

## INTRODUCTION

“It was dangerous to awaken a *somnambulist* on the brink of a precipice.”

—Mary Wollstonecraft, *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* (1794, I:275)

When *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker* first went on sale in late summer 1799—the first of its three volumes was published in August or early September—it was the fourth of Charles Brockden Brown’s novels to be published in book form in the space of twelve months. By 1801 two more would be published as books; one more would be serialized; yet another was lost. *Edgar Huntly* is thus one of the peaks in an extraordinary burst of novel writing that is still the best-known aspect of Brown’s prolific literary career, and a remarkable achievement by any standards.

Brown’s novels are intellectually ambitious works that present the reader with considerable formal and conceptual complexity, and *Edgar Huntly* is no exception. As this Introduction will suggest, *Edgar Huntly* draws on and refers in detail to eighteenth-century medical theories and doctrines of sensibility, British radical-democratic social theory, theories of the novel, revolution debates of the 1790s, politicized Celtic folktales, and a wide swath of recent history, from Anglo-French imperial wars to Irish revolutionary uprisings, Quaker-Indian frontier relations, and struggles between Pennsylvania Quakers and other immigrant groups. Brown’s dark tale of somnambulism and frontier violence combines the explosive political atmosphere of the revolutionary and counterrevolutionary 1790s with the brutality of settler-Indian conflict in Pennsylvania extending back through the eighteenth century. It relates both these theaters of conflict, Old World revolutionary wars and New World Indian wars, to the global reach of Anglo-French imperialism and commerce, and to the shock of the (early) modern in the widest sense, from North America and Ireland to the Asian subcontinent. Dramatically organized around one individual’s unconscious or sleep-walking fall into murderous frontier violence in backcountry Pennsylvania, the novel’s actions are nevertheless connected to global political and economic transformations that still shape our world and bodies today. Although the novel leaves the reader with a gloomy picture of the challenges facing its protagonist at the end of the revolutionary era and beginning of the commercial and expansionist nineteenth century, it nonetheless holds out the hope that we are not doomed to repeat the social traumas of the past and may progressively come to understand the collective forces that condition our individual lives.

This Introduction will orient the reader to the world of *Edgar Huntly* by providing some tools for understanding Brown and his novel. We will outline and provide

background for the novel's primary themes in order to draw the reader's attention to them and open them up for discussion. A sketch of Brown's life and the late 1790s context, and a discussion of his understanding of novels as instruments of political education and enlightenment, will provide general background. Information on central motifs—sleep-walking, Quaker-Irish-Indian violence on the Pennsylvania frontier, questions about gender and sexuality, and Brown's use of gothic and folk motifs like human-animal transformation—will lead to a discussion of how the novel develops and explores its primary social, psychological, and political concerns.

## Brown's Life and the Context of the 1790s

Brown was born into a Philadelphia Quaker merchant family on January 17, 1771. Philadelphia—the capital of the newly formed United States during the 1790s and then the largest, most culturally and politically diverse city in North America—was his home for most of his life. Beginning in the mid-1790s and particularly during the intense 1797–1800 period when Brown was writing his novels, however, he also lived in New York and moved in a cosmopolitan circle of young upper-class intellectuals who circulated and debated the latest medical-scientific, political, and cultural information, and produced writings on a wide variety of subjects.

Growing up a Philadelphia Quaker (members of The Religious Society of Friends are commonly known as Quakers or Friends), Brown was shaped by that community's history of dissenting relations to mainstream Protestant and Anglo-American culture and by the history of William Penn's Pennsylvania. From its founding as a Quaker colony in 1682 to Brown's lifetime, Pennsylvania experienced a number of basic historical transformations that Brown addressed in his writings: the rapid commercial expansion of Philadelphia as a wealthy trading center that enriched and often bankrupted its Quaker merchant elite; the gradual erosion of Quaker political power and community unity as other immigrant and ethno-religious groups came to outnumber Quakers in Pennsylvania; and the history of conflicts in the Pennsylvania backcountry or frontier, where Anglo-French imperial contests like the Seven Years War (1756–1763; the French and Indian War is the North American theater of this conflict) pitted Quakers against Indians on the one hand and other European immigrant groups (particularly the Irish) on the other. Brown had a classical education at the elite Friends Latin School in Philadelphia and taught at the Friends Grammar School briefly in the early 1790s, but he did not, like male friends in his New York circle, attend a university, since Quakers and other dissenters in the United States and England did not patronize the educational institutions that served dominant Protestant groups. Additionally, progressive traditions and doctrines concerning egalitarianism and equal authority for women in the Quaker community contributed to Brown's lifelong commitment to female education and equality. Quaker doctrines of nonviolence figure dramatically in the background of *Edgar Huntly*, since the novel's protagonist is a Quaker farmer who casts these beliefs aside to become an Indian-killing machine in the second half of his story. Although Brown's adult years led him from his Philadelphia origins to

the intellectual world of the radical Enlightenment, his Quaker background nonetheless marks his development in fundamental ways. Interestingly, after having grown up as Quakers in the increasingly diversified Philadelphia of the late eighteenth century, Brown and all his siblings married non-Quakers. Brown was formally expelled from the Quaker meeting in Philadelphia when he married Elizabeth Linn, daughter of a Presbyterian minister, in 1804.

Growing up the fourth of five brothers and seven surviving siblings total in a merchant family,<sup>1</sup> Brown's life was marked by the instability and crises of mercantile and revolutionary Philadelphia. It is notable that the two main forms of commerce that figure in *Edgar Huntly* are land acquisition and development (then called "land conveyancing"), and the circum-Atlantic import-export commerce that was the main business of Philadelphia's port, for Brown's father and older brothers had checkered, up-and-down careers in these two areas. As expansionism and the transformation of frontier land into private property created vicious cycles of settler-Indian violence and revenge attacks in this period, imperial conflicts (primarily between England and France), the 1790s revolutions in France and Haiti, and rebellion in Ireland enriched Philadelphia's import-export trade and filled its streets with political refugees and immigrants of every stripe and color. Brown's father Elijah was imprisoned and briefly banished from Philadelphia in 1777–1778, during the American Revolution, as a Quaker whose religious neutrality made him suspect to both royalists and revolutionaries. In 1784 he was humiliatingly imprisoned for debt. Through all this, the father struggled to continue in business, working primarily as a land broker and conveyancer (a real estate agent). Brown's oldest brothers Joseph and James—like the merchant Weymouth in this novel—were buying interest shares in ocean ventures as early as the 1780s and traveled frequently to Europe, the Middle East, and the Caribbean as merchant importers.<sup>2</sup> Brown himself became a reluctant partner in their import-export firm, James Brown and Co., from late 1800 to the firm's dissolution in 1806.<sup>3</sup> In 1801, Brown reflected on the loss of Indian tribal lands when his brother James bought 20,000 acres of property on the Pennsylvania frontier.<sup>4</sup> Thus *Edgar Huntly's* dramatics of disputed land claims, violent conversions of tribal land into private property, inheritances, risky export investments, and sudden financial failures are drawn not just from Brown's wider knowledge of the world around him, but from his own family business background.

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<sup>1</sup> Kafer's *Charles Brockden Brown's Revolution* provides the numbers we use here—that is, five brothers and two sisters who survived to adulthood, plus three siblings who died at birth or in early infancy (45; 210, note 36; 221, note 25).

<sup>2</sup> Warfel, *Charles Brockden Brown*, 16–18. The oldest brother Joseph died in 1807 in Flanders, Holland, while on a Weymouth-like business voyage.

<sup>3</sup> See the accounts of Brown family business interests in Warfel, *Charles Brockden Brown*, 16–18, 23, 204; Clark, *Charles Brockden Brown*, 108–9, 194–95; and Kafer, *Charles Brockden Brown's Revolution*, 26–37; 45–46; 162; 214, note 15.

<sup>4</sup> Krause, "Penn's Elm and *Edgar Huntly*," 473–75. See this text, from the "Memorandums Made on a Journey Through Part of Pennsylvania" in this volume's Related Texts.

Although his family intended for him to become a lawyer, Brown abandoned his Philadelphia law apprenticeship in 1793 and moved toward the circle of young, New York–based intellectuals who helped launch his literary career and, with Brown as one of their group, enacted progressive Enlightenment ideals of conversation, intellectual inquiry, and companionship.<sup>5</sup> The key figure in this group was Elihu Hubbard Smith (1771–1798), a Yale-educated physician who met Brown in Philadelphia in 1790 and who formed part of the model for the character Waldegrave in *Edgar Huntly*. Like Waldegrave in this novel, Smith was an abolitionist and deist<sup>6</sup> dedicated to progressive ideals; when he died prematurely, while he and Brown were roommates, during a yellow fever epidemic in 1798, the deist writings he left behind were perceived as scandalous. The New York group included a number of young male professionals who called themselves The Friendly Club, along with female relatives and friends who were equally invested in progressive intellectual exchange and enlightened models for same-sex and other-sex companionship. This progressive model of companionship based on “reason and desire” (Teute) expressed through a “republic of letters” is a crucial context for Brown’s astonishing burst of novel writing between 1798 and 1800. As one of this circle, Brown developed his knowledge of like-minded British radical-democratic writers of the period—above all William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft (whose books were already in Brown’s household as a youth, before he met Smith)—as well as physiological theories of sense perception and moral philosophy drawn from the Scottish Enlightenment (notably Erasmus Darwin), the French Naturalists, and other streams of Enlightenment thought. The circle’s interest in similar groups of progressive British thinkers was strong enough that they established contact with scientist Erasmus Darwin (who corresponded with Smith) and novelist Thomas Holcroft (who corresponded with Dunlap). Thus Brown’s interest in European developments led him to participate in a network of like-minded endeavors, but his progressive, modernizing ideals meant that he felt little or no need to emulate Europe or the past as a superior culture.

If Brown’s intellectual circle in New York constitutes one part of the context for his burst of novel writing, the other crucial element in this context is the explosive political atmosphere of the revolutionary 1790s as the decade culminated in the antirevolutionary backlash of 1797–1799. As the decade-long process of the French

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<sup>5</sup> For discussions of this circle, see Teute, “A ‘Republic of Intellect’” and “The Loves of the Plants.” The diaries of William Dunlap and Elihu Hubbard Smith provide detailed records of Brown’s activities and relations within this circle.

<sup>6</sup> Deism is a progressive eighteenth-century response to Christianity. It affirms the existence of a supreme being but rejects revelation, supernatural doctrines, and any notion of divine intervention in human affairs. Reason and science, rather than revelation and dogma, are the basis for religious belief. Late eighteenth-century writers often adopt a deistic stance as part of their general secular and rationalist critique of earlier institutions. Deism is associated with natural religion and the well-known metaphor of the deity as a clock-maker who creates the universe but makes no further intervention in it. Many leaders of the American revolutionary generation were deists, most notably Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. See Walters, *Rational Infidels*.

Revolution (including the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804 and the failed Irish uprisings of 1796–1798) drew to its close in the late 1790s, a severe reaction against the progressive ideals of the revolutionary era spread through the Atlantic world and was especially powerful in England, Germany, and the recently formed United States. During the administration of the second U.S. president, John Adams (1796–1800), the ruling Federalist party presided over a hysterical, authoritarian response to real and imagined threats of revolutionary subversion and potential conflict with France.<sup>7</sup> Enacting the now-infamous Alien and Sedition Acts (1798), for example, the Federalists made it illegal to criticize the Adams administration and legitimated the arrest and deportation of those deemed “dangerous” state enemies (i.e., French and Irish radicals). Paranoid countersubversive fantasies about conspiracies led by mysterious groups like the Illuminati, as well as elite panic about ideals of female equality and universal democracy that arose and circulated widely during the revolutionary years, contributed to this crisis.<sup>8</sup> Although these excesses led to the election of their Democratic-Republican opponent Jefferson in 1800, the larger early romantic, culturally conservative wave of which they were a part put an end to the revolutionary era and laid the foundations for the more staid cultural order of the nineteenth century. Mysterious and threatening Brownian characters like *Edgar Huntly’s* Clithero Edny—a deranged Irish refugee whose story is a gothic condensation of recent Irish class and revolutionary struggles—draw on and respond to the counter-subversive myths of this crisis period.

Brown’s efforts to establish himself as a writer were impressive indeed. After several years of experimentation with literary narratives that remained unfinished, Brown’s novelistic phase began with the 1798 feminist dialogue *Alcuin* and continued unabated through the composition of eight novels by 1801. In addition to these novels, Brown was editing the New York *Monthly Magazine* and published many essays and short stories throughout this period. As noted earlier, the four gothic novels for which Brown is best known—*Wieland*, *Ormond*, *Arthur Mervyn*, and *Edgar Huntly*—were all published between September 1798 and September 1799 (a continuation of *Arthur Mervyn* appeared in summer 1800), and there was a period in 1798 when all four were under way at once. Although commentators have seen Brown as a writer who renounced his literary and progressive political ideals when he stopped publishing novels in 1801, a more plausible explanation for his subsequent shift toward other forms of writing is that his novels did not make money; the particular conditions that fueled the intense novelistic burst between 1798 and 1800 changed (who could sustain such a rhythm of production?); and he became interested in new literary outlets. Like his older counterpart Godwin in England, Brown

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<sup>7</sup> See the discussions of this backlash and its implications in Cotlar, “The Federalists’ Transatlantic Cultural Offensive of 1798”; Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism*; and Miller, *Crisis in Freedom*.

<sup>8</sup> On the countersubversive fantasies that were a basic element of this crisis, see Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style*; Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie*; and Davis, *The Fear of Conspiracy*.

moved away from the novel because he felt it no longer offered an effective mode of argumentation in the increasingly conservative cultural and political environment that emerged after 1800. Had Brown lived longer, he might conceivably have returned to novel writing, as Godwin did in the later 1810s.

Brown's later literary career builds continuously on the novels and earlier writings. Between 1801 and his death from tuberculosis in 1810, Brown edited *The Literary Magazine* (1803–1807), a literary and cultural miscellany that renewed his experience with the earlier *Monthly Magazine* and which he filled with his own essays and fiction, and *The American Register* (1807–1809), a historical and political periodical that featured Brown's "Annals of Europe and America," a contemporary political history of the Napoleonic era. In addition, he wrote a novel-length, experimental historical fiction known as *The Historical Sketches* (1803–1806) that was published posthumously, a now-lost play, and several lengthy, quasi-novelistic pamphlets on expansion into the Louisiana territory and Jefferson's embargo policies (1803, 1809). Seen as a whole, these writings continue Brown's career-long concern with the link between historical and fictional ("romance") writing and extend the earlier program of "reason and desire" that makes writing an instrument of progressive, educational principles in the public sphere. Rather than dramatizing the ways individuals are shaped by social pressures, as he did in his novels, the later Brown explores forms of historical narrative and the larger historical world that made up the allusive backdrop of the earlier fiction. The critical perspective on global webs of imperialism and colonialism that is mostly implicit in the life-stories of characters in *Edgar Huntly* and his other novels, for example, becomes explicit and is explored in detail in the later histories and essays.<sup>9</sup>

## The Woldwinite Writers and Brown's Novelistic Method

The world of Brown's novels—with their gothic emotional intensities, disorienting psychosocial violence, and imbedded plots and subplots—may be difficult to sort out on first encounter. Understanding some basics about Brown's primary intellectual and political sources and his well-defined novelistic method, however, can help the reader understand features of Brown's novels that otherwise seem difficult to grasp. This information also sheds light on basic critical questions about how to understand Brown's use of narrative point of view, which helps us consider the key issue of whether Brown is speaking directly through his narrator or, rather, implying a distanced and critical view of the narrator's ideas and actions.

Unlike many authors of eighteenth-century fiction, Brown had a well-developed methodology and set of themes for writing novels. His method draws on and further develops the ideas of the British radical-democratic writers of the period. Brown's

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<sup>9</sup> On Brown's later commentary on the imperialist backdrop of *Edgar Huntly*, see Kamrath, "American Exceptionalism and Radicalism."

enthusiastic reception of these Woldwinite<sup>10</sup> (Anglo-Jacobin) writers—above all Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Thomas Holcroft, Robert Bage, Helen Maria Williams, and Thomas Paine—undergirds his entire literary project after the mid-1790s. The British Dissenter culture of highly educated middle-class professionals and the clubs and academies from which these writers emerge is the wider context of Brown's own Philadelphia Quaker community. Thus Brown comes to be exposed to the Woldwinite writers through his father's copies of their works even before Brown moved into the New York circle and explored these writers' works in greater detail.<sup>11</sup>

The Woldwinite agenda rests on three basic arguments that draw together the main strands of knowledge and critique in the late, radical Enlightenment. Drawing on well-established eighteenth-century arguments and themes such as associative sentiment (the idea that emotions are communicated from one individual to another and may be used to encourage constructive, progressive behavior), these three arguments sum up this group's rejection of the prerevolutionary order and the group's conviction that social progress may be achieved by altering dominant ways of thinking through peaceful cultural means such as literature. First, the social order of the old regime (monarchy and feudalism) is to be rejected, because it is artificial and illegitimate, violating the natural equality of humanity by imposing coercive hierarchies of caste and faith. Second, a new social order will need to operate in more rational and constructive ways, for the old regime maintained its domination through an obscurantist mythology of territorialized race, priestly tricks, and a politics of secret plots, conspiracies, and lies. Third, the illustration of progressive behavior will multiply to generate larger social transformation, because society works through chains of associative sentiment. These cultural relays will have progressive results since the illustration of virtuous behaviors and results will spread through imitation, as one person learns new and improved ways of acting by observing others. Proceeding from these assumptions, the Woldwinites' critique leads to their antistatism, their distrust of institutions, and their use of cultural forms such as literature to advance their program. Because they believe in the natural propulsion of cooperative behavior and the guidance of critical reason, these writers see social change

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<sup>10</sup> We use the term "Woldwinite" to highlight, through an abbreviation of Wollstonecraft and Godwin, this group's special place among the British radical democrats of the 1790s. The term "Godwinians" erases the crucial role of Wollstonecraft and other women in this group, a role that was particularly important for Brown and many other writers. Similarly, these British writers are also discussed as "Jacobins" or "Anglo-Jacobins," names used by their enemies to link them to the most authoritarian and destructive faction of the French Revolution, but the group explicitly rejected the Jacobin position in favor of the kind of progressive cultural politics that Brown adapts from the group. For studies of literary Woldwinism, see Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*; Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel* and *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*; Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*; and Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*. This passage condenses arguments from Shapiro, *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel*.

<sup>11</sup> For the Woldwinite writings in Brown's household, see Warfel, *Charles Brockden Brown*, 17–18, 27; Clark, *Charles Brockden Brown*, 16; Kafer, *Charles Brockden Brown's Revolution*, 46, 66–72.

as resulting from the amplification of transformed local and interpersonal or intersubjective relations. Thus, as we say today, the personal is political.

In their assumption that global historical change begins from the bottom up with the premeditated transformation of relations among a small circle, the Woldwinites are an early instance of cultural avant-gardism that aims to develop means of worldly social revolution through arts and manners rather than political parties or state institutions. In contemporary terms, the Woldwinites introduce a relatively straightforward, albeit limited, idea of environmental or social construction, the notion that individuals are shaped or conditioned by their social environments. The Woldwinites' ideas about social construction are limited, because they position themselves as innocent participants, do not recognize the dilemmas implicit in their own social program (particularly its assumptions about sentiment, benevolence, and associative imitation, e.g.), and direct their critique at the hierarchical inequalities of the old regime while neglecting the emergent structures of liberal capitalism. Brown adopts their environmentalist argument but also, as a second-wave Woldwinite, recognizes that their ideas about social construction and action are incomplete. His fiction attempts to think through these limitations and their implications in ways that we will explore in greater detail when we turn to the plot of *Edgar Huntly*.

Building on these basic Woldwinite ideas, Brown's fictional method is articulated in several key essays on narrative technique and the social role of the novel that appear at the height of his novelistic phase, most notably the manifesto-like "Walstein's School of History" (Aug.–Sept. 1799) and "The Difference between History and Romance" (April 1800).<sup>12</sup> To summarize this method, we can say that Brown's fiction combines elements of history and the novel to place his characters in extreme conditions of social distress as a means of engaging a wider audience into considerations of progressive behavior. His novels explore how common, disempowered subjects respond to damaging social conditions caused by defects in dominant ideas and practices. Through their interconnected patterns of socially conditioned behavior, dramatic suspense, and gothic intensities, Brown's fictions urge readers to reflect on how to overcome corruption in order to construct a more "virtuous," equal, and fulfilling society.

This approach begins with Brown's understanding of the relation between historical and fictional writing. History and fiction, he argues, are not different because one deals with factual and the other with fictional materials. Rather, history and fiction are intrinsically connected as two sides of one coin, because history describes and documents the results of actions, while fiction investigates the possible motives that cause these actions. Fictions are thus narrative experiments that tease out possible preconditions for historical events or behaviors and that reason through social problems presented as hypothetical situations. Whereas history describes events, romance analyzes and projects the probable causes, conditions, and preconditions of events. The "Walstein" essay builds on this distinction and develops a three-fold plan for

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<sup>12</sup> These essays are included in the Related Texts at the end of this volume.



novel writing. As critics have noted, the plan outlined in this essay gives us an accurate account of Brown's motivation for writing fiction and of how he builds his novels. The historian Walstein first combines history and romance in such a way as to promote "moral and political" engagement while rejecting universal truths in order to stress the situatedness of engaged political response in noble and classical figures such as Cicero. Walstein's pupil Engel then modernizes and develops the theory by adding that a romance, to be effective in today's world, must be addressed to a wide popular audience and draw its characters not from the elite but from the same lower-status group that will read and be moved by the work. History and romance alike must address issues and situations familiar to their modern audience, notably the common inequalities arising from relations of sex and property. Thus a modern piece of literature will insert ordinary individuals like Edgar Huntly, rather than elite characters like Cicero, into situations of stress over contemporary conflicts involving money and erotic desire. Finally, a thrilling style and form are crucial and necessary, since a romance capable of moving its audience to considerations of progressive action must, as Brown writes, "be so arranged as to inspire, at once, curiosity and belief, to fasten the attention, and thrill the heart." In this manner, Brown's method uses the twists and turns of his plots and their many embedded narratives as ways to illustrate and think through interrelated social problems. The first edition (1799) of *Edgar Huntly* illustrates the method outlined in "Walstein" quite literally; while Edgar's tale is that of a common individual struggling with shared inequalities of sex and property, the novel's third volume also included "The Death of Cicero," a Walstein-like narrative that illustrates the shortcomings of a classical, elite protagonist.<sup>13</sup>

## Sleep-Walking on the Frontier

Sleep-walking and cycles of frontier violence and revenge supply the spectacular plot points and dramatic motifs in *Edgar Huntly*. As Brown develops them, these motifs connect outward to an implicit commentary on the revolutionary and colonial struggles of the eighteenth-century, and inward to observations on how individual consciousness and forms of collective interaction are shaped by these conditions.

In accordance with the latest medical works of the period, Brown understood sleep-walking in terms of the associative physiology of sentiment and sensibility, and as a socially generated symptom of emotional damage. In the moral and psychological theories of the Enlightenment, physical responsiveness to external stimuli is a basic link in the associative chain of sentiments and emotions that drives human interaction. Physical symptoms are thus signs of breakdowns in an individual's response to social networks. As Edgar observes in Chapter 2, after his sentimentalized response to Clithero's sleep-walking: "The incapacity of sound sleep denotes a mind sorely wounded" (11). Along with his roommate Elihu Hubbard Smith and other members

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<sup>13</sup> See "The Death of Cicero," in Weber, ed., *Somnambulism and Other Stories*, 117–33.

of his New York circle, Brown read Erasmus Darwin's *Zoönomia; or, The Laws of Organic Life* (1794). This medical-biological study is important for *Edgar Huntly*, because it provides Brown with his basic understanding of madness as a disorder of the senses and, more particularly, because it provides the novel's understanding of sleep-walking, *Somnambulismus*, as a disease "of volition" that is one example of this disorder.<sup>14</sup> Darwin sees the dissociation of volition and outward stimuli in sleep-walking as fundamentally akin to the same problem in the ailments he refers to as "reverie" and "sentimental love"; whereas a pathological level of dissociation in sleep-walking is manifested in "the exertions of the locomotive muscles," reverie and sentimental love concern "the exertions of the organs of sense." Darwin explains that in all these states—sleep-walking, reverie, and sentimental love (or "erotomania")—the body is engaged in "violent voluntary exertions of ideas to relieve pain."

With Elihu Hubbard Smith's help, Brown collected information about and examples of sleep-walking that he put to use in a series of narratives from 1797 to 1805. In 1796, for example, Smith showed Brown the "History of the Sleepless Man of Madrid" in Benjamin Gooch's *Practical Treatise on Wounds and Other Chirurgical Subjects* (1767). In June 1798 Brown published queries in the Philadelphia *Weekly Magazine* requesting information from the public on sleep-walking and other physiological-psychological phenomena that he would dramatize in his novels. One month later, in July, just months before he died in Brown's presence, Smith recorded in his diary an incident of somnambulism that he learned about during a trip home to Connecticut and notes, "This will do for C. B. Brown."<sup>15</sup> Earlier that year, in March and April 1798, Smith, William Dunlap, and other friends were already reading and discussing Brown's initial use of somnambulism in his first (and now lost) novel, *Sky-Walk; or, The Man Unknown to Himself*.<sup>16</sup> The one fragment of the novel that was published to promote its appearance suggests that somnambulism in that story is a symptom of intolerable anxieties concerning debt and social status.<sup>17</sup> Elements of the lost *Sky-Walk* reappeared in both *Edgar Huntly* in 1799 and the tale "Somnambulism. A fragment," published in 1805. A substantive difference between *Sky-Walk* (based on the little information that survives) and *Edgar Huntly* seems to be Brown's later concern, which we will discuss later, with the effects of imperialism and global commerce. These concerns come to the fore in *Edgar Huntly*, but they are not evident in the earlier material nor in first-wave Woldwinitic writings, which affirm a cosmopolitan program but never ask how it might be destroyed by commercial empire and landgrabs. Scholars explore the precise interrelation of these somnambulism narratives, but the way that sleep-walking, reverie, and sentimental love are combined in all three plots demonstrates Brown's fundamental interest in

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<sup>14</sup> See the excerpts from Darwin's *Zoönomia* in Related Texts.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *Diary*; July 1, 1798 (454).

<sup>16</sup> The surviving fragment of and other information on this novel are included in Related Texts.

<sup>17</sup> On the thematic links between *Sky-Walk* and *Edgar Huntly*, see Hinds, "Charles Brockden Brown's Revenge Tragedy"; and Krause, "Historical Essay."

the links between psychic distress and social networks, and illustrates how his narratives reference the medical and moral-philosophical research of the progressive Enlightenment.

Along with the basic motif of sleep-walking, the Delaware Indians that appear in *Edgar Huntly* are probably the most frequently discussed aspect of the narrative, partly because this is the first American novel to dramatize frontier violence between settlers and first peoples. This novel is therefore a critical point in the long history of representations of Euro-Indian conflict in America, extending back to the earliest contact narratives and forward to the movie genre of the western. In recent years there has been considerable critical debate over how to interpret Brown's portrayal of settler-Indian relations. Some commentators maintain that Brown's novel is an early example of Manifest Destiny or expansionist ideology at the turn of the nineteenth century and suggest that it offers a frankly or covertly racist, xenophobic perspective on settler-Indian relations.<sup>18</sup> After all, the novel's initially peaceful protagonist does become a vicious Indian-killer by the end of his story. Earlier commentators, in particular, often identify Brown with his protagonists even though Brown's novelistic method makes this kind of author-character identification difficult to justify and, quite to the contrary, works in many more and less obvious ways to situate both author and reader at a critical distance from the novel's characters and actions. All of Brown's novels require the reader to dis-identify with and take a critical perspective on their protagonists.

Our discussion in what follows generally takes the view that Brown is critical of the patterns of imperialism, expansionism, and racialism that he depicts in *Edgar Huntly*. Besides questions about whether or not Brown can be identified with his narrators and protagonists, many thematic aspects of *Edgar Huntly* and a considerable body of scholarship suggest that the novel's frontier violence is framed by a critical perspective on the history of Quaker-Indian relations and the wider processes of imperial dispossession and displacement that surround them. In fact, Brown's staging of settler-Indian relations not only frames Edgar's actions within a critical account of frontier violence, but it also arguably makes this novel an implicit critique and rejection of late eighteenth-century Quaker political tracts and captivity narratives, which were written to present the Quaker community's self-interested interpretation of ongoing multiethnic frontier conflicts.

This framing begins with the most basic elements of the plot's setting and geography. The site of Waldegrave's murder, a locale that returns throughout the first half of the narrative, is the giant Elm that is one of the leitmotifs of the plot. This Elm is the place where Edgar's friend Waldegrave was mysteriously murdered, the place that first joins him to Clithero, and the obsessive point around which the novel's sleep-walking proliferates. As Edgar notes on his first approach to it:

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<sup>18</sup> For readings of *Edgar Huntly* as a prototypical expansionist and Indian-hating novel, see Weidman, "White Man's Red Man"; Newman, "Indians and Indian-Hating in *Edgar Huntly*"; and the influential interpretations in Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, and Gardner, "Alien Nation." This interpretation is taken up by numerous recent discussions.

## Introduction

I descried through the dusk the widespread branches of the Elm. This tree, however faintly seen, cannot be mistaken for another. The remarkable bulk and shape of its trunk, its position in the midst of the way, its branches spreading into an ample circumference, made it conspicuous from afar. My pulse throbbed as I approached it. (8)

Scholars beginning with Daniel Edwards Kennedy in the 1930s have suggested that this Elm, with its centrality to sleep-walking and frontier violence, condenses into a single image the long history of betrayal and violence in eighteenth-century Quaker-Indian relations. The Elm itself refers to the Treaty Elm, which, according to legend, marked the site of the founding of Pennsylvania in 1682, the spot where William Penn may (or may not) have negotiated a treaty of peace between Quakers and the Lenni Lenape (Delaware) Indians, who have recently lost their tribal lands in *Edgar Huntly*. This Treaty Elm was still a tourist attraction in the Philadelphia of Brown's time and featured in many well-known images, from fabrics and plates to Benjamin West's 1771 historical painting *Penn's Treaty with the Indians*.<sup>19</sup>

The geographical setting of *Edgar Huntly's* action, in the "Forks" of the Delaware, where the fictional Elm links the novel's Anglo settlements Solebury and Chetasco with the wilderness area called Norwalk, ties the dubious legend of the Treaty Elm to the harsh realities of Quaker land-grabbing and the infamous Walking Purchase Treaty that was an instrument of fraud in seizing Delaware tribal lands. In the Walking Purchase Treaty of 1737, agents of William Penn's sons dishonestly maintained that they would resurvey a tract of land that they claimed was sold to Penn by the Delawares fifty years earlier, a tract defined as the amount that could be walked at a normal pace, along a winding river and under ordinary conditions, in a day and a half. Ordinarily this might amount to twenty or twenty-five miles, but a path was cleared in advance and hired walkers with a support team worked continuously to cover sixty-four miles, in a straight line, in the allotted time. In this manner the Delawares were defrauded of about 1,200 square miles of tribal territory in what is now northern Bucks, Lehigh, and Northampton counties in Pennsylvania.<sup>20</sup> Historian Francis Jennings describes the calculated misrepresentations and outright deceptions of the 1737 land-conveyancing documents as "a feat of prestidigitation on the level of a carnival shell game."<sup>21</sup> The forcible removal of the Delawares took several more years and was only accomplished after the Iroquois-Quaker negotiation of 1742, when Canasatego and the Iroquois declared the Delawares "women" and evicted them from their lands on behalf of Anglo-Quaker commercial interests. Canasatego, who flew a British flag in front of his home, addressed the Delawares in forceful terms:

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<sup>19</sup> For a full discussion of the novel's material on Penn's Elm, see Krause, "Penn's Elm and *Edgar Huntly*."

<sup>20</sup> On the Walking Purchase Treaty and the topography of *Edgar Huntly*, see Krause, "Penn's Elm and *Edgar Huntly*"; and Kafer, *Charles Brockden Brown's Revolution*, 173–83.

<sup>21</sup> Jennings, "The Scandalous Indian Policy of William Penn's Sons," 37.

We conquer'd You, we made Women of you, you know you are Women, and can no more sell Land than Women. . . . This Land that you Claim is gone through Your Guts. You have been furnished with Cloaths and Meat and Drink . . . and now You want it again like [the] Children you are. . . . This String of Wampum serves to forbid You . . . for ever meddling in Land Affairs.<sup>22</sup>

This dispossession and its gendered language seem relevant to *Edgar Huntly*, for the novel's main Indian character Old Deb is presented as a female personification of the Delaware people and their removal from land stolen by Quakers in a notorious fraud.<sup>23</sup> Solebury, the settlement where Edgar lives, is the name of an actual town in this area, as is Abingdon, mentioned as the settlement where Edgar's fiancée Mary is located. Chetasco, the non-Quaker settlement near Solebury in this novel, is a fictional name, but it suggests an anagram of Chester County, the county just west of Philadelphia and southwest of the Forks, where Brown's father (as well as his fictional character Arthur Mervyn) grew up.

Before settler-Indian conflicts were mythologized in novels, a long tradition of influential captivity narratives presented the settler view of these conflicts and of the cycles of violence and revenge that accompanied colonial expansionism. Captivity narratives are first-person, supposedly autobiographical accounts of European colonists who were captured by and lived as prisoners among Indians. In them, the captive—often a pious, female settler like the nameless girl that Edgar rescues from the Delaware war party in this novel—appears as an innocent victim of barbaric Indian aggression, and, in this manner, the larger white community is made to appear innocent of hostile intention and action in the overall picture of settler-Indian conflict. As Joanna Brooks puts it, “The captivity narrative formula utilized a story of individual suffering to mask the implication of the colonial subject in the broader machinations of English imperialism. It isolated and allegorized the war experiences of individual colonists to articulate a colonial white identity that was innocent of history.”<sup>24</sup> Brown was certainly aware of these narratives and draws on them for the novel's general emphasis on captivity, which is experienced in one form or another by most of its characters (Sarsefield, Wiatte, Clithero, Edgar, and the nameless girl Edgar rescues), but Brown's use of these narratives tends to critically reverse or invert

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<sup>22</sup> Hazard, *Minutes of the Provincial Council*, 4:660. For Canasatego, see Starna, “The Diplomatic Career of Canasatego.” Starna examines Canasatego's part in the 1742 council on pages 148–52. Brown's great-uncle William Brown, a close friend of his father Elijah, was present at a later 1756 negotiation when Delaware chieftain Teedyuscung told the Quakers he was attacking Anglo settlers because of the Walking Purchase fraud. This great-uncle apparently helped raise money to buy off the Delawares at that juncture; see Kafer, *Charles Brockden Brown's Revolution*, 174–76 and 236, note 13.

<sup>23</sup> See Hinds, “Deb's Dogs,” and Sivils, “Native American Sovereignty and Old Deb.” For the “tumultuous social and cultural transformations and adaptations” that followed the Walking Purchase Treaty, see Harper, “Delawares and Pennsylvanians after the Walking Purchase.”

<sup>24</sup> Brooks, “Held Captive by the Irish,” 33.

their customary function of shifting responsibility for historical violence onto native peoples. If Brown draws on the 1787 “Panther” captivity narrative, for example, as some scholars have suggested, he also seems to reject its emphasis on Native American irrationality by ending his novel with a rational explanation for the Delaware war party as resistance to the encroachment of white settlers.<sup>25</sup>

In the late eighteenth century, Pennsylvania Quakers published a new wave of captivity narratives and other tracts that argued that Quakers were innocent of frontier violence, because other settler groups, above all the “wild Irish,” were victimizing Indians and Quakers alike. These writings built on a long history of Anglo-Quaker disregard for the Irish and painted Quakers as reasonable, pacifist actors in relation to both the Irish and the Indians.<sup>26</sup> In the aftermath of English colonialism in Ireland and massive Irish immigration to Pennsylvania, Anglo-Quakers viewed the Irish—particularly those from the same northern (Ulster) Protestant areas of Ireland as this novel’s character Clithero—not just as a rival immigrant people, but as barbaric ethno-racial others every bit as “savage” and threatening as Indians; “the very scum of mankind,” as one contemporary put it.<sup>27</sup> This history of distrust rose to a boiling point in the aftermath of the French and Indian War, when large numbers of lower-class Irish immigrants, in incidents like the violent Paxton Boys uprising (1763–1764), challenged Quaker authority on the Pennsylvania frontier. In the pamphlet war that followed the Paxton uprising, illustrated here by the excerpts from Franklin and Barton,<sup>28</sup> the Philadelphia Anglo-Quaker elite sought to shift responsibility for frontier violence onto Irish settlers, characterizing them as “White Christian Savages” (Franklin) who were destroying Penn’s legacy of harmonious Quaker-Indian relations. Similarly, in Chapter 27 of this novel, the manner in which Edgar blames Deb’s anger on the Chetasco settlers—shifting responsibility for provoking the Delaware raids onto this other group—seems to reference the Quaker community’s attempts to blame Irish backcountry settlers for conflicts that go back to the original Quaker colonization and landgrabs.<sup>29</sup>

At the moment Brown was writing *Edgar Huntly*, these antagonisms were intensified yet again by the Irish revolutionary uprisings of 1796–1798 and the arrival of

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<sup>25</sup> See the “Panther” captivity narrative, included in this volume’s Related Texts.

<sup>26</sup> See Brooks’ entire discussion of the Quakers’ neo-captivity narratives in her article “Held Captive by the Irish.” Brooks sees *Edgar Huntly* as the “apotheosis” of these Irish-blaming narratives (41), but obviously we are suggesting, here and in the last part of this Introduction, that the novel critically reverses or inverts these narratives on several levels.

<sup>27</sup> See Griffin, *The People with No Name*, 99–124.

<sup>28</sup> See the excerpts from Franklin and Barton’s pamphlets in this volume’s Related Texts. For more on the Paxton uprising, see Griffin, *The People with No Name*, 157–73; Kafer, *Charles Brockden Brown’s Revolution*, 173–83; White, *The Backcountry and the City*, 105–21; and Camenzind, “Violence, Race, and the Paxton Boys.”

<sup>29</sup> For a wider account of the cultural impact of these backcountry conflicts in the period, see White, *The Backcountry and the City*.

fresh waves of Irish revolutionaries and émigrés in both Philadelphia and the back-country frontier, where they mixed with Indians and took part in multiethnic Indian-African-European communities extending from western Pennsylvania into the “middle ground” of the Great Lakes area.<sup>30</sup> Thus it is highly significant that *Edgar Huntly* sets its action in the aftermath of the French and Indian Wars (the narrative reminds us that Edgar’s uncle participated in the most disastrous chapter of that conflict) and leads its reader to understand profound similarities, rather than differences, between Edgar, his Irish doppelgänger Clithero Edny, and, ultimately, the Indians themselves. As we will note later, Edgar comes to resemble Clithero more and more as the tale progresses: both are tutored by the English colonialist Sarsefield, both are driven by intolerable social pressures to sleep-walk, and both are pressured toward marriage to the same inheritor of the British-imperial class system. Like the Indians they outdo in barbarity, both are driven to violence in cycles of displacement that the novel takes pains to link with wider Anglo-French imperial struggles extending from Pennsylvania to what is now Pakistan and India.

Rather than scapegoating Irish or Indian “savages” and revolutionaries as a means of avoiding the history of Quaker responsibility in settler-Indian violence, Brown’s novel acknowledges Quaker violence (quite literally in the savage exploits of Edgar and his warrior uncle) and seems to make its Quaker and Irish figures into doubles for one another, exploring how cycles of frontier violence are driven by larger social structures and conflicts. Clithero initially appears to the reader as a Northern Irish other, just as Edgar initially appears as an enlightened, pacifist Anglo-Quaker. But the entire novel works in obvious and more subtle ways to outline the social and historical forces that transform these men into something very different than what they initially seem to be, and to explore the structures that lead them to their “unconscious” explosions of violence. Edgar’s romantic renaming of the Indian Old Deb as a Celtic Queen Mab repeats the racial dynamics of Indian- and Irish-hating, but rather than figuring Indians like Deb as barbaric others, the novel emphasizes the historic responsibility, barbaric violence, and projective scapegoating of its Anglo-Quaker protagonist.

## Enlightenment Benevolence and the Rejection of Gothic Revenge

In the introductory “To the Public” that begins *Edgar Huntly* by rejecting “Gothic castles and chimeras” as “puerile superstition and exploded manners,” Brown is insisting that every age requires its own literary forms and cultural codes. For Brown, a

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<sup>30</sup> For information on the “middle ground” from western Pennsylvania to the Great Lakes and the mixed communities of Indians, Irish, escaped slaves, and other European settlers there, see White, *The Middle Ground*; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*; Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*; and Linebaugh, “The Red-Crested Bird and Black Duck.”

modern-looking world struggling to achieve enlightenment neither needs to nor should continue the traditional narrative structures that hearken to its collective adolescence. In “Romances,” an essay published a few years after *Edgar Huntly*, Brown argues that because every period produces its “own conceptions of truth and nature,” the tales of the ancient Greeks and Romans and even those of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries can no longer motivate contemporary readers.<sup>31</sup> The “gradual revolution of human manners and national taste” necessitates new cultural and literary forms. Since all narratives must inescapably represent the “manners and sentiments” of “the age in which the works were written,” the “works that suited former ages are now exploded by us,” just as our own productions will be “exploded in their turn” by ensuing generations.

With this claim about the necessary linkage between standards of taste, the historical transformation of social structures, and the alteration of literary forms and conventions, Brown stands as one of the early proponents of a pragmatic, modernist perspective. Like Thomas Paine’s dictum that the dead should not legislate for the living, Brown’s frank refusal of the need to revere established literary genres or consecrate a tradition of great writers insists that cultural productions should not be judged according to universalizing standards or transcendental ideals, as Kantian and romantic aesthetics argue, but according to the terms and debates of their own historical context and struggles.

Early modern Europe was regulated by aristocratic feudal regimes, materialized by fortified manors (“Gothic castles”), and the dogma of institutionalized, Catholic mysticism (“puerile superstition”). Brown’s point in “exploding” the old cultural forms linked to this past is that in an age, like the eighteenth century, when the rising middle class seeks to replace the artificial status divisions of aristocratic bloodlineages and priestly superstition with a new society based on republican-liberal equality and skeptical reason, writers must craft new tales that articulate these democratic desires and help the reader acculturate into his or her actually existing social environment. If authors continue to use the “exploded manners” and locales of an increasingly obsolete early modern society, they hold back the collective maturation of modern society by confusing it with specters of a thankfully vanquished past. In an essay “On the Effects of Theatrical Exhibitions,” written shortly before *Edgar Huntly*, Brown condemns Shakespeare’s plays for crippling their viewer’s analytical development.<sup>32</sup> Being “foreign to the experience of men of the present times and of middling classes,” using “a language as unintelligible as Greek, and raving about thrones and mistresses,” Shakespeare presents “mistaken notions of virtue and duty” to the modern bourgeoisie. “Theatres are, in themselves, capable of being converted into schools of the purest wisdom and philanthropy,” but not if they regressively insist on staging the mentality of a historically superseded society.

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<sup>31</sup> This essay is included in this volume’s Related Texts.

<sup>32</sup> See the excerpt from this essay in this volume’s Related Texts.



Conversely, Brown sees his own writing as participating in the action of progressive social transformation. While scholars frequently observe that *Edgar Huntly* and Brown's other novels inaugurate U.S. gothic writing as a genre that often recalls the past, these novels are also postgothic in the sense that they seek to leave the premodern behind. The horror resonating in their subterranean passages echoes the challenges of escaping archaic behavior that is not only unsuitable to the contemporary moment but also degrades their reader's ability to properly understand the ongoing revolution in social manners in the late eighteenth century. As Edgar Huntly attempts to explain what has happened to him, he repeatedly emphasizes the newness of events and scenes that cannot easily be compared to traditional themes. The problem Edgar indicates is that contemporary readers lack codes of reference that might provide a moral compass to guide their actions. Hence, the main plot points of sleep-walking, performances of exaggerated shame, or frontier confusion provide metaphors for the uncertainty of tumbling forward into a modern, postfeudal society that both requires and produces new modes of social consciousness and new forms of human interaction.

Nowhere is *Edgar Huntly's* investigation into the event threshold of modernity more explicit than in the novel's dogged rejection of the kind of historical continuity manifested in vicious cycles of revenge blood-feuds. For Brown and many of his contemporaries, the resolution of conflict through honor codes requiring automatized violence, typified by the aristocratic duel, is an atavistic throwback to feudal clan antagonisms, a tragic failure to seek legitimate, rationalized, and modern forms of justice in the courtroom. The bloodthirsty obsession with vengeance through retribution, mutilation, and murder sets off an unending series of retaliations that lock humanity into patterns of vengeance that stunt its moral progress. The main cause of Clithero Edny's problems in Ireland is the challenge of breaking free from his own internalized notions of the landed gentry's immemorial prestige. Clithero's difficulty is that he cannot liberate his mind from the shackles of subordination to notions of inborn lineage. He cannot bring himself to imagine the possibility that his relationship to his landed mistress's niece Clarice could possibly be a partnership of equals.

Clithero's psychological obstacle here is that he understands all too well how challenges to the status boundaries of aristocratic bloodlines will be met with the personal violence embodied by Clarice's father, Arthur Wiatte. Wiatte personifies the gentrified old order's refusal to suffer the dishonor of treating the urban middle class as its equal. In Chapter 5, Wiatte forces his sister Euphemia to break off her engagement with the bourgeois surgeon Sarsefield and then vows revenge on her for having undermined blood allegiances in favor of the middle-class courtroom determinations of justice. Wiatte returns from exile to set off a new round of spontaneous violence in Chapters 7 and 8, as Wiatte is killed by Clithero while attempting to murder him. The inheritance of violence, and the violence generated by the social codes of aristocratic inheritance, continues to unfold when Clithero attempts a kind of allegorical clan revenge by deciding to murder Wiatte's sister and daughter, insanely claiming that this murder will spare Lorimer the pain of learning about her brother's death. *Edgar Huntly* charts other instances of revenge acts that are nightmarishly projected

through the generations, notably the vicious cycles of settler-Indian violence in the book's second half. Edgar's blood-lust against the Delawares who killed his parents (Chapters 17–19), and the plot of Delaware Indian Old Deb against the white settlers for their failure to respect her identity as defined by premodern claims of land-blood status (Chapters 20 and 27), are mirror images of this process. Similarly, Edgar's uncle's fatal desire to retaliate on the Delawares for the deaths of his army comrades in the disaster of Braddock's defeat thirty years prior to the novel's action (Chapter 24) offers another instance of the risks involved in continuing to hold onto past injuries and construct an identity grounded in victimization and dishonor.<sup>33</sup>

Brown does not, however, seem to argue for an extreme position of rupture from the past, for simply forgetting or repressing the feeling of having suffered historical wrongs. Edgar begins his tale, in Chapter 1, traumatized by the unresolved mystery of his friend Waldegrave's murder. His hurt at the loss is made more severe by the collective amnesia of the Solebury settlers, who quickly lose interest in attempting to discover the agent of Waldegrave's death. As we first see Edgar walking at night, while the settlers are in bed, this movement toward sleep-walking may allegorize his psychological stasis in being both alive and dead because of his inability to bring Waldegrave's death to satisfying closure. Hence the Elm that is the site of Waldegrave's death becomes a geographical fetish that increasingly magnetizes Edgar's movements as he enacts repeated open-air performances of mental and physical trauma. Brown seems to be dramatizing the way that the past's crimes and misdemeanors continually resurface to shape the present if left unresolved.

If the wrongs of the past cannot be simply forgotten, Brown uses *Edgar Huntly* to claim that the misdeeds of the past need to be confronted and worked through before they can be dissolved and consigned to the trashheap of history. For this revolution to succeed, however, it must forgo the dubious satisfaction of violent revenge. When Edgar insists on questioning Clithero, who he believes has murdered Waldegrave, the purpose of the meeting is not to demand a duel, but to talk through the past in a dispassionate fashion. Edgar insists that his responsibility is two-fold. The ethical need to excavate the crimes of the past is yoked to the need to comfort, rather than denounce, the agent of Waldegrave's murder. Edgar assumes that in every act of violence, the perpetrator is also damaged and needs therapeutic relief as much as the associates of the primary victim. Partly motivated by the pacifist principles of his Quaker upbringing, Brown also recognizes that conflict resolution through violence (through war or the death penalty) psychologically damages the victor brandishing the sword of justice. Edgar abandons his desire for a fear-driven revenge and instead proposes a project of benevolent compassion for Clithero as he seeks to comfort the Irishman both physically and psychologically. Edgar's purpose in returning to Norwalk in Chapters 9–12 is not to secure Clithero and deliver him to public judgment, but to provide food and water so that Clithero can himself come to terms with his actions.

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<sup>33</sup> For more on revenge in the novel, see Hinds, "Charles Brockden Brown's Revenge Tragedy."

In this program of compassion, Edgar, and Brown, are guided by two assumptions. First, demonizing Clithero will only tear away at the fabric of society as it introduces practices whereby others can, in turn, be destroyed. This argument can be more forcefully seen with a figure seemingly inspired by Brown's fiction: the creature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). In the years before Mary Shelley wrote one of the most influential works of gothic fiction, she and her husband actively set about reading all of Brown's fiction that they could find. While she later admitted that she disliked Americans for their cultural brashness, the sole exception to her aversion was Brown, whom she wished she had had a chance to meet. Mary Shelley seems to have been an especially discerning reader of Brown, for she perceives how Brown's "freaks," the marginal figures like Clithero here or Carwin in the novel *Wieland*, are monstrous primarily because they have been denied inclusion within the conviviality and mutuality of dominant society. Shelley's creature seeks out comfort in the home of the blind man, who may "overlook" his physical difference from the white English but is then driven off into mad revenge when he is denied this compassion. With Shelley's novel, we see a brilliant continuation of Brown's antirevenge tragedy in *Edgar Huntly*.<sup>34</sup>

The second assumption behind Edgar's benevolence appears as he seeks to engage Clithero in conversation that will calm and cure Clithero's mental distress. In keeping with widely accepted doctrines of eighteenth-century sentimental pathology, that were exemplified by naturalists like Erasmus Darwin and that were the mainstay of medical practice among Brown's physician friends, Brown believes that mental illness is caused by an imbalance in the body's senses that deranges our apparatus of cognition. The chief therapy for this dysfunction is reasonable dialogue that reduces the intemperate anger or "madness" that is the origin of insanity. In ways that prefigure psychoanalysis's faith in the talking cure, Brown's character believes that without the therapeutic sedative of conversation, the body's wild senses will overwhelm the individual. Edgar repeatedly comments on the rate of his heartbeat and respiration in order to gauge the state of his physical calmness and emotional balance, which if lost will result in mental incoherence.

Edgar's insistence on the power of sympathy in the act of reconciliation is a programmatic renunciation of aristocratic manners. He enacts this through a radical internalizing of the other's experiences so as to understand the conditions and cognitive lifeworld of those who have wronged him. It is a truism that male-authored gothic tales frequently involve the narrator's paranoid sense that he is being pursued by an omniscient, inscrutable double or doppelgänger, plotting his humiliation and downfall. In conventional gothic narratives, this phantom menace must be destroyed at all costs. The reverse is the case in *Edgar Huntly*. Edgar progressively *doubles* Clithero, rather than the other way around. Sleep-walking, starvation, bodily laceration and disarray, the reburial and resurfacing of private letters, marriage plans frustrated by the return of an enigmatic stranger, and locked cabinets are all devices associated

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<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of the Shelleys and Brown, see Shapiro, "I Could Kiss Him One Minute."

with Clithero that Edgar progressively duplicates. As Edgar actively and progressively doubles Clithero, Brown suggests that the only way to escape from a permanent war of revenge is to put ourselves literally in the position of the other so as to experience the dynamics of power confrontations from the perspective of our antagonist. Only by gaining a complete understanding of the perspective of the other can we dissolve a culture of trauma and move beyond the cyclical violence intrinsic to premodern, unenlightened societies. This gesture seems to act as Brown's initial revision of his belief in the power of sentiment. Rather than expecting that Edgar's deeds will be repeated by others, the novel suggests that his act of virtue will only succeed if he recognizes the human condition and perspective of others.

## Failed Benevolence?

Until Chapter 16, slightly more than halfway through *Edgar Huntly*, Brown gives little indication that his narrative will include the events that dominate nearly all criticism on the text: the action surrounding the Delaware Indian warpath. Because the Indian action looms so large in discussions of the narrative, the coherence of the tale until this point and its implied trajectory must be emphasized. Until Chapter 16, *Edgar Huntly* has clearly marked themes and a predictable conclusion. Edgar refuses the impulse of gothic revenge against Clithero so that rational benevolence can replace the vengeful and backward-looking passions produced by prebourgeois, aristocratic society. Edgar's refusal of landed interests does not, however, imply the embrace of commercial ones, as seen by his readiness to forgo Mary Waldegrave's inheritance.

An abrupt break occurs, though, as Edgar awakens in a pit that is guarded by armed Delaware Indians on the warpath. From this point, the theme of mutuality and compassion is not only marginalized but also seemingly refuted and thoroughly denied. The hardly vigorous Edgar, who "never delighted" in hunting's "carnage and blood" (84), begins devastating Delaware Indians with a spontaneous dispatch that few who knew the youth could have predicted. If Edgar assumes that calm reflection, interpersonal dialogue, and mute sympathy can resolve the bad feelings surrounding the mystery of Waldegrave's murder, all these assumptions are upended by the narrative's deflationary, mournful conclusion. Clithero is saved from self-starvation in Norwalk, but this rescue is only physical, as he remains mentally traumatized, and even this respite will be momentary. Clithero may be repaired from the bodily damage he suffers during his anorexic retreat into Norwalk and at the hands of the Delawares, but he remains defiantly morose, alienated, and psychologically damaged. By *Edgar Huntly's* end, Clithero may have been exonerated from Waldegrave's murder, but only so that he can incriminate himself once again by apparently rushing to assassinate Euphemia Lorimer. Edgar's plans for nursing Clithero back to health go for naught as the Irishman ultimately commits suicide to evade the social death of permanent institutionalization. Edgar's notion that male mutuality and sympathy could replace long-standing resentments fails, and he ends the narrative as marginal a figure

as he was when we first see him walking at night. The resolution of the mystery of Waldegrave's murder has not brought him lasting mental composure, closure, or integration within the settler community. Throughout the tale, Edgar dreams about the return of his tutor Sarsefield in utopian terms; he hopes to reestablish a caring community among friends. Yet when Edgar shouts with joy on seeing the older man again, in Chapter 24, Sarsefield brusquely refuses to reciprocate and gaze on, embrace, or speak warmly to him. Instead, Sarsefield comes with a prearranged plan that Edgar should marry Clarice Lorimer, although Edgar has never seen or communicated with Clarice (he has only heard of her from Clithero's tale, not Sarsefield) and remains engaged to Mary Waldegrave. If taken seriously, Sarsefield's plan to marry Edgar and Clarice forces Edgar to choose between (the sister of) Waldegrave and (the daughter-in-law of) Sarsefield in a way that makes relations with one old friend incompatible with the other. This gesture of exclusion continues with Sarsefield's merciless refusal of his surgical expertise to a mangled Clithero, a vengeful denial that even Edgar considers "inhuman" (179). When Sarsefield sees that Edgar nevertheless seeks to help Clithero, he rushes away in a stunning denial of human compassion and betrayal of medical ethics. Edgar later recounts Clithero's tale in order to still Sarsefield's maddened "fury" and heart-throbbing "vehemence" (178). Even in this more rational, composed state, Sarsefield reiterates his unwillingness to give medical assistance that might prolong Clithero's life.

The failure of compassion and benevolence to succeed in an American society no longer ruled by aristocratic social codes raises *Edgar Huntly's* main sociological question: what is the modern spring of action that leads to the psychological dysfunction represented by Clithero's continuing madness, Edgar's anomie, and Sarsefield's brutality? In staging this question, Brown shifts the plot's mystery away from the initial riddle of who murdered Waldegrave to ask a more global question about the contemporary conditions that generate social aggression.

In this turn to the greater mystery about the state of collective damage, Brown's writing differs in important ways from the dominant pattern of most later detective fiction written for an assumed bourgeois reader. In conventional detective fictions, the riddle of assigning guilt to a perpetrator must be resolved in such a way that the dominant social interests that structure the underlying tensions leading to the crime are left unexplored and able to proceed with their agendas unquestioned. The burden of sanitizing the tensions of collective inequalities by translating them into the simple answer of an individual's guilt, leaving the existing social order blissfully unaware of its constitutional defects, is carried by the figure of the detective, who bears these contradictions on his body and mind. Like the eccentric, drug-addled Sherlock Holmes, the detective is frequently himself alienated from sustaining relationships and congeniality, deeply cynical, and psychologically damaged in ways that lead to drug or alcohol abuse when the pressure of maintaining the fiction of society's innocence and the criminal's sole guilt becomes too difficult to bear.

Brown does something similar with *Edgar Huntly's* physical and psychic transformation after Chapter 16, in the story of the Delaware war party. But instead of shifting responsibility onto a guilty individual, Brown, in keeping with his plan for novel

writing, leads the reader toward an awareness of the collective forces that condition individual responses. As *Edgar Huntly* moves from a tale that is primarily centered on Clithero's struggles to one about settler-Indian conflicts, Brown traces out what he considers to be the primary current threat to reforming domestic society through "the magic of sympathy, the perseverance of benevolence" (76). He indicates his answer to this question with the motif of sympathy for the damaged male body. Nearly all of the male characters' bodies are starved and wear the marks of torture and distress, manifested in worry lines, wounds, scarring, and other symptoms. When Edgar meets Clithero for their conversation, the latter's face is "pale and wan, and his form emaciated and shrunk" (24), and the worry lines of his sorrows later "dignify and solemnize his features" (76). When Edgar emerges from the forest, his "countenance was wan and haggard" and his body lacerated and bleeding (130). The merchant Weymouth appears as "sallow and emaciated," prematurely aged and facially marked by "deep traces of the afflictions he had endured" (103). Sarsefield, likewise, has become "rugged" looking as a result of "vicissitude and hardship, rather than of age" (43).

Men's bodies are preternaturally worn out in *Edgar Huntly* as a result of two interlinked global events. The initial cause for physical decay is the international pursuit of commercial gain. Edgar sees Weymouth's premature decay as the result of entrepreneurial adventures that send men "over every sea and every land in pursuit of that wealth which will not screen them from disease and infirmity, which is missed much oftener than found, and which, when gained, by no means compensates them for the hardships and vicissitudes endured in the pursuit" (104). Edgar's pessimism about the personal value of long-distance commerce is then tied to a larger critique of global relations.

From the perspective of many commentators, *Edgar Huntly* is an exceptionally American tale about the events, history, and psychology of the frontier. Its action is set in 1787, the year the U.S. constitution was ratified and thus year one of the national institution; in this sense, the novel casts a skeptical light on the founding narratives of Pennsylvania (in the Treaty Elm) and the United States (in the constitution) alike.<sup>35</sup> But beyond this traditional focus on events in the United States alone, the reader may consider the way the novel connects its action with a global network of forces and struggles. Edgar's review of male infirmity illustrates how the men's trauma usually results from a captivity experience that has its roots within a larger geography of border disputes between Europeans and nonwhite populations as a result of infra-European imperial conflicts. Sarsefield's body has been damaged not simply because he has had to seek his fortune outside Europe, but because he was imprisoned by Asian Indian forces who were themselves caught up in the Seven Years War between the British and French over which nation would colonize India and profit from its resources and trade. On the other side of this global war between English and French imperial rivals, Edgar's uncle suffers wounds in the British general Braddock's disastrous defeat by French and North American Indian forces.

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<sup>35</sup> See Grabo's Introduction to the 1988 edition of *Edgar Huntly*.

Braddock's defeat sets off a new wave of settler-Indian antagonism, and one consequence of these struggles is Old Deb's anger at her people's removal from their ancestral lands in the Forks of the Delaware. Deb's desire for revenge sets off the raiding party that leads to Waldegrave's death as retaliation for the collective wrongs done to the Delaware people. In response to Waldegrave's death, Edgar then suffers "the insanity of vengeance and grief" (6). As Sarsefield's double-barreled musket from the Bengal campaign turns up to be used by Edgar against the Delawares, Brown seems to suggest that the two Indian frontiers—one in North America, the other in South Asia—are linked because both belong to the same environment of conflicts between imperial powers mediated through native populations.

The cause of male suffering, then, appears to be the commercial desire for gain that creates the need for conflict between European nations that enlist local aboriginal populations in their disputes. With *Edgar Huntly*, Brown extends the Woldwinite critique against the old regime by turning that group's progressive analysis toward a new object: the sentimental-liberal assumptions of laissez-faire commerce, exemplified by Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). For Brown, the logical consequence of this emerging economic philosophy leads inevitably to conflict between nations in ways that re-create early modern cycles of revenge in a new, commercial mode. The eighteenth-century proponents of a "free" market, exemplified by Smith and other writers of the Scottish Enlightenment, assumed that exchanging goods, commercial exchange and circulation, was the defining, intrinsically progressive characteristic of humanity and civilization. Trade, for these writers, can only continue to exist if the buyer and seller learn how to satisfy each other's needs so as to ensure the satisfaction of their own self-interest. Exchange is not only about fulfilling the financial needs of traders; it also generates a surplus value of sympathetic mutuality as each successful trade generates more confidence in business and cooperative networks. This surplus is then directed outward as traders continually seek to expand their activities and search out new, foreign markets within which to trade. Thus, for Adam Smith, the moral community generated among strangers through business ultimately expands to encompass the entire globe, revolutionizing all societies as trade magnetizes, and improves cultural standards and trust between different peoples.

As *Edgar Huntly* collapses back into moody isolation, Brown's implicit argument seems to suggest that international free trade, as an index to the rising middle class, does not lead to benevolence but introduces a new, modern feeling of revenge in the entrepreneurial competition that generates new forms of global antagonism, which, in turn, spark local emergencies. From this perspective, Brown's narrative can be read as one of the first anti-imperialist fictions, as *Edgar Huntly* assumes that the desire for profit leads to overseas conflict between those seeking to gain from business, and that this conflict both deranges the mind and eviscerates the body. As Brown shifts the tale's mystery from the whodunit of Waldegrave's murder to the deeper question of why benevolence fails, he indicates his realization that a postaristocratic commercial society will not erase or overcome the sociocultural deficiencies of the prior age. Instead, these passions will be reformulated to create new forms of destructive behavior, typified by Sarsefield's inhumanity. The codes of aristocratic honor-violence are

transformed and now appear in commercial terms, spread through imperialism, which sets off contemporary cycles of revenge that will be transmitted across generations in ways that will also deform the inheritors of those struggles.

In the end, Brown's treatment of Edgar's violence and Indian fighting may have more to do with large-scale social and economic relations than with notions about the intrinsic savagery of the human soul. Brown's narrative can be read as showing how global conditions of competition for profit position local agents in situations where they commit acts that appear to be spontaneous but, in reality, respond to and represent global conflicts and transformations.<sup>36</sup> With *Edgar Huntly*, Brown dramatizes the social relations of bourgeois-led imperialism, which turns its carriers into heartless men, like the returned Sarsefield, or randomized agents of violence, like Edgar.

## Subordination and Sexuality: Male-Female Relations

Responding to the conservative counterrevolution of the late 1790s, when the egalitarian aspirations of the radical Enlightenment were turned back, *Edgar Huntly* charts the defeat of women's autonomy. By the narrative's end, the tale's women have been stripped of control over their finances and locked within positions of infantile subordination to men. Euphemia Lorimer's fortune may have given her the ability to challenge aristocratic hierarchies by marrying Sarsefield, but in so doing she loses control of her wealth to him. The Delaware Old Deb's claims, moral and otherwise, to sovereignty over her ancestral lands have been negated, and she must flee the region to escape punishment. Euphemia Lorimer's daughter Clarice is presented to Edgar as an object that Sarsefield feels empowered to transfer at will, and Edgar's sisters are saved from death only to find that they have been made homeless and impoverished by their uncle's death. Other minor female characters include the abused wife of the drunken Selby and the unnamed female hostage that Edgar rescues and returns to her father's authority. To say that women's ability to transcend gender limitations is severely diminished in this narrative would be an understatement.

The question here, then, is why a Wollstonecraftian feminist like Brown would write a fiction that is so unrelentingly pessimistic about female empowerment. What are the social factors that constrain women? In line with Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Brown primarily represents women's disempowerment by the impositions that men place on their access to knowledge and opportunities for education and rational improvement. The novel's male characters assume a paternalist, disciplinary right to censor the information women need in order to participate in enlightened discussion. It is not the case that women are essentially less mature than men, but that the male characters structurally infantilize the women. Lorimer's twin

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<sup>36</sup> See Brown's 1804 "Memorandums Made on a Journey Through Part of Pennsylvania" in this volume's Related Texts. There he reflects again on these issues and portrays resourceful and witty Indians who adjust to commercial expansionism and play on and reverse the stereotypes of frontier whites.



brother prohibits her from choosing Sarsefield as her intended partner, and, when she asserts her rights by refusing to provide an alibi for Wiatte, he vows punishing revenge. From this point on, all the male characters, regardless of their actual rank, assume for Lorimer, because of her gender, that she cannot be trusted to hear the truth about Wiatte's return, his murder, or Clithero's movements.

Edgar also reinforces the imposition of female ignorance. Like Clithero, who seeks to protect a text by burying it, Edgar in Chapter 13 wants to hide Waldegrave's deist letters from Mary, his fiancée and Waldegrave's sister. Edgar has been transcribing these letters for Mary's benefit but paternalistically denies her the complete acquisition of her brother's letters, just as he ensures that she does not gain his inheritance. Because Edgar assumes that Mary's religious convictions are merely intuitive, he believes that they cannot withstand the subtleties of Waldegrave's arguments. Consequently, he decides to give Mary edited copies of Waldegrave's letters so that she reads only their "narrative or descriptive" elements, but not the analytical or deductive passages.

The male imposition of female childishness continues with Old Deb. As noted earlier in the discussion of the novel's historical background, Deb seems to personify the historical "feminization" and subordination of the Delawares after the Walking Purchase fraud of 1737 and the Quaker-Iroquois-Delaware negotiations of 1742. Within the context of her own people in this novel, Deb has authority to speak before the tribe's general council and possesses a powerful "eloquence" that sways their collective decisions (137). Yet to Edgar and the other white settlers, she is inscrutable, incoherent, and tolerated as semi-mad. Her language is likened to her dogs' barking: "Her voice was sharp and shrill, and her gesticulations were vehement and grotesque" (137). Deb appears to the settlers as a primitive figure, a barbaric and uncultivated creature unfamiliar with the higher stages of human refinement.

The novel's male characters express their assumed patriarchy as they insist that the novel's women are incapable of negotiating the complexities of a modern commercial economy, an inability exacerbated as the women are refused equal access to means of knowledge and channels of self-education. While Edgar is willing to give the men he encounters the benefit of sympathy, he does not always do the same with women. He readily signs over Mary Waldegrave's fortune, abandons the female hostage in Deb's hut where she is rediscovered by the Delaware warriors, joins in the collective denial of Old Deb's intelligence, and refuses to stay longer at the drunken Selby's, where he might comfort the crying, abused wife. *Edgar Huntly's* geography is fundamentally a man's world.

## Friendship and Sexuality: Male-Male Relations

In recent decades, studies of the gothic tradition have explored the centrality of psychosexual dynamics—particularly anxieties about same-sex relations, whether erotic or merely social—in the novels of this period. As this scholarship has brought new insights into Brown's engagement with issues concerning gender and sexuality in

general, the importance of same-sex dynamics in his writings has also attracted scholarly attention. If *Edgar Huntly* dramatizes a man's world, it also expresses hopes and anxieties about new models for behavior between men.

During the eighteenth century, new spaces and opportunities for male-male relationships began to emerge throughout western Europe and its Atlantic colonies. The rise of commercial cities swollen with hinterland immigrants like Clithero created zones where old status relationships between men began to be put aside. The nascent bourgeoisie fashioned realms where they could meet, discuss, and make trades outside of the regal state's supervision. In semipublic places where one could enter for a small admission fee—typified by rapidly spreading new institutions like coffee houses—the middle class developed new, more egalitarian patterns of social interaction between men who looked to overcome older ethnic or regional identities in order to take part in the larger, corporate identity of the urban, middling classes. As part of their refusal of older clan-blood and lord-serf hierarchies, the bourgeoisie forged new conceptions of male friendship, mutuality, and benevolence in terms that encouraged and legitimated modern social relations. "Friendship," in particular, was a theme of endless reflection as the term shifted from a sense of obligation to one's kinship group or political allies to a new state of chosen emotional affinity wherein men would protect and nurture each other in the emerging world of competitive commerce.

This long reconfiguration of male manners opened up a new spectrum of possibilities regarding the possible interrelations of emotion and sexuality.<sup>37</sup> As new institutions, ideas, and behaviors emerged during the eighteenth century, there also arose both the material conditions for and conceptions of homoerotic community, along with modern fears and anxieties about these relations, particularly fears about how association with the passion of male-male sexuality might undermine the middle-class man's public status. Recent scholarship has begun to uncover the eighteenth-century world of homoerotic contact in streets, pubs, and harbor underworlds, and cultural historians have become more sensitive to the semicovert symbolic codes and narrative devices in which male-male desire was represented before the late twentieth century.<sup>38</sup>

With its emphasis on means of communication between men that use tone and gesture, rather than explicit speech, and a self-conflicted tension between private actions and public role, *Edgar Huntly* seems to evoke many late eighteenth-century homoerotic themes. In Erasmus Darwin's medical text *Zoönomia; or the Laws of Organic Life*, mentioned earlier as Brown's primary source on sleep-walking, Darwin lists the stages of the disease sentimental love (erotomania) as reverie, which causes sleep-walking, the desire for solitude in mountains and forests, and, lastly, "furious or

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<sup>37</sup> See Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution*.

<sup>38</sup> See Higgs, *Queer Sites*; Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House*; and Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*. For discussions of early American sexuality and male friendship, see Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America*; Crain, *American Sympathy*; Arnebeck, *Through a Fiery Trial*; and Foster, *Long before Stonewall*.

melancholy insanity; and suicide, or revenge.”<sup>39</sup> Because Clithero performs each of these symptoms in the order that Darwin mentions, the reader can see how Brown’s use of this sequence implies that Clithero’s perturbed state is the result of an unresolved conflict of love. But love for whom?<sup>40</sup> When Edgar confronts Clithero and accuses him of murdering Waldegrave, the latter responds with his autobiography in lieu of an explicit confession. Clithero’s testimony, in Chapters 4–8, begins as a story about conflicted love as he struggles to repress a socially transgressive desire for a woman above his class position, the niece of his landowning, aristocratic employer Euphemia Lorimer. As Clithero’s superior, Lorimer raises Clithero above his peasant origins and grants him permission to disregard the erotic prohibitions of older hierarchies. This lovefest between classes, however, is damaged by the eruption of violence and vengeance in the unexpected return of Lorimer’s exiled brother Arthur Wiatte, who seems to represent the latent power and brutality of the old order’s codes of rank and status.

Clithero has every reason to fear and despise Wiatte as Lorimer’s antagonist and a formidable obstacle to his marriage to Clarice, Wiatte’s daughter. Yet Wiatte also magnetizes Clithero in ways that suggest a covert attraction. From this perspective, the first section of Clithero’s tale about the erotic drive to overcome divisions between peasant and noble may also be said to introduce a symbolic language for overcoming the felt prohibitions about sexual relations between men of different status, such as Clithero and Wiatte. Clithero’s emotional difficulties in the first (male-female) instance become even more extreme and conflicted in the second (male-male). Clithero’s murder of Wiatte, from this perspective, could also be read as suggesting an emotional panic in which Clithero attacks Wiatte in order to reject and displace a subliminal attraction. As Clithero is trapped between mutually incompatible modes of masculinity, his sleep-walking might also, on this level, be taken as a metaphor for his being caught in between two states of identity, much as later gothic fiction uses figures of vampires, werewolves, and specters to allegorize homoerotic identity.

Clithero continues to be tormented by his actions in Ireland (his five-chapter narrative is the longest segment in the novel), and he uses the site of Waldegrave’s death at the Elm to agonize over the events and aftermath of Wiatte’s death. Unlike Clithero, however, Edgar is more eager to realize the possibilities of positive male-male relations in Norwalk. Almost all of Edgar’s interaction with Clithero occurs when the two are alone together in this isolated space. Thus when Edgar first sees Clithero at the Elm, it is not entirely clear whether he is surprised because he discovers someone else there, or because that someone else is a muscular, half-naked man.

*Edgar Huntly* often uses descriptions of spatial and geographical borders as a symbolic map for psychic ones regarding male-male sexual identities. Edgar and Clithero’s concern that biographical documents remain buried or locked within

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<sup>39</sup> See this excerpt from Darwin’s *Zoönomia* in this volume’s Related Texts.

<sup>40</sup> The following passage condenses arguments from Shapiro, “Man to Man.”

secret boxes may suggest what is today called “the closet,” the self-protecting, self-tormenting state of enclosing one’s felt desires. The world of *Edgar Huntly* is a world where men closely observe each other’s bodies and faces in public for signs of experience that are not otherwise spoken aloud. Although it will later become the site of frontier violence, Norwalk initially appears to Edgar as a space for intimate emotional and possibly physical relations between men, where the pain of erotic repression can be overcome. The doubled aspect of Norwalk, as a space where homoeroticism becomes potentially empowered and contested, illuminates meanings latent within the Delaware Indian sequence. From this perspective, the Indian fighting recodes earlier tensions in Ireland as the Euphemia-Wiatte-Clithero triangle reappears in the conflict between Old Deb, the male Delawares, and Edgar. If the male Delawares appear more like nightmarish phantoms than humans, this may partly be because Brown also uses them as a medium to represent struggles over male-male relations. That Edgar’s first and last sightings of Delaware warriors occur when he’s emerging from sleep and in bed suggests that the entire Indian episode may also function as a dreamscape in which the matter of homoeroticism is displaced and projected onto the question of settler-Indian conflict. Edgar’s weird rationalizations for killing Delawares at close range, when no other course of action seems possible, replicates Clithero’s alibi for “spontaneously” and “unconsciously” assassinating Wiatte (“as if by spontaneous energy,” 51). As another case in which Edgar replicates or doubles Clithero’s actions so as to help understand the latter’s experience, the entire Indian war segment seems to reiterate Clithero’s biography in an alternative locale that might—but does not—provide a happier ending.

If the theme of male-male relations initially seems foreign to the more obvious issues in *Edgar Huntly*, the significance of the issue for Brown becomes a bit plainer to see if we look briefly at how it recurs in some of his other writings. The homoerotic inflection in this novel seems to be connected, for example, with similar themes in Brown’s *Memoirs of Stephen Calvert*, a novel he published serially in 1799–1800, immediately after finishing *Huntly*. *Stephen Calvert* begins with a Clithero-like narrator who lives among Indians in the Great Lakes’ “middle ground” area and seeks protective isolation and refuge on the frontier. The narrator claims that he is seeking to escape the danger of love, and the nature of the attraction is implied when Calvert relates how he suddenly became uninterested in his fiancée and how his bachelor cousin prohibited the marriage until Calvert could learn more about his true self. Calvert then becomes entranced by a mysterious woman and proposes to her, only to be told that she is already fleeing from a man she married in Europe. In the first American literary account of male homosexuality, this unattainable female character explains to Calvert that she had assumed her husband’s lack of sexual contact with her was due to competition from a female mistress. She is then shocked to discover him having sex with another man. Because this story is embedded within the larger narrative of Calvert’s self-discovery, it suggests that Calvert himself may be implicated within its dynamics.

*Edgar Huntly*’s narrative, however, ends on a pessimistic note as Norwalk’s grounds of male mutuality turn into a gory battlefield. Clithero remains entombed within

self-loathing and fits of uncontrollable aggression, and Edgar ends the novel perhaps even more alienated from the other whites than he began it. The implication here is that any new models and opportunities for male companionship that may have opened up at the end of the eighteenth century are closing back down again. The narrative's structural disempowerment of women likewise suggests that failure in one sphere of gender equality will translate into failure in other spheres of sexual liberty. Both projects appear to be overwhelmed by the tale's end with the rise of Sarsefield as a representative of the new bourgeois order. Sarsefield insists that his relation to Clithero Edny (and Edgar) can only be understood as the domestic and unequal relation to a father-in-law, rather than the civic and cooperative relation of equals or comrades, and likewise that Lorimer and Clarice give up the rights to manage their own fortunes in favor of the middle-class version of patriarchy that Sarsefield now inhabits. The larger theme—how the project of benevolence as a means of overcoming early modern revenge codes is blocked by the rise of global imperialism—thus takes on additional significance when placed in context of the narrative's depiction of male-male and male-female relations. Brown draws out connections that illuminate the ways in which overseas adventures and counterattacks on non-Christians also work to justify denying new kinds of sexual and gender equality in the modern world. In *Edgar Huntly*, Brown charts an emerging bourgeois structure of feeling that meshes together global capitalism, the restriction of women and men into a cult of middle-class domesticity, and imperial wars.

In magazine writings after *Edgar Huntly*, Brown continued to stage the tension between celebrating male-male desire and its social disapproval. In Brown's "On the Odes of Anacreon,"<sup>41</sup> the issue emerges in a debate between a prurient narrator and Tom R—about the merits of the Greek poet. An enraptured Tom praises the poet's cadence, imagery, and celebration of love. The narrator, on the other hand, sees Anacreon's poetry as lascivious and worse, because "this poetry appears not to have even *woman* for its object." Responding to a poet who celebrates drunkenness and a passion for novel experience that confounds cross-gender sexuality, the narrator exclaims, "Fough! The very thought excites nausea. Between disgust and abhorrence, my stomach sickens," and instead recommends a therapeutic reading course of Edward Moore's moral fables (130). The narrator's violent speech and complacent hypocrisy in saying that he likes to "praise [him]self" for lacking "conceit or arrogance" is Brown's way of suggesting to the reader that this condemnation of Anacreon is small-minded and should not be taken seriously.

Brown's intention to satirize this narrator's moral smugness is clear in a slightly later (June 1805) piece considering the relative merits of the Persian poet Hafiz, whose lyrics "are generally dedicated to love and wine."<sup>42</sup> Brown comments that editions of Hafiz's poetry struggle to hide the male object choice of the poem's addressee and notes that "English translators," particularly, give "a very different sense from that

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<sup>41</sup> "On the Odes of Anacreon," *Literary Essays* (December 1803): 129–31.

<sup>42</sup> "Of Persian Poetry and Hafiz," *Literary Essays* (June 1805): 148–53.

conveyed by the text,” changing the genders within the poems so that “the ‘angel-faced cup-bearer’ and ‘infidel boy’ are converted into damsels and nymphs of paradise.” Brown ultimately finds Hafiz’s poetry lacking, but on account of its poor versification and rhyme, not because of the main themes concerning love and “the object, *either male or female*, of another appetite” (151).

By the early years of the nineteenth century, Brown’s associates began having an internal debate about the ideas they held in the 1790s. In “The Traveler,” a series of columns written in the *Literary Magazine and American Register* in 1803–1804, Brown’s associates return to debate the meaning of male friendship.<sup>43</sup> While “I.O.” claims that male friendship is not scripturally forbidden, “W.D.”—who is likely Brown’s close associate and later biographer William Dunlap—replies with support for these male relations but then argues for puerile friendship, in the sense that relations between men ought to be replaced in time with a man’s relationship to a woman.

The homoerotic themes in *Edgar Huntly* and its oblique defense of male-male sexuality, by absence of its condemnation, does not immediately mean that Brown himself felt that these erotic impulses defined his identity. They merely show his awareness of the pressures and public opposition surrounding homoeroticism. Yet readers of Brown’s biography may wonder at the possible link, especially considering his argument that novel readers need to train themselves to be careful and astute observers who can “supply the intermediate links” between a text’s “*obvious parts*” and a meaning that the surface narrative “wishes to *conceal*” (171).<sup>44</sup>

A standard reading of Brown sees him rejecting a law career over disgust for its willful obscurities and gothic language. Brown’s decision to abandon a law career may also have something to do with how this decision synchronizes with the end of a personal friendship with another male law clerk, W. W. Wilkins. In emotionally saturated letters to Wilkins, Brown charts out their intimacy and describes how Wilkins suddenly breaks off from Brown. Afterward, Brown wandered for several years without regular employment. His later friendship with medical student and literary editor Elihu Hubbard Smith brought Brown back into society and encouraged him to focus his literary ambitions. Yet during this time, Brown alternates between rarely communicating with Smith and sending depressed, suicidal letters full of self-loathing and hinting of secret crimes. Smith, finally, tells Brown to either explain himself openly or be quiet. To our ears, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Brown’s letters sound the ambivalent tones of someone flirting with leaving the closet.

Because critics and historians still debate how to read the period’s discourses of male friendship, and the degree to which male friendship acts as a code for some men to express a new sense of collectivity around homoerotic desire, readers ultimately will have to decide for themselves whether they see *Edgar Huntly* as a text of sexual longing or as an expression of progressive hopes for male companionship in a period that allowed greater emotional intensities between friends than is the case today.

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<sup>43</sup> See the excerpts from “The Traveler” in this volume’s Related Texts.

<sup>44</sup> “Remarks on Reading,” *Literary Essays* (March 1806): 165–71.

## Gothic Inversions: Lycanthropy and Imperialism

Finally, let us look a bit more closely at the ways Brown uses the iconography of gothic and folk traditions. Scholars have noted the ways the novel develops parallels between its panthers, dogs, and Indians.<sup>45</sup> Edgar regards panthers and Indians alike as savage others who threaten the Anglo-Quakers of Solebury, and the dogs that accompany Old Deb provide a third link in this associative chain of animalistic savagism. As he dramatizes these associations in *Edgar Huntly*, Brown seems to be drawing on recent transformations of this imagery in late eighteenth-century Ireland and America.<sup>46</sup>

When Edgar makes his first detour to the site of Waldegrave's murder, in Chapter 1, he discerns a presence that would "have been unnoticed" by any other "casual observer" (8). While the reader might initially assume that this obscure movement is a fantasy or symptom of Edgar's distress, Edgar insists that "this apparition was human" (8). He insists that the movement is not a figment of his imagination and thus rejects the possibility that he has encountered the kind of ghost, ghoul, or supernatural spirit that appears in generic gothic or "terrific" novels (see Brown's discussion of "terrific" novels in the Related Texts). In keeping with the antisupernatural mode of narrative he announced in the novel's preface, Brown refuses to allow Edgar's discovery of Clithero at the murder site to descend into a gothic mode of explanation. Yet while Brown dismisses supernatural gothic causes, he nevertheless plays on the reader's familiarity with gothic imagery and conventions. In the initial scenes concerning Clithero, for example, Brown suggestively floats the possibility that Clithero is not merely a sleep-walker, whose nocturnal movements are forgotten in the light of day, but possibly a lycanthrope, a were-beast who shape-shifts across the borderlines between human and animal as he crosses the borderlines between Solebury and Norwalk.

This possibility is literalized when Edgar searches for Clithero and instead encounters an American panther. When Edgar first follows Clithero into Norwalk in Chapter 2, Clithero watches Edgar enter a cave. After he abandons his pursuit at the cave mouth and waits for Clithero to reappear, a mysterious panther emerges instead (16). The story's visual exchange of man for animal is suggested again when Edgar returns to the cave, after hearing Clithero's tale, in Chapter 10. After traversing the cave's interior chambers by crawling on all fours, Edgar emerges into the "desolate and solitary grandeur" of Norwalk's gothic chasms and projectures, where he sees "as if by some magical transition . . . an human countenance," "an human creature" that is Clithero (72). At this point Clithero appears to be in a "trance" and has undergone

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<sup>45</sup> See for example Hinds, "Deb's Dogs," or the suggestion of "a strange change of identity between man and animal" in Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence* (384).

<sup>46</sup> For an earlier discussion of some ways that Brown uses gothic motifs to explore countersubversive anxieties about the Ulster Irish and Native Americans, see Gibbons, "Ireland, America, and Gothic Memory."

a shocking metamorphosis that leaves him unusually hirsute: “his arms, bosom and cheek were overgrown and half-concealed by hair” (72). When Edgar returns to the scene the following day, in Chapter 11, to leave food for a sleeping Clithero (“buried in profound slumber,” 75), he cuts down a tree to bridge the chasm that separates them. Returning to the spot for a third time in Chapter 12, Edgar again encounters and escapes the threatening panther that appears in Clithero’s place (84). This will not be the last encounter, for in Chapter 16’s central cave episode, Edgar awakes in a pit to face a second panther, which he kills and savagely devours to slake his ravenous hunger and thirst. Similar gothic human-animal associations then finally appear in Chapter 20 with the Delaware Old Deb/Queen Mab. From her first appearance Deb is surrounded by snarling dogs—“three dogs, of the Indian or wolf species” (137)—who might be thought of as transmuted Delaware warriors, later restored to human form so that they can enact Deb’s vengeance against the colonizing white settlers.

Readers may therefore wonder why Brown’s novel rejects the supernatural as a narrative device for modern readers yet simultaneously uses plot devices that seem to allude to tales of human transformation into werewolves and were-cats. The answer may lie in how Brown uses recent eighteenth-century adaptations of folkloric traditions and early accounts of colonial conquest and metamorphosis as he crafts an anti-imperialist message. The idea that the Irishman Clithero might be a shape-shifter alludes to a tradition beginning with one of the earliest Conquest of Ireland narratives, the medieval *Topographia Hibernica* by Gerald of Wales. This narrative links werewolf transformations to Irish resistance and traditions about the legendary figure of Queen Mab that Brown will reference in *Edgar Huntly*. In this historical-allegorical account of the English conquest of Ireland, Gerald relates the story of a priest traveling from Ulster toward Meath. Stopping at night in a wood on the borders of Meath, he is asked by a speaking wolf to provide last rites for his dying wife, who is also a human transmogrified into the shape of a wolf. This tale of wolflike natives seeking grace through Christian absolution helps allegorize Gerald’s larger ideological goal, which is to justify English conquest as a civilizing discipline imposed on a backwards and bestial Irish population. In a later version, Gerald has the male werewolf prophesy that the English will continue to dominate Ireland so long as the colonizers refuse to adopt the “depraved habits” of the colonized.<sup>47</sup>

Gerald’s story is part of a “werewolf renaissance of the twelfth century,” in which accounts of lycanthropy appeared widely, but this account of Irish werewolves significantly differs from most others in that it unusually focuses on a *female* werewolf. This representation of an older female werewolf has specific political meanings in stories about the domination of the Irish.<sup>48</sup> Catharine Karkov explains that Gerald’s account draws on the “pseudohistorical tales of early Ireland,” where “the sovereignty of Ireland was personified as an old woman often roaming the wilderness.” Consequently, the dying female werewolf “can also be understood as a personification of Ireland and

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<sup>47</sup> Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 15–16.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.



[the] passing from the old to a new [imperial English] order.” If “the old woman was traditionally associated with land and sovereignty in the Irish tales, the wolf was traditionally associated with the warrior and outlaw figures whose violent activities were highlighted in Gerald’s *Topographia* as being typical of the Irish.”<sup>49</sup> The chief exemplum of this old female personifying Ireland is the legendary Queen Mab of the Ulster cycle tales, who presides over the warrior figures, the *fianna*, who foreshadow the later Fenian resistance to English domination.

Gerald’s fantastical demonization of the Irish through ethnographic history eventually became a textual site of anti-imperialist resistance as Irish scholars, like John Lynch in *Cambrensis Eversus* (1662), vigorously rejected Gerald’s condescending accounts of an Irish people lacking civility and civilization before the English conquest. This refutation was reaffirmed and amplified in Brown’s era when Protestant Irish (Ulster) scholars sought to reclaim prequest, pagan Irish culture as a means of bridging the divide between Catholics and Protestants and mounting a united Irish resistance to British rule. The Protestant scholars who spearheaded this political Gaelic antiquarianism established the Royal Irish Academy in 1785 in order to develop Celtic studies as a substitute for the kind of English colonizer’s history that began with Gerald’s account. Rather than using history as a means of legitimizing imperialism, these Irish Protestant scholars represented prequest Ireland as a more civilized place than it would become after English conquest. In this manner they challenged the sociological historians of the Scottish Enlightenment, such as Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, who argued that the English incorporation of Scotland brought modern commerce and progressive civilization to “north Britons.”<sup>50</sup> Like Brown, Smith and Ferguson’s Irish contemporaries have a darker and more pessimistic view of the civilizing mission of imperialism. In 1802, three years after Brown wrote *Edgar Huntly*, Irish radical John Dunne addressed the Royal Irish Academy. Returning from North America, where he lived among Indians in the “middle ground” of the Great Lakes, Dunne told the Royal Irish Academy an allegorical story about an Indian woman who discovers that her husband is, in fact, a werewolf. If Dunne’s 1802 story of Indian werewolves is an allegory for Irish and mixed-race resistance, as historian Peter Linebaugh has argued, then Dunne is connecting Indian characters with a centuries-old theme of Irish lycanthropy in such a way as to parallel Native Americans with the Irish as mutual victims of English commercial empire.<sup>51</sup>

Brown seems similarly aware of contested narratives of lycanthropes as imperial subjects in *Edgar Huntly*, when, like Dunne, he uses savage-animal allusions to link or parallel Clithero, the Indian “Queen Mab,” and her male Delaware tribesmen as American fenians. If Brown alludes to gothic motifs of human transformation,

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<sup>49</sup> Karkov, “Tales of the Ancients.”

<sup>50</sup> Kidd, “Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity.”

<sup>51</sup> Linebaugh, “The Red-Crested Bird and Black Duck.”

however, he does so to throw charges of Irish-Indian bestiality back onto the imperialists. For the animalistic flesh-eaters in this novel are neither Clithero nor the Delawares, but Edgar as the representative of an invading Anglo presence. When Edgar awakens in the pit, he kills a panther that is suggestively encoded as a substitute for both Clithero and the Delaware “savages,” and feasts upon its “yet warm blood and reeking fibres” (112). When he becomes ravenously thirsty afterward, he leaves the pit to enter into a phase of mindless, semiautomatized Indian-killing. When this episode is read allegorically and in the context of the narrative history of conquest, it therefore suggests Brown’s anti-imperialist meaning that the real werewolves are not the native peoples but the so-called civilized Europeans who are bestially invading and devouring aboriginal peoples’ lands (whether Celtic or Delaware).

To this image of the triangular relations between the Quaker Edgar, the Irish Clithero, and the Delaware Deb, Brown adds one more generic twist. As noted earlier in this Introduction, Joanna Brooks has discussed the ways that Pennsylvania Quakers began revising the genre of Indian captivity narratives in the late eighteenth century so as to represent backcountry Protestant Irish as savages threatening metropolitan Quaker civilization and its innocent pacificism. In this light, we can see again that Brown’s description of the Quaker Edgar as the one actually acting like a lycanthrope confronts his own Quaker community with their complicity as they financially benefit from English imperial rule over the Pennsylvania frontier while absenting themselves from the dirty work and moral responsibility for killing and “removing” Indians.<sup>52</sup> As we have noted, numerous critics suggest that Brown’s novel in fact exemplifies the impulses that animate colonialism and imperialism. The manner in which Brown draws here on his contemporaries’ research and reevaluation of a long iconographic history resulting from colonizing invasions and settler plantations may suggest, on the contrary, that Brown crafts *Edgar Huntly* as one of the first anti-imperialist narratives, as a story that inverts and deflates the myth that Anglo invasion is a culturally beneficial and socially progressive act.

<sup>52</sup> Brooks, “Held Captive by the Irish.”