as follows:

One sunny afternoon I was standing in the door of my house, when I marked a person passing close to the edge of the bank that was in front. His pace was a careless and lingering one, and had none of the gracefulness and ease which distinguish a person with certain advantages of education from a clown. His gait was rustic and awkward. His form ungainly and disproportioned. (53)

This initial impression is then amplified when Carwin arrives abruptly at her door. Clara’s impression of Carwin when he suddenly appears at her door is as follows:

It will be readily supposed that I was somewhat inquisitive as to the person and demeanor of our
visitant. After a moment's pause, I stepped to the door and looked after him. Judge my surprise when I beheld the self-same figure that had appeared a half-hour before upon the bank. (55)

This kind of uncanny reappearance begins to cause anxiety in not only the narrator, but the audience as well. It is Clara's simple language that helps to incite emotional response.

Brown also utilized his version of "amplification" to create the murder scene in which Wieland views his wife's lifeless body (166). What causes the true outpouring of emotion is the reader's knowledge that Wieland murdered his entire family before the narrative methodically confirms that detail. We know the horrible act that Wieland has committed, in other words, which causes his slowly developing "confession" to have a particularly chilling impact. The structure of the narrative leads up to Wieland's explanation of the deeds, and the simple style aids the explanation:

'The lineaments of that being whose veil was now lifted and whose visage beamed upon my sight, no hues of pencil or of language can portray. As it spoke, the accents thrilled to my heart:—'Thy prayers are
heard. In proof of thy faith render me thy wife. This is the victim I choose.’ (161).

Here again, Brown utilizes the simple idea of “amplification” to create the terror that pervades the novel, terror that mirrors the ever-escalating uneasiness in the world of Revolutionary America.

Through Brown’s novel the sublime terrors produced by religious mania are also explored. As Burke points out, terror is created in a specific way by visual cues: “Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror, be endued with greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look on anything as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous” (101). The point that Burke is making is that regardless of the scale of an object, sublimity goes hand in hand with the idea of fear and danger. This is why Brown can use something as simple as a single ventriloquist’s voice to destabilize an entire community.

In Brown’s narrative, Wieland hears a voice that he (and the reader, perhaps) supposed to be the voice of God (161). It is this voice that incites the murders of Wieland’s family, in a similar act of religious mania to that which incited the Beadle and Yates familicides. The
terror comes from the idea that a single, small voice created such a broadly destructive delusion, even as eventually the voice itself is revealed as a hoax. This terrifying hoax nevertheless incites murder. Brown wanted to make the point that extreme religious behaviors and or mania on a small scale can cause the kinds of murders that both Beadle and Yates perpetuated. As Daniel E. Williams points out in his piece “Writing Under the Influence: An Examination of Wieland’s ‘Well Authenticated Facts’ and the Depiction of Murderous Fathers in Post-Revolutionary Print Culture” that Beadle believed his murders were “God’s will” (657). Wieland believes his murders to be of divine guidance as well, and Brown wanted to convey the idea that these delusions are terrible and should be feared. Equally important for Brown’s commentary on the Revolution is the idea that a single deluded citizen, set in motion by a deceptive “voice” (which could also represent political leadership) can become a terrifying destructive force. Gothic fiction, then, with its emphasis on supernatural events, becomes the perfect vehicle for Brown’s exploration of social and political concerns. This idea of the adaptability of the gothic is reinforced by Bayer-Berenbaum’s on the role uses of the supernatural:
"The Gothic imagination, like the religious imagination, reverently acknowledges awesome and terrible spiritual forces operative in the world. This affinity has led Gothic writers to borrow and then modify religious symbols and archetypes" (34). Brown utilizes these kinds of supernatural elements to achieve the terror that Burke discusses, but he does so for particularly American purposes. Brown’s desire was to create a novel that illustrated how men can go mad because of resolution, and that this occurs because they isolate themselves from conventional society.

Another gothic sublime element perpetuated through this novel is the idea of disgust. Brown knew that murder narratives in the newspapers, and other publication perpetuated a level of disgust. Brown’s evocation of disgust is clearest, perhaps, in the part of Wieland’s “confession” where he justifies the murder of his family. In Wieland’s “confession” he describes the murder of his wife as follows:

‘Til her breath stopped she shrieked for help,—for mercy. When she could speak no longer, her gestures, her looks, appealed to my compassion. My accursed hand was irresolute and tremulous. I meant thy death
to be sudden, thy struggles to be brief. Alas! My heart was infirm, my resolves mutable. Thrice I slackened my grasp, and life kept its hold, through the midst of pangs. Her eyeballs started from their sockets. Grimness and distortion took place of all that used to bewitch me into transport and subdue me into reverence. (165)

The disgust that Brown evokes comes across in Wieland’s “confession,” in what happens to Wieland’s wife as she is strangled. Brown’s use of disgust helps the reader to feel a feeling of abhorrence towards the murderer, and his deeds. This disgust would have been felt by readers of the Yates and Beadle murders. Another important scene that evokes disgust occurs when Wieland tries to justify the murders of his wife and children: “‘Thou, Omnipotent and Holy! Thou knowest that my actions were conformable to thy will. I know not what is crime; what actions are evil in their ultimate and comprehensive tendency, or what are good. Thy knowledge, as thy power, is unlimited.’” (170). Here the disgust becomes prevalent in Wieland’s statement because he believes that God commissioned him, and the idea of God commissioning a murder would make the reader feel disturbed and frightened. Disgust, for Brown and the
gothic sublime, comes through in description and the feeling that the text evokes at that particular moment.

Another gothic element that is important in terms of the novel is its depiction of the psychology of fear. We should recall that, as David Punter suggests, Burke saw the idea of Psychological Speculation as important in connection with terror, and that narrative depictions of the shift from normality to madness are useful methods of producing such an effect (39). In Wieland, the psychological comes through in Brown’s of the growing madness of Wieland. Brown positions Wieland into the realm of psychological speculation when he has him hear the voice of God (161). This voice could be the wind, another person, or the actual deity. Wieland’s “confession” reveals that his wife believed the voice to be a result of a temporary insanity: “‘Fear was now added to her grief. ‘What mean you? Why talk you of death? Bethink yourself, Wieland; bethink yourself, and this fit will pass.’” (165). Believing that the voice that Wieland heard was a fit of insanity seems logical, and Brown makes it appear that way momentarily. Prior to the voice Wieland appears normal, and this appears in Clara’s relation of a discussion between him and his friend: “Even my brother,
though his opinions were hourly assailed, and even the divinity of Cicero contested, was captivated with his friend, and laid aside some part of his ancient gravity at Pleyel’s approach” (30). Before, the voice, Wieland enjoys the company of his friends and family. After the voice, he becomes more introverted. The reason for Wieland’s voice, and its origins are soon revealed by Clara. Clara states that Carwin reveals to Wieland that the voice he heard was his: "The answer was now given, but confusedly and scarcely articulated. 'I meant nothing—I intended no ill—if I understand—if I do not mistake you—it is too true—I did appear—in the entry—did speak. The contrivance was mine, but—" (209). The source of the voice resides in the body of a person, and not divine interference. Once the origin of the voice is revealed, Wieland spirals into a feeling of despair: “These words were no sooner uttered, than my brother ceased to wear the same aspect. His eyes were downcast; he was motionless; his respiration became hoarse, like that of a man in the agonies of death” (210). Wieland realizes that he took a normal belief in God, and allowed a faceless voice to manipulate his belief. The insanity in Wieland builds gradually, and it starts with a voice. The voice creates a shift in the minds of Wieland
and Clara (perhaps, even the reader), and goes on to perpetuate an insanity that leads to self destruction, or recovery. Wieland stabs himself once his voice is revealed to be a hoax, but he still believes that God was present in it: "He plunged it to the hilt in his neck; and his life instantly escaped with the stream that gushed from the wound" (222). This self-destruction is ushered in by the return of the voice of Carwin. The idea of inciting terror becomes evident in Wieland's approach to kill his wife, and what he believes drove him to it. A sane explanation of the voice is what the story seems to start with, and ends with. Brown was fully aware of the damage that a voice can do (even a political one), unless it has a rational basis. The Yeats and Beadle narratives influenced Brown's use of this faceless voice, but with a twist. In the end, the voice is human. The insanity is perpetuated by a fracture in the mind that occurs because of real life circumstances, such as the terror that Revolution creates. Brown realized that insanity has its triggers, and that some of them can be as simple as a voice (political or otherwise).

Lastly, on the formal level there is a sense that Wieland like Beadle and Yates was a societal deviant with
an isolationist mentality. This is reinforced by both characterization and setting. Wieland isolates himself on his farm Mettingen (26-28). This self-imposed isolation seems to require a certain type of person to accomplish it, and specific circumstances that would incite it. The American Revolution might be one reason that Brown uses the idea of isolation in his text, and another is the structure of the murder narratives. Another issue that isolation brings up is that of detachment from conventional religion. This detachment from conventional religion creates a need for the detached person to acquire a new religion. Wieland for instance has a temple where he, his family, and his friends congregate to enjoy music, philosophical reflection, and education (28-29). This for one thing is not conventional worship. Brown wanted to make it clear that Wieland's detachment from the exterior world had a lasting effect on him, leading to the murder of his family, which was supposedly ordered by a divine voice. The isolation and separation from conventional religion in Wieland mirrors the Yates and Beadle narratives closely. It is this that causes the shift from sanity to insanity. The insanity seems to be perpetuated by this separation from society and the church. Brown
wanted to make the point that deviating from society's prescribed values and duties causes the destruction of the soul and the society of the individual that perpetuates it.

One other formal element that Brown seems to work with has to do with character depiction. The depiction of the characters in the murder narratives is fairly exact, but Brown inverts them slightly. According to Bayer-Berenbaum in Gothic fiction there are "villains", "victims", and "heroes" (23). There are two villains in Brown's novel, Wieland and Carwin. Carwin might play the simple peasant with a special ability, but his ability to manipulate borders on the diabolical. Clara plays two roles through the course of the novel, one is the victim and the other is the hero. Bayer-Berenbaum points out that "[...] the hero is frequently a peasant" (23). Brown inverts this by pointing out that Clara has her own home on the property, and that she might struggle with sanity but she is the hero. By having the knife, and being unable to stop her brother from killing himself she ends the murderous cycle (222). This illustrates that she saves herself and Carwin. Clara is the hero. The other victims in the novel are Catherine (the wife) and Wieland's
children. This mirrors the events in the murder narratives except for the fact that Beadle shoots himself (9). The murderer in this instance ends the cycle of murder by killing himself. Brown realized that this was an important moment in the murder narrative, and I believe it is because of this that he created the self-stabbing scene. Brown wanted to show a similarity between characters, the novel, and real-life events. At the same time, he needed to craft a satisfactory plot that would not end with the death of his narrator.

As we can see, then, Brown clearly drew considerable inspiration from popular narratives of familicide in writing his gothic novel of revolution, Wieland. It remains only to highlight the political point he seems to have been making in doing so. Brown utilized his novel to delve into issues that are present within the Post-Revolutionary culture, and to explore the human condition. It is the instability in the mind that seems to create uncertainty for Brown. The Burkean notion of terror pervades both the murder narratives and the novel. The terror of religious mania and self-alienation also appear within all three narratives. The characterization of the murderer as gradually becoming insane was something that
Brown highlighted in his novel. With the Yates and Beadle narratives the murders occur at specific times, and are largely premeditated. Brown does not use the premeditated quality in his work, but he does dramatize a shift from sanity to insanity that leads to the destruction of a family by a deranged family member. Brown wanted to disgust, horrify, and terrify his readers while making them aware that the most normal of people could perpetuate such acts. In the political climate of the time, such sublime violence on the part of fathers represents a clear, if indirect, expression of a range of political fears in the wake of the American Revolution. Brown would continue to develop his thinking on such fears in his next major gothic novel.

The next chapter will focus on how the revolution influenced the text of *Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker*. It will focus further on how the political climate made people retreat from society both in the novel, and in the Revolutionary period. Brown's focus in *Edgar Huntly* is on the savage nature of the humanity, and again his fiction seems directly influenced by the crime narratives of Yeats and Beadle. Edgar's shift back to the primal can be seen as influenced, in part, by similar
regression in these real killers. As in the case of
Wieland, though, we can see that the political climate of
Revolutionary America provides the key context in which to
consider how he reworks his source material into a work of
gothic fiction.
CHAPTER THREE
EDGAR HUNTLY, OR MEMOIRS OF A SLEEP-WALKER; SAVAGERY, MURDER, AND THE GOTHIC AESTHETIC

Gothic fiction and its conventions helped Charles Brockden Brown to explain the atrocities of the American Revolution, and the ways in which it impacted the typical American citizen. To be more specific, Brown wanted to illustrate the notion that the fledgling nation had more than just the revolutionaries to worry about; it also had to worry about the savage nature of the humanity. The first chapter sought to explain what went on in Revolutionary America in reference to Brown’s biography. Brown’s use of the gothic was discussed in a limited way within the first chapter, but for the most part the conventions of the gothic were outlined. In the second chapter, I explained how the American Revolution and “familicide” appear in Brown’s work Wieland, or the Transformation. Another element that I discussed is how the gothic was employed for political purposes. Finally, I discussed how Revolutionary familicides served as source material for Brown’s Wieland, or the Transformation. Building on the previous chapters, in this chapter the...
discussion will focus on the savage nature of the human, and how Brown used the Revolutionary-era discourse of "savagery" as a basis for his novel Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker.

The images of "savagery" that presented themselves during the American Revolution served as a metaphor for Brown, enabling him to criticize the Revolutionary impulses of the time. Part of Brown's sense of this "savagery" comes from his own awareness of the political symbolism of mob violence during the period. One of the most relevant examples for Brown would have been the December 16, 1773 Boston Tea Party, which is discussed in Bénjamin Labaree's book The Boston Tea Party. As Labaree notes, the colonists involved disguised themselves as Native Americans "savages" (more specifically "Mohawks"), and they then went to the harbor and tossed the tea into the sea (143-44). Brown's awareness of this famous event certainly would have drawn his attention to the metaphorical links between "revolutionary" impulses and "savagery." The Tea Party was a case where the image of the Native American as destroyer and savage was adopted by the colonists for political purposes. For Brown, the "savagery" of the mob was a disturbing prospect. As we
have seen, Brown witnessed how the Americans
(Revolutionaries) of Philadelphia allowed themselves to
burn homes and destroy businesses owned and operated by
Quakers. This attack on the Quaker community places
"savage" behavior in a different light.

Another of Brown’s major concerns about the
implications of "savagery" within the world of the
Revolutionary or Post-Revolutionary America was the idea
that savage acts often fall on the unsuspecting. Again, as
we will recall, Brown himself, was a victim of such
unanticipated disruption. Not only was Brown’s family
structure fractured as a result of the "savagery" of the
mob, but so too was his community. Such an experience of
"savage" behavior within a community is not only central
to Brown’s illustration of the effects of the Revolution,
but it also explains his interest in exploring the
isolation that such behavior creates through his gothic
writing. To focus on this facet of "savagery" in his
fiction, Brown employs images and metaphors related to
Indian raiding and captivity, images he derived in part
from the print culture of his time. In Edgar Huntly; or
Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker, such illustrations of
"savagery" represents Brown’s attempts, (also utilizing
the non-fiction crime narratives of the Yates and Beadle "familicides" for inspiration), to employ gothic conventions to illustrate what occurs during and after Revolution. Just as Brown's father was separated from the community (by the destructive mob) as a result of his business ventures, Edgar through his own retreat into the savageness that mirrors the mob is separated from his family and the society that he grew up within.

As I suggested above, there are interesting links between the discourses of "familicide" discussed in the last chapter and the discourse of "savagery" to be treated here. (These links draw attention to the ways that Brown drew on both captivity literature and crime narratives in crafting *Edgar Huntly*.) Within the political rhetoric of the time there circulated the idea that the nation should not simply be based on the idea of a "father" who just takes care of it. Revolutionary political rhetoric also used the metaphor of "behavior" as a way of discussing how the nation should act, and how it should subject to its leader. In his text *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* Jay Fliegelman draws attention to the widely circulated story of how the young George Washington destroyed his father's
favorite tree with his hatchet, and that as a result of his sinful behavior (mirroring "Adam's fortunate fall") he became more in tune with the higher things in life (202). The Washington example probably represents an exception to the rule, however. Typically, revolutionary rhetoric treated disobedience as deviance and irrational behavior, not as something that could bring one closer to the divine. For idealized political fathers (like Washington), deviance might result in the realization that something higher is present. But for the ordinary citizen, deviance represents the risk of descent into "savagery." The idea is that the nation (the United States) must have a moral and civilized individual to run it, instead of a despotic king (George III). This despotic king (George III) was interested only in pure self-preservation (a form of savagery), while the moral father would be interested in the preservation of the nation. However, according to Fliegelman, this image of the government of the fledgling nation had one huge flaw; in achieving independence, men likely learned more from their bad, savage behavior, instead of their good behavior (204). A new nation without a strong comprehensive moral structure must rely on the authority of a strong father (Washington) instead of one.
that bases his life on his own pleasures (King George III). George Washington, in this context, seemed able to make his nation function, and keep his citizens happy. As an idealized political father he was seen as able to control the nation's savage tendencies, and fashion the nation into a well-behaved child. The well-behaved child would not be governed by selfish tendencies or self-preservation. But if the nation were deprived of a leader with the ability to turn away from his desires or to regulate the desires of the people, chaos and disorder would result. In Edgar Huntly, Edgar’s regression into "savagery" as a result of his separation from guiding father-figures, represents Brown’s evocation of this larger social issue.

In order for one to understand the connections between Edgar Huntly; Or Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker and the Revolution and Native American relations, the very complicated story of the narrative must be recounted. The novel Edgar Huntly; Or Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker gives its reader an unreliable narrator, Edgar, and through his eyes we get the story of how his sleepwalking and obsession causes him to retreat into "savagery." At the beginning of the narrative Edgar explains how his friend Waldegrave was
murdered and left under a tree. Edgar becomes obsessed with finding Waldegrave’s killer, and he also notes that he wants to be able to tell his fiancée (Waldegrave’s sister) who killed her brother. Edgar lives far from town, and during the night he comes across a man named Clithero digging near a tree (10-11). About the time that Edgar comes across Clithero, he begins to suspect that Clithero murdered Waldegrave, in part because he is digging near the tree where Waldegrave was found. Edgar witnesses Clithero’s digging, while Clithero is in a sleep walking state, and he pursues him into the wilderness before losing his trail. This pattern is repeated on a few occasions. In time, Edgar’s obsession with Clithero leads him to begin mirroring the suspected murderer. Edgar begins sleepwalking himself, and at a turning point in the novel awakens to find himself in Clithero’s cave hideout. Far from home and desperate, Edgar becomes hungry, and as a result kills a panther with a hatchet and eats it raw. This act precipitates Edgar’s retreat into “savagery” because he lets his survival instincts get the better of him.

While on his way home, Edgar comes upon a band of Indians that are in possession of a captive farm girl.
Perhaps still caught up in a fit of sleepwalking (somnambulism), Edgar goes on a sort of killing spree, battling marauding Indians throughout the countryside. At this point having found only Edgar’s clothes at home, his father-figure and former teacher Sarsefield and some of the townspeople go in search of Edgar. In the confusion of the night, Sarsefield and Edgar nearly shoot each other. Eventually, having found his way home and been reunited with Sarsefield, Huntly finds out that ten of the twelve Indians that he came into contact with are dead, presumably by his own hand (246). At this point, Sarsefield and Edgar discuss the full story of Clithero and his somnambulism. Clithero, Edgar has discovered, is connected to Sarsefield’s fiancée Euphemia Lorimer. Clithero was taken care of by the lady, but he tried to kill her in a fit of sleepwalking. Apparently, his present sleepwalking involves a repetition of this past guilt. Edgar’s desire to “redeem” Clithero meets with resistance from Sarsefield, however, who sees in Clithero a menace needing to be contained. Edgar, however, reveals to Clithero that Euphemia is not dead but rather is in America with Sarsefield, whereupon Clithero (now clearly a madman) sets off to finish what he started. Edgar
frantically writes to Sarsefield to warn him (273). At
the book’s end, Clithero supposedly drowns after
Sarsefield has intercepted him and captured him.
Meanwhile, the sleep-walking Edgar is left unmoored.
Readers are led to believe that he may have subconsciously
been willing to destroy the life of his friend’s wife. We
are also led to wonder about his own guilty feelings
regarding Waldegrave’s death. Finally, the killings he
committed with tomahawk and hatchet draw attention to how
close Edgar himself may be to becoming a savage. The tale
ends with the death of Clithero, however, but no
explanation of what happens to Edgar after.

Based on the previous summary, one fairly obvious
source for Brown’s narrative would be Native American
captivity narratives. The importance of this source
material is something that is well-documented in criticism
regarding Brown. For those unfamiliar with the genre, a
brief introduction may be useful. In the introduction to
her text Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives, Kathryn
Zabelle Derounian-Stodola defines a captivity narrative as
a story, “that involves accounts of non-Indians captured
by Indians in North America (generally in what is now the
United States of America and, to a lesser extent, in
Canada)” (xi). These types of narratives illustrate the lives of the captives while they are with their captors. The “savagery” of Native Americans is usually depicted in detail. The prevalence of this stereotypical view of the Native American as uncivilized is discussed at length in the text The Savages of America; A Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization by Roy Harvey Pearce. Pearce points out that the colonists came to these shores with the idea that the natural world of America was uncivilized, and that the natives of it were uncivilized (3). Popular literature, like the captivity narratives, ensured the wide distribution and influence of this discourse of savagism. Narratives such as Mary Rowlandson’s A True History (1682) and Shepard Kollock’s A True Narrative of the Sufferings of Mary Kinnan (1795) provide influential examples (xii). These narratives would seek to show the populace how “savagery” operates within the Native American community, and to produce disgust at large.

One particular captivity narrative that probably was a source for Brown is “Panther Captivity.” In this narrative a woman’s fiancée is killed and his body is burned by Native Americans while they dance (Derounian-
In response to this savage act, though, the woman undergoes her own transformation. After the woman witnesses her lover’s death, she kills one of her captors by taking off his head and quartering him (89). Both in its depiction of the linkage between Indians and “savagery” and its treatment of the disturbing possibility of regression into “savagery” during times of stress and trauma, the “Panther Captivity” has clear resemblances to Edgar Huntly. Another likely source of inspiration for Brown may have been A Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, particularly the passage in which Mary describes having to eat a piece of raw horse liver during her captivity (226). For Rowlandson, that act evoked feelings of revulsion and anxiety, tied to her own sense that she was slipping over the line between civilized and savage. This scene probably served as source material for Brown’s panther eating scene, and it illustrates the connection between Edgar Huntly and the captivity narratives. Brown uses these kinds of gruesome images of captivity as sources for his text, though he amplifies them for full gothic effect. Following the conventions of gothic aesthetics discussed earlier in this thesis, Brown presents such events in a
more bloody and grotesque way. The idea of "savagery" is reinforced by the grotesque in Brown's case.

In addition to captivity narrative literature, two other print culture sources particularly germane to my discussion of *Edgar Huntly* are, once again, the Yates and Beadle murder narratives. These murder narratives, as we recall, contained many elements that would have interested Brown. One element that would have interested Brown was the nature of the metaphor of "savagery" and its relation to the evocations of sublimity. In his text *Elements of Criticism*, Lord Henry Home Kames suggests that metaphor enables a writer to produce striking reversals, resulting in the mind being disrupted (124). This function of metaphor is revealed in both the Yates and Beadle narratives, as well as in the captivity narratives. According to the actual Yates narrative, for example, Yates initially appears sane and civilized, but then he attacks his family with clubs, thereby metaphorically transforming into a kind of "savage" (1). Such a metaphorical shift also appears in the "Panther Captivity" when the woman kills her would be rapist by cutting off his head and slicing him up (89). The manner in which the murders were committed and depicted metaphorizes the shift
from civilized to savage in a way that has a striking impact on the reader. In another example, Stephen Mix Mitchell points out that the once civilized, oyster-eating Beadle executes his wife and children by slicing their throats and bashing their heads in with an ax (9). Drawing on these examples, Brown develops his own metaphors of the civilized man’s retreat into “savagery” in his novel, thus creating a profound sense of gothic dislocation in the reader.

Another inspirational element derived from the Yates/Beadle narratives would be the fact that the use of simple language to depict “savagery” can create the sensational effects. As we recall, Monk points out that gothic narrative uses simple, direct language to create sublimity within the text of the murder narratives (36). Monk wants people to realize that a simple style is necessary for the ordinary reader. This simple language facilitates sensational details, which are exemplified by the Beadle narrative when it describes the bodies of the dead: “the woman had two wounds in the head, the skull of each of them was fractured; he then with the carving knife cut their throats from ear to ear [...]” (9). Longinus would have called the exemplification of the sensational
"amplification," and this type of narrative was constructed this way to elicit a specific emotional and bodily response through the accumulation of relatively simple details (331). In a similar way, in the Yates narrative "savagery" is illustrated through the simple descriptions: "He had likewise killed his dog; two horses and two cows: in the body of one of the cows, which was not quite dead, an axe was found sticking" (1). Such a passage illustrates that Yates was savage enough to let the living animal lie there with an ax in it. This type of sensational, gripping detail, conveyed in simple prose helps to illustrate the savageness of the murderers. Such moments would also likely have been linked in the popular imagination with terrifying scenes from captivity literature. Yates, according to Axelrod, terrorized his wife by chasing after her and their daughter in order to kill them (54). Such violence causes terror to rise up in the reader through the depiction of the savage, axe wielding Yates' running after his wife. This creates a situation in which the reader would automatically think of Native American raiding parties, the types of raiding parties in which homes were burned, and people were killed or abducted. An example of a raiding party that abducts is
present in Mary Rowlandson's "From A Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson" in which they burn her home and take her captive (217). Certainly, such images provide inspiration for Brown in composing Edgar Huntly.

A final point of connection between the crime narratives and Edgar Huntly would be related to formal elements. Two elements that are present within the murder narratives are recurrent character types and out of the way settings. Both seem to have inspired Brown in writing Wieland and Edgar Huntly; Or Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker because both Beadle and Yates lived in isolated areas, although the two men elected to isolate themselves. Their isolation then, is a choice related to their sense of personal liberty, which draws attention to how these two men might have become linked metaphorically for Brown with larger social issues raised by the Revolution. Another thing that these men share is that each appears as an archetype, the stereotypical savage. Beadle slices his family's throats, hits them in the head, and accosts them with an axe (9). Yates beats his family to death with a club, and axes his farm animals to death (2). The "savagery" of the murders, and the implements that they
used convey a sense of the archetypal savage nature of the human exposed. Such character traits parallel the stereotypical popular representations of Native Americans present at the time. Of particular significance, though, is that this image of murderous, savage fathers that victimize their families, has a political significance (as we recall). The fathers might have been ushered into their crimes by an external voice, but that doesn't change the fact that the voices cause them to turn savage and or primal. Their families then become the victims of a savage desire to destroy, driven by unrestrained individuals' mental retreat into the primal. Such stories implicitly comment on the destructive impulses potentially unleashed by political revolution (which was also set off, in some sense, by "voices").

Having reviewed some of the gothic elements that Brown is likely to have acquired from the murder narratives and captivity narratives, it remains to illustrate how he positioned them within his gothic novel of "revolution." First, we should notice that Brown wrote Edgar Huntly; Or Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker in a way that connects directly to the gothic sublime. This first element of "gothic" style mentioned by Kames, we should
recall, is that metaphor is used as a tool to disrupt the mind of the reader (124). This element of style is frequently utilized by Brown in a way that resembles the murder narratives of Yates and Beadle. Brown’s plot includes a great deal of metaphorical action, which helps the reader to see the political implications of the world of the novel:

I had acted without foresight, and yet no wisdom could have prescribed more salutary measures. The panther was slain, not from a view to the relief of my hunger, but from the self-preserving and involuntary impulse. Had I fore-known the pangs to which my ravenous and bloody meal would give birth, I should have carefully abstained, and yet these pangs were a useful effort of nature to subdue and convert to nourishment the matter I had swallowed. (161)

In this section of the story Edgar is describing how he killed a panther (cougar) to save himself both physically and mentally. This section illustrates how extreme situations and instinct can move a man away from rational civilized behavior toward “savage” and impulsive actions. Edgar notes that he commits his action “not from a view to the relief of my hunger” (a rational motive), but from
“impulse” (161). In this sense, the metaphorical action of killing the panther parallels the murder narratives and captivity narratives in showing how civilized behavior can quickly give way to savagery. Edgar’s discussion, later in the text, of his killing of an Indian also disturbingly suggests his own unconscious relish for violence, another sign of his own growing savagery: "The stroke was quick as lightning, and the wound mortal and deep. He had not time to descry the author of his fate; but sinking on the path expired without a groan. The hatchet buried itself in his breast, and rolled with him to the bottom of the precipice. Never before had I taken the life of a human creature" (172). While this may have been Edgar’s first murder (there is, of course, some ambiguity about that), his recollection of the event suggests more of a sense of pride at his own skill in the kill, than deep remorse of horror. Throughout the novel, then, within the descriptions of different types of killings, Brown draws attention to how the men may convince themselves that they kill only to survive, but that in the act of killing they may come to act like animals themselves. The use of metaphorical plot actions paints Edgar as a kind of savage by the end of the book.
Another example of the influence of print sources in Brown’s depiction of “savagery” in *Edgar Huntly* involves his use of simple style. As we should recall, Monk points out that the sublime must utilize a clear, and simple style (36). This is an element that is frequently utilized by Brown, and it is utilized in the murder narratives of Yates and Beadle as well. Edgar tends to present outrageous things or actions using very plain, straightforward prose. In describing a change meeting with an Indian marauder, Edgar comments, “Scarcely had I withdrawn three paces when he started from his seat, and turning towards me walked with a quick pace. The shadow of the rock, and the improbability of meeting an enemy here, concealed me for a moment from his observation. I stood still. The slightest motion would have attracted his notice” (171). In this scene, Edgar is recounting how he acted when confronted with a terrifying threat, and the description paints him like a stalking animal. That image is conveyed with great verbal simplicity, however. Another example of Edgar’s use of simple, controlled language in highly charged situations would be his communication to Sarsefield that he had inadvertently set the madman Clithero on the trail of Euphemia Lorimer again: “At
present, I shall only say that Clithero is alive, is apprised of your wife's arrival and abode in New-York, and has set out, with mysterious intentions to visit her" (273). Here, Edgar is creating a sense of frightening anticipation, but the remarkable verbal restraint involved is a key part of the overall effect. Edgar's use of simple and concise language parallels directly with the murder narratives, because of its emphasis and directness.

Another rhetorical technique present within Brown's text is "amplification," which is used to create a "sensational" response in the reader. Longinus' notion of "amplification" fits in with Brown's Edgar Huntly as well as Wieland. In Wieland, the moments of "amplification" occur when she hears a noise in the closet, or a voice telling her not to do something. In the case of Edgar Huntly, amplification occurs in episodes like those of the panther-eating scene when he describes the eating of the raw meat. The sense of "amplification" stretches throughout the whole of the narrative. Brown knew that in order to create terror through language, that one had to build suspense using simple, direct, and terse language. One example of this sense of "amplification" is Sarsefield
speaks of his discovery of Edgar toward the end of the latter's killing spree:

The objects that presented themselves to a nearer view were five bodies stretched upon the ground. Three of them were savages. The fourth was a girl, who though alive seemed to have received a mortal wound. The fifth, breathless and mangled his feature almost concealed by the blood that overspread his face, was Edgar; the fugitive for whom I had made such anxious searches. (243-244)

This initial impression is further amplified when Sarsefield describes how he viewed the scene, and what he thought about it. Later on, Sarsefield employs similar techniques when he explains Clithero's role in his and Euphemia's life:

He did not tell you that in recompense for every benefit, he stole upon her sleep and aimed a dagger at her breast. There was no room for flight or ambiguity or prevarication. She whom he meant to murder stood near, saw the lifted weapon, and heard him confess and glory in his purposes (254).

Sarsefield's "amplifying" language creates a powerful rhetorical effect. Edgar (like the reader) finds out
Clithero’s secrets through simple style, and a direct manner.

The use of language to evoke terror and Psychological fear is also essential to Brown’s Edgar Huntly. As we should remember, Punter highlights that Burke’s notion that sees terror is an instrument that allows the mind to run toward the darkest psychological possibilities (39). The key to evoking terror in literature involves presenting a process by which the mind gradually shifts from calm to something more disturbed. In Edgar Huntly, this effect is generated through Edgar’s first-person account of his growing savagery, or his civilized man versus “Indian” conflict. Edgar’s narrative voice reveals that he gradually moves to perpetuate savage deeds of his own accord such as when he kills the panther and eats its raw flesh (161). Edgar becomes a “savage” in a way that suggests a sense of inevitability. In most cases, Edgar’s initial, stated goal before committing an act of violence is just to survive: “A single effort placed me on my feet. I fired with precipitation that precluded the certainty of hitting my mark, dropped my piece on the ground, and leaped from this tremendous height into the river” (212). Presented in such a way, it seems that the deed that Edgar
perpetuates (here, firing at Sarcefield in the dark) was logical (perhaps while sleepwalking) in these moments. Initially, Edgar appears totally civilized in his thinking: "Methought that to ascertain the hand who killed my friend, was not impossible, and to punish the crime was just" (8). Before Edgar kills the panther he also seems completely sane. Soon, though, the reader is confronted with the picture of him going around randomly shooting and tomahawking people to death. This contrast illustrates how Edgar slips from the civilized man to the "savage" state through his somnambulism. Brown makes it appear as though "savagery" is always present within the subconscious, and the gradual awakening of that "savagery" creates terror in the Burkean sense.

Another similarity between the gothic elements of the murder and captivity narratives Brown's novel is the idea of disgust. Brown was completely aware that the public responded well to the disgust in print culture narratives. Brown's evocation of disgust is perhaps it clearest in the scene, quoted above, in which Edgar discusses how he killed the panther and ate its raw flesh:

I had acted without foresight, and yet no wisdom could have prescribed more salutary measures. The
panther was slain, not from a view to the relief of my hunger, but from the self-preserving and involuntary impulse. Had I fore-known the pangs to which my ravenous and bloody meal would give birth, I should have carefully abstained, and yet these pangs were a useful effort of nature to subdue and convert to nourishment the matter I had swallowed.(161)

The disgust that Brown evokes here comes through in his description of how he kills and eats the flesh of the panther. Another section in which one can see disgust is when Edgar talks about how his stomach responds to his bloody meal:

No alternative was offered, and hunger was capable to be appeased, even by a banquet so detestable. If this appetite has sometimes subdued the sentiments of nature, and compelled the mother to feed upon the flesh of her offspring, it will not excite amazement that I did not turn from the yet warm blood and reeking fibres of a brute. One evil was now removed, only to give place to another. The first sensations of fullness had scarcely been felt when my stomach was seized by pangs whose acuteness exceeded all that I had ever before experienced.(160)
Brown realized that this type of disgust would cause the reader to realize that killings were usually saturated with disgust, and Revolution was saturated with disgusting scenes of death.

Lastly, on the formal level we can see links between "gothic" print culture and *Edgar Huntly* in Brown’s use of setting and characterization. Edgar, like Beadle and Yates is a kind of archetype, the isolationist loner, albeit not of his own choosing. This facet of his character is also reinforced by Brown’s use of setting. Through his sleep walking habits, Edgar isolates himself in the woods in search of Clithero (30). As a man associated with the wilderness, Edgar thus becomes more closely tied with the antisocial image of the "savage." In the isolationist archetype and this context, it is important to remember that both Edgar and Clithero are both isolationists and murderers. Another kind of archetypal characterization common in gothic narratives also appears in Brown’s novel, the doppelgänger. Both Clithero and Edgar mirror one another in their isolation, a condition that is driven by each man’s subconscious. Their common link to each other is further reinforced by the close relationship each has to the wilderness settings
that dominate the book, and in particular to the symbolic Elm tree. Edgar first finds Clithero when he leaves the road on which he is on to visit the isolated road dominated by the Elm tree where Waldegrave was found (9). And significantly, it is another tree (a fallen one) that provides Edgar with a bridge that allows him to cross a gorge and gain entry to Clithero’s hideout. This tendency to integrate setting and archetypal characterization in creating a gothic narrative is something Brown may have borrowed from popular crime and captivity stories.

There are, in addition, other forms of “stock” characterization from popular narratives and gothic conventions that Brown employs in *Edgar Huntly*. Edgar’s “revolutionary” mentality parallels in some ways the religious deviance of Yates and Beadle. Also, as Linda Bayer-Berenbaum points out that in a gothic novel there are usually “villains,” “heroes,” and “victims” but that the central character may blur these roles (23). The Indians are villains according to their supposed savage behavior. Edgar, however, plays many roles within the novel, one as the victim, one as the Indian-fighting hero, and the other as the sociopathic murderer. (To a degree, this complexity appears also in Clithero.) Bayer-Berenbaum
points out as we should remember, that the conventional gothic hero is usually from hearty, farm stock, as Edgar is (23). However, Edgar is not necessarily a hero. Brown points out that Edgar is not a hero both because he is the reason the farm girl (who he set out to rescue) ends up near death, and because he hunts Clithero, ostensibly out of benevolence, like an animal. Another reason Edgar plays the anti-hero role is because he allows the murderous Clithero access to the information about where Sarsefield's wife is (273). This makes him a potentially "savage" character because when he tells Clithero where she is, and he is not sleep walking when he does this and thus has no excuse for what he does. It is in this complexity that we might see Brown drawing on nonfiction sources to complicate gothic conventions. Brown wants to make it clear that there is no heroism in murderers, and that Revolutionaries can play the role of the anti-hero when they go around hurting their own countrymen. Through his manipulation of conventions of characterization, then, Brown breaks down the binaries between hero and anti-hero for political effect.

At the time of the American Revolution, and after it there were many examples of "savagery" present. In Edgar
Huntly, Brown endeavors to illustrate that the common
Englishman can become a savage, utilizing the examples of
both Edgar and Clithero. The novel's treatment of
"savagery" illustrates that both the Native American and
the Anglo American can appear equally savage as a result
of the deeds that they perpetuate. This linkage takes us
back to an earlier point that highlights Brown's intent to
write a gothic novel that offers a commentary on the
revolution. During the Boston Tea Party, revolutionaries
dressed up as Indians and tossed the tea overboard. They
did this because they did not want their community blamed,
and because they would rather see the savage blamed. Brown
refuses to allow such easy scapegoating. In the
Revolution that he experienced, destructive mobs injured
and abducted people. Brown expresses his awareness of
the problematic nature of revolutionary violence by
presenting the idea that anyone can turn savage and commit
atrocities. Edgar, acting without guidance from a
political father, becomes an example of the murderous
citizen; he utilizes savage means, such as the gun and
tomahawk, to murder. Clithero also turns savage in
attacking his own "family," utilizing a knife when he
tries to kill Euphemia, his benefactress. This inter-
communal violence illustrates a savageness that can be paralleled with the murders that resulted from bad times during the revolution. In this sense, Brown sees "familicide" as tied to "savagery" because the means were always violent and bloody. The Revolution led Brown to explore the idea that "savagery" can grow rapidly in intensity, and that it can begin with the most apparently civilized of men.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

This thesis is important for a variety of reasons. One of the things that I wanted to do with this thesis is to get the academic community to think differently about Brown's writing. Not only is Brown a fiction author, but he is the author of a specific type of fiction. I have seen in articles, as well as heard, Brown called many things. Some researchers on Brown have called him a romanticist writer, and while this is true for him much later, it is not true at the time that he wrote *Wieland* or *Edgar Huntly*. By my personal definition, and some who have come before me, I see him as a predominantly gothic writer. Brown's first four novels *Wieland, or the Transformation*, *Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker*, *Ormond*, and *Arthur Mervyn* all fall into the category of gothic. The reason that scholars pin the word romanticist on him is because of the time in which he was writing. My thesis has sought to explain that the reason that he wrote *Wieland* and *Edgar Huntly* the way that he did was to create novels which were heavily influenced by what was going on inside of and outside of the American
Revolution. Brown wanted to create a brand of gothic fiction that was influenced by things that occurred as a result of the American Revolution. The chief desire of Brown was to critique the revolution, and the world that it created. “Familicide” would be one metaphor that he uses, and the other would be “savagism.”

There is a question that looms in the mind of Brown scholars, like myself. Why has he seen a resurgence in popularity? I say that part of it is because of what is going on in literature today. Brown paved the way for authors from Edgar Allan Poe to Stephen King. The gothic authors of today have taken the psychological gothic to new heights, and Brown provided some of them with the tools. Another reason for a renewed interest in Brown’s writing is because of the events of today, and the way in which modern gothic authors use them as source material for their novels. Lastly, Brown ushered in the idea of American Gothic, and this left room for writers to construct a type of fiction that would engage the reader. Brown left his mark on the authors of today.

Another purpose for this thesis was to look at how the narratives that influenced Brown were the direct result of Revolutionary-era America. For instance,
Wieland, is influenced by two well-known murder narratives. The Yates and Beadle narratives illustrate the alienation that some suffered because of the revolution, and Brown had felt the effects of this himself. These murderers were driven to kill because of their self-imposed isolation, and their lack of business survivability at the time of the revolution. The men went mad, as does Brown’s Wieland. I seek to illustrate that these murders served as background for Brown when he created his novel, and that he fits within specific gothic parameters.

The second novel that I looked at was Edgar Huntly. One of the reasons that I decided to look at this novel was because I believe that it displays the savage nature of man. This in itself is very gothic. In this novel, a sleepwalker by the name of Edgar walks around acting like an animal and tomahawking people to death. This novel is usually associated with Native American “savagery,” when it is studied. While I make mention of this; I do not believe that the stereotyping that occurs should solely be based on this. I believe that the main source for this novel was the same murder narratives that were used in connection with Wieland. Why do I believe this? My main
reason for asserting that the murder narratives serve as source material for *Edgar Huntly* is that there is evidence that the murderers killed in a savage manner. In some cases a knife was used, others a gun, and in still others a fence pole. The point that I am trying to make is that the American Revolution caused the typically civilized man to become uncivilized, and that this paved the way for Brown to critique the revolution through his novels. Brown’s novel implies that the revolution made the darkest, and most animalistic side of man come to the forefront.

There is a great deal left to research for the Brown scholar. Does Brown use the murder narratives in more than two of his novels? Why these narratives? What made Brown stop writing gothic fiction? These are the questions that I leave open for those that come after me. Hopefully, using some of the scholarship I have, and looking at my own work; those that research Brown after me will be able to answer these questions.


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---. "Introduction." Derounian-Stodola xi-xxii.