

GOTHIC ENLIGHTENMENT:
AMERICAN FICTION AND THE LIMITS OF SYMPATHY, 1789-1850

BY

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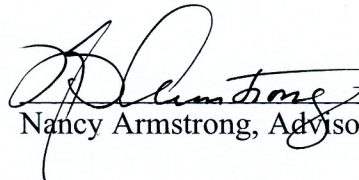
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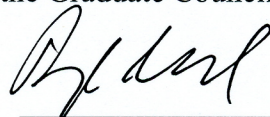
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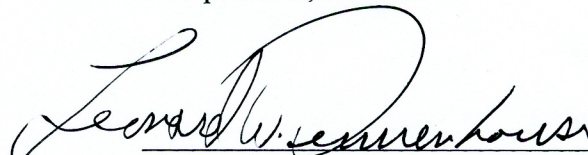

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Vita

Siân Silyn Roberts was born in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1976. She received her B.A. in English Literature from the University of Auckland in 1998, and her M.A. from the same institution in 1999. She has taught courses in American Literature as a Teaching Fellow at Brown University from 2005-2006. She is currently an Assistant Professor of English at Queens College, CUNY.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Gothic Locke	17
Chapter Two: The Gothic Goes Native	67
Chapter Three: A Mind for the Gothic	98
Chapter Four: The Limits of Liberal Society in <i>The Scarlet Letter</i>	133
Notes	165

Introduction

Say something about objectivity and subjectivity. Be sure and abuse a man called Locke.

Edgar Allan Poe, "How to Write a Blackwood Article" (1838)

It is a well-established fact of American political history that the British Enlightenment models of individual subject and contractual state proposed by John Locke were essential to the revolutionary writings of the 1760's and 1770's.ⁱ Any number of scholars have documented the influence of Scottish educators who, in staffing colleges up and down the East coast, imported and disseminated Scottish common and moral sense philosophy, the intellectual roots of which can be found in the works of Locke.ⁱⁱ Over the past two decades, a critical consensus coalesced around these facts, namely, that the importance of Scottish thought cannot be overstated, extending "from the realm of ideas (e.g. moral philosophy, political economy, literature, historiography, natural science and medicine) to religion and higher education."ⁱⁱⁱ The recent outpouring of scholarship on Locke's influence in America has, in one critic's assessment, indeed opened up particularly generative avenues of thought for "social and cultural historians," "historians of ideas," and "political theorists."^{iv}

Conspicuously absent from this list of intellectual benefactors is the literary critic, for whom it has hitherto been common practice either to minimize the significance of Scottish Enlightenment thought in American letters, or else to read novels as straightforward fictionalizations of historical events or political theories, theories aimed at asserting independence from English cultural tradition rather than appropriating those traditions.^v In an effort to recuperate this largely neglected epistemological tradition, my dissertation argues that antebellum fiction uses gothic conventions to revise

Enlightenment categories of the individual, sympathy, and the social contract for a cultural environment made of heterogeneous, mutable, and often migratory groups. I read the fiction of Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Montgomery Bird, and Nathaniel Hawthorne to show how their works challenge the normativity and naturalness of these Enlightenment models. In so doing, I account for the gothic's substantial appeal during the first half of the nineteenth-century on the grounds that it prepared a culturally diverse readership to think of itself as very much part of a transatlantic world of exchange.^{vi}

This line of argument rests on the assumption that Locke's models of mind and social contract so thoroughly saturated American intellectual life that its influence extended well beyond political and judicial institutions – where it has, to this point, been largely confined – and into literary circles. Thus I take seriously Terence Martin's claim that Scottish Lockean thought had achieved “an unofficial status of orthodoxy” in educated circles by the beginning of the nineteenth century.^{vii} At the same time, I also believe that, as T. H. Breen has argued, Locke's importance can be traced back even earlier. As he explains, writers in the decades prior to the Revolution so “repeatedly invoked the authority of John Locke” that “even when the name of the great philosopher did not appear, his ideas still powerfully informed popular public consciousness.”^{viii} “Whether or not they knew Locke's writings,” Gillian Brown agrees, “early Americans assimilated Lockean liberalism as they grew up.”^{ix} American authors, in short, worked in an intellectual climate where Locke's notion of the absolute distinction and rational relationship between subject and object, as well as a contractual government devoted to the protection of property, were so pervasive that one did not necessarily need to read

Locke to know him. The pervasiveness of this model of self and world is in large part due to the Scottish moral and common sense philosophy of John Witherspoon, Hugh Blair, Lord Kames, Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart, Frances Hutcheson, and Adam Smith, whose theories provided the standard for college curricula well into the middle of the nineteenth century.^x W. M. Verhoeven puts it in a nutshell in proclaiming that all of these philosophical thinkers “had a common ancestor in Locke.”^{xi}

Consider Pennsylvania theologian Samuel Miller’s 1803 intellectual history, the *Brief Retrospective of the Eighteenth Century*, which offers an account of Thomas Reid’s influential common sense thought. Reid, Miller tells us,

totally rejected the ideal system [of Berkeley and Hume], or theory of perception . . . and maintained that the mind perceives not merely the ideas or images of external objects, but the external objects themselves; that when these are presented to our senses, they produce certain impressions; that these impressions are followed by correspondent sensations; and these sensations by a perception of the existence and qualities of the objects about which the mind is employed.^{xii}

Here Reid draws directly on Lockean faculty psychology to explain how we receive sensory information: “material objects” produce “impressions” and “sensations” that produce ideas, or “perceptions,” about the external world.^{xiii} The telling difference between Lockean materialism and common sense thought resides in the process by which one comes to a better knowledge of the material world: “when sensible objects are presented to us, we become persuaded that they exist, and that they possess the qualities we witness, not by a train of reasoning, by formal reflection, or by association of ideas; but by a *direct and necessary connection* between the presence of such objects and our consequent perceptions.”^{xiv} Here, it is fair to say, common sense philosophy aims merely to remove the gray area between truth and fiction created when the faculties of reason,

reflection, or association mediate the relationship between sensation and knowledge of the external world.^{xv} As is the way with all major epistemological shifts, however, a little bit of tinkering can bring about radically new forms of world making.

II. British Forms and the American Difference

That a wide range of American intellectuals found common sense thought so appealing for its ability to cut through mediation suggests a late-eighteenth century preoccupation with the problems posed by misrepresentation, and literary critics have examined this problem at length.^{xvi} The historical events of the period certainly conspire to foster such apprehensions. In the dozen years before Brown published his major novels, the new nation had been vicariously shaken by two internal rebellions and it had seen Europe thrown into revolutionary upheaval. In view of America's growing awareness of her own relative powerlessness overseas and an influx of foreign immigrants whose origins and political intentions were all too uncertain, it makes sense to me that American thinkers should have gravitated toward a model of perception that resolved these uncertainties by means of a common, rational interpretation of the world of objects. At the same time, for a culturally diverse and altogether fluid community to espouse common sense entailed a paradox that has yet to be fully explored.

The very model of perception that assumes universal norms – a sense in common – assumes that one way of making sense of the world can hold true for the whole of human experience. Literary evidence shows, to the contrary, that American fiction used gothic conventions to turn this model into an impossible fantasy, unsuitable for a nation composed of people with altogether different, culturally-specific notions of common sense. Indeed, as American authors were quick to recognize, the Enlightenment's

insistence on universal norms, abstract models, and the unproblematic unfolding of human sovereignty along developmental lines only applies to a body of people who fit the Enlightenment definition of individuals, individuals who are, by implication, self-enclosed, autonomous, rational, and self-governing men of property. Such an individual is the basic unit of a social body in which it is indeed possible to trust representation because there is no significant difference among people in the first place. As Locke originally formulated this category with a British land-owning elite in mind, it needed to undergo significant reconfiguration in a colonial setting. Leonard Tennenhouse describes this process as “the Americanization of British letters.”^{xvii}

To make my own case that the American gothic had a major role to play in this process, I draw on the process of cultural transmission Tennenhouse has called “the cultural logic of diaspora” (3). As he explains it, the tradition of American letters developed not from an originary national culture but through the ongoing negotiation with and appropriation of British forms. Agreeing with Breen’s thesis in “Ideology and Nationalism,” Tennenhouse contends that American authors were more determined than ever to think of themselves as culturally English after the Revolution produced a political break.^{xviii} Thus “[w]hat makes our literature distinctly and indelibly America,” he writes, “is our literature’s insistence on reproducing those aspects of Englishness that do not require one to be in England so much as among English people” (9).^{xix} Characterized by “detours, disruptions, circularity, and exchanges” (6), this model of cultural transmission reformulates British ideas and forms to suit a peculiarly colonial setting, so that “what we mean by American is most likely a reproduction of cultural practices that originated somewhere else” (9).

Taking the transformation of Francis Hutcheson's moral philosophy as a case in point, Tennenhouse shows how immigrant Scottish educator John Witherspoon (President of the College of New Jersey, later Princeton) adapted Hutcheson's philosophy of mind to the colonial situation by reformulating the moral sense as "conscience." As conscience "issues a call to duty or obligation that requires one to act rather than simply react to stimuli," it can be impressed into the task of making good citizens (33-34). I see precisely this logic at work in novels that "Americanize" the models of John Locke and Adam Smith – models designed for a relatively stable society of landowning gentlemen – in response to the challenge of cultural diversity. If our novels are, as Leslie Fiedler says, pervasively gothic, it is because, I argue, the fiction of such authors as Brockden Brown, Poe, and Hawthorne, adjust the assumptions underwriting British common sense to take a shifting and heterogeneous population into account. This line of argument assumes an intimacy between Enlightenment epistemologies of mind and the form of the novel.

To this end, in reading select American novels I take as my starting point Nancy Armstrong's contention that the British novel formulated a model of the individual that proved "uniquely capable of reproducing itself not only in authors but also in readers, in other novels, and across British culture in law, medicine, moral and political philosophy, biography, history, and other forms of writing that took the individual as their most basic unit."^{xx} This is a model of humanity, in other words, that can thrive in different cultural milieux because it can present itself as normative even as it changes and adapts itself to each new setting. According to Armstrong, this elastic and mobile model has its origins in Locke's model of the individual, which develops over time and with experience in the world into a rational, self-governing subject. British authors transformed this model into

a “human subject with the restlessness to grow – over time and in successive stages – both more complete as an individual and more worthy in social terms” (4). In order to make such an individual both exemplary and normative, Armstrong argues, “it was also necessary to invalidate competing notions of the subject – often proposed by other novels – as idiosyncratic, less than fully human, fantastic, or dangerous” (3). British novels, in other words, incorporated the anti-individualistic elements of the gothic “only to naturalize those elements as components of an all-encompassing narrative of growth and development” (22). The gothic assumes control of the narrative to assault the category of rational individualism and contest “reality” in order to reaffirm that world as normative and dominant.

It makes sense that a model of British identity so adept at reproducing itself would make its way across the Atlantic, not only in works of political philosophy but also in the British novels for which the American readership had developed a voracious appetite.^{xxi} Indeed, as Tennenhouse has argued, “a model of English identity that was completely transportable” (36) had significant appeal for a nation determined to maintain its cultural ties to the homeland. The cultural logic of diaspora dictates, however, that this appropriation of British forms would undergo significant revision in a colonial setting.

Pushing these arguments to their logical conclusions, I see American gothic fiction appropriating the British model of the individual in order to explore the potential in precisely those alternative forms of subjectivity the British tradition would render monstrous or phobic. For example, Locke insists on housing a single mind within a single body; for him one ceases to be an individual the moment two minds come to occupy one body, or vice versa. While Locke dismisses any instance of a two-in-one

case as absurd, it nevertheless makes its way directly from his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) into the gothic trope of sleepwalking, where two minds, waking and sleeping, control the same body. A mind thus constituted has to lack the self-control, not to mention bodily control, that the self-enclosed individual of the British tradition possesses in spades. In *Edgar Huntly* (1799), Brockden Brown uses this trope to imagine a more porous form of human consciousness open to influences from its environment. In the wilderness, Huntly becomes part of a larger social body that depends on its surroundings for its constitution, information, even vitality. Where the British novel defends the individual against any kind of human aggregate that obliterates individuality, in Brown's novel that aggregate becomes a network of exchanges that keeps people, things, and information in perpetual circulation. Here it is not the beginning or end point that determines identity but what one brings to and takes away from the exchange: the demonstrable potential for *becoming* rather than the achievement of *being*. Nor from this material can one imagine a territorially bounded community calculated as the sum of its individual members. What we have instead is a single, mobile organism that operates by a dynamic akin to an economy.

As Philip Gould has argued at length and in persuasive historical detail, the eighteenth century was receptive to a model of collectivity that stood in opposition to the geographically circumscribed model of the nation.^{xxii} Gould shows how the anti-slavery movement redefined the slave trade as a barbaric form of exchange in order to legitimate other forms of trade and consumption. In so doing, he argues that the discourse on commerce turned the nation into a node on an international network of exchange through which both commodities and people could move freely. In thinking outside the

geographical limits that have long held sway over American literary criticism, Gould's argument forges an important distinction between those forms of trade inimical to the political health of the nation – such as slavery – and those that promote a unique American identity predicated on mobility and exchange.^{xxiii}

With Gould's economic model in mind, I approach American gothic novels as a series of thought experiments that detach national identity from any notion of geographic origin, consanguinity, or exemplary political status. In so doing, these novels confront nothing less than the political problem facing a post-Revolutionary America: namely, how to imagine a cohesive national character, or "people," suited to a culturally diverse, largely migrant population whose allegiances are not necessarily tied to any single place or kinship group, and which is committed to a circum-Atlantic system of trade that sends goods, information, and people in and out of the country. It fell to America's fiction writers, I argue, to imagine ways of making this disparate, globally dispersed social body cohere as a political entity. In this sense, the novels I discuss are as much a product of the late eighteenth century as the *Alien and Sedition Acts* (1798), which sought to locate and discipline those indeterminate foreign elements that require a model ensuring cosmopolitan sociability, or the *Jay Treaty* (1794), the controversy over which showed that competing models of nation were inextricably tethered to the contested issue of international trade.

To imagine a national subject whose Americanness resides in its very ability to change, adapt, and travel, paradoxically the gothic novel turned the dominant Enlightenment notions of the individual, sympathy, and the social contract into phobic constructs. Locke's civil society takes property-ownership as the original condition of

self-government, and the categories of self and contract exist to protect that property – whether one’s property-in-oneself or material property – against encroachment. These are the very structures, in other words, that are supposed to guarantee freedom, property rights, and independence – at least as defined by the contractual state, whose constituents meet the exemplary yet entirely arbitrary political status of the individual subject. To challenge this altogether restrictive model of social relations, the American gothic redefines autonomy, self-enclosure, and fixed social position – whether in a body, household, or civil state – as prohibitive and static formulations that trap people and things in one place. In this way, the gothic creates the possibility that political freedom just might depend on the ability to change and move independent of origin or birth, depend, that is, on the potential of becoming as opposed rather than certain conditions of being. An example taken from Brockden Brown’s *Arthur Mervyn* (1799-1800) reveals considerable advantages in such an unlikely model of social relations.

This is Brown’s description of Philadelphia in the grip of the yellow fever:

Terror had exterminated all the sentiments of nature. Wives were deserted by husbands, and children by parents . . . Men were seized by this disease in the streets; passengers fled from them; entrance into their own dwellings was denied to them; they perished in the public ways.^{xxiv}

The novel’s horrific account of the household’s disintegration effectively questions the Enlightenment assumption that family feeling is an unbreakable bond and the basis for the kind of fellow feeling – among independent householders – that would create a community. That affective model of domestic social relations, Brown suggests, is particularly ill-suited to the kind of heterogeneous community one encounters in a city.

Brown’s Philadelphia is an urban space in which all manner of people are forced into close proximity with others – like the conman Welbeck – whose origins and

intentions are, at best, unknowable or, at worst, hostile. The case can be made that, in such an environment, any assumption of fellow feeling – that people have common ideas and emotions capable of uniting them in a single interest – can be downright dangerous. To think his way through this problem, Brown uses the device of the plague to displace the self-enclosed household as the basic unit and model of society with a totally inimical model where feeling flows unimpeded between people and even objects and people.^{xxv} As the agent and representative of a society thus constituted, Mervyn refuses to observe the boundaries separating subject from object and allows feeling to pass between himself and those with whom he comes into contract. In refusing to observe any separation between himself and others, Mervyn assumes that everyone is just like him. Any domain where the logic of individualism prevails (the idyllic Hadwin household, for example) depends on unbreachable individual boundaries for its health and cohesion. Thus Mervyn's invasions prove entirely destructive in such spaces.

In the city, by contrast, this form of human interaction comes to us as Mervyn's strikingly advantageous ability to ingratiate himself with practically anyone. His indiscriminate affability gets him out of danger, allows him access to Philadelphia's elite, and even secures him a wealthy wife. Indeed, what might be seen as a lack of discrimination in British terms might well earn the descriptor "democratic" in those of the new United States. The different and conflicting accounts we receive of Mervyn's actions and motives tells us that he is all things to all people. He has the potential, in short, to be anyone. This is Brown's alternative to the fixed and static social position of the property-owning individual of the British tradition. Having reduced the sentimental

household to rubble, in short, Brown builds a model of subjectivity out of the gothic energies that are absolutely antithetical to the British novel's models of community.

In assuming that one mind can be any number of people, Brown breathes life into the very kind of anti-individualism that the British gothic tradition, as Nancy Armstrong has shown, goes out of its way to invalidate. In the British novel, Armstrong argues, the gothic imagines alternatives to the self-enclosed, self-governing subject only to rule those alternatives out as phobic, thereby reinscribing the individual subject as normative and, by extension, the household and civil state as its basic units of aggregation. In America, by contrast, gothic novels take those negated forms of consciousness and test them as viable, alternative (non-contractual) forms of collectivity. Such negations include, for example, two minds in one body, which Brown stages as sleepwalking in *Edgar Huntly*. We see one mind housed in two or more bodies not only in Mervyn, but also in the preternaturally connected twins of Poe's *House of Usher* (1839), or the process of metempsychosis in *Sheppard Lee* (1836). Objects that act like subjects come to us as the return of the dead in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820), while a world in which the subject cannot control the information entering his mind takes the form of ventriloquism in *Wieland* (1798). The ability to turn such gothic scenarios into workable models of unity is the extraordinary rhetorical feat that sets the American gothic decisively apart from its British counterpart.

Despite its gothic characteristics, Brown's transatlantic model of cultural transmission seemed to speak in positive terms to a late eighteenth-century readership that still thought of itself as culturally English because it sustained the diasporic fantasy of a return to a cultural home. Naturally, the ideological stakes of the gothic change with

the advent and progression of the nineteenth century. By the 1820's and 1830's, the gothic has shifted to the problem of regional difference in a nation comprising discrete local groups whose cultural norms are entirely relative and impenetrable to outsiders. In the figure of Dupin, Poe considers whether this problem can be solved by reinventing the category of common sense. Rather than assume we share a sense in common, Dupin sees the world in terms of competing cultural logic, a peculiar clarity of vision he arguably shares with Roderick Usher. What I call Poe's "uncommon sense" offers a way of acquiring information under conditions of local difference, but his protagonists pay a hefty price for this privilege. Both Usher and Roderick may be able to see competing interpretative norms at work, yet both are fixed – or trapped – in a single cultural milieu, putting them at odds with the cultural mobility Brown established as the precondition of early American identity.

Poe's defense of the autonomous subject thus stands in opposition to the kind of subjectivity Brown first imagined. In his contemporaneous novel of metempsychosis, *Sheppard Lee*, Robert Montgomery Bird draws on a physiological model of identity, where the body dictates one's quality of mind, making the vaunted American character a byproduct of its physical and repeatable actions. This physiological determinism has much in common with Brown's porous subject, as both models imagine the self in biological continuity with its environment. I place Bird and Poe side by side because they offer alternative symbolic solutions to the same concern, namely, that local difference looms large in the early decades of the nineteenth century as a site of potential political and cultural conflict. To pursue this line of thought to its next logical step, I

investigate its afterlife in the major works of the American Renaissance, taking Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) as my test case.

In the years immediately preceding the Civil War, Hawthorne reconceptualizes the fluid, heterogeneous form of subjectivity as a model of mass life I have called, after Foucault, a "population."^{xxvi} In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne takes the contractually-based society to task for its inability to account for the unprotected life of large, migratory groups of people that, in the 1850's, arguably seemed on the verge of overwhelming the civil state. As a model of humanity measured in quantitative rather than qualitative terms, the population submerges the restrictive institutions of civil state and paternal household (or what, in his *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke called a "little common-wealth") to become the novel's dominant political body.

By reading these novels as a series of epistemological experiments in subjectivity and collectivity, my purpose is to add to our understanding of literary production in the antebellum era in a way that revises the conventional divisions of cultural labor in the early American novel. My argument disallows our reading the gothic as the eruption of anti-Enlightenment counter-narratives (madness versus reason, self versus monstrous Other, etc), on the grounds that such a reading reinscribes Enlightenment categories of thought as dominant and normative. Since American gothic authors clearly did not regard those categories in such terms, neither should we. Nor should we continue to assume that other predominant literary forms of the antebellum period, chiefly sentimental fiction and frontier romance, had a monopoly on nation-making. What distinguishes the gothic is its ability to imagine political formations in terms other than the conventional paradigms of household, territory, or place of national origin.

III. Revising the American Gothic

It is a long-held assumption of American literary criticism that Charles Brockden Brown set the stakes for the gothic tradition in America, and I do not dispute this claim. Leslie Fiedler's contention still stands: "Charles Brockden Brown, single-handed and almost unsustained, solved to key problems of adaptation [i.e. adapting the British gothic form to an American setting], and though by no means a popular success, determined, through his influence on Poe and Hawthorne, the future of the gothic in America."^{xxvii} I obviously do dispute the grounds on which Fiedler came to this conclusion and which subsequent criticism has largely reproduced without interrogating its terms. Fiedler and his successors claim that Brown consciously departed from British tradition to invent a wholly indigenous form of the gothic especially suited to encode America's national guilt or collective geist.^{xxviii} There can be no doubt that the gothic offers itself up as a psychological form – it is, to use David Punter's phrase, a "literature of terror"^{xxix} – but it does not automatically follow that we must read the gothic in psychoanalytic terms.

I depart from conventional criticism in contesting the nature and legacy of Brown's literary innovations. He was the first writer of gothic fiction to imagine a heterogeneous model of national identity predicated on movement and exchange, and I see his influence running in a straight line through his literary successors, all of whom are equally invested in imagining alternative models of subjectivity peculiarly suited to America's shifting political and social needs. I am suggesting that the psychological elements of gothic fiction work in the service of its political ends; namely to produce modern forms of collective identity.

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, gothic authors shaped a large body of literary works whose protagonists offered an early national readership different models of what American character might be. Whenever we encounter characters that seem internally incoherent and begging to be measured by a constellation of contradictory norms, we are, I believe, in the presence of information detailing another political model of the American self. Literary criticism has found it difficult to place fiction like Bird's, Brockden Brown's, even Poe's in the American canon because their apparent instabilities at the level of character make them politically problematic and formally anomalous. Such apparently extraneous elements of character are, to the contrary, the formal traces of a literary debate over national psychology that gives American fiction its unique qualities.

Chapter One

The Gothic Locke

It is a critical commonplace to note – in passing – Charles Brockden Brown’s engagement with John Locke’s philosophies of faculty psychology and empiricism.ⁱ But such glancing acknowledgments marginalize the importance of these epistemological frameworks by dismissing the evident presence of Lockean language in Brown’s novels in favor of the historical and political contexts beyond.ⁱⁱ This chapter focuses on Brown’s language – which draws on the vocabulary of Locke’s theories of human subjectivity – and the types of consciousness his novelistic treatment of these epistemologies produce. I see Brown setting out to expose certain quandaries inherent in the Enlightenment model of rational consciousness as it is laid out in Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), *The Second Treatise of Government* (1690), and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), and Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). My reading of *Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793* (1799-1800) shows how Brown excavates a number of contradictions and difficulties in Locke’s model in order to depict the restrictive character of his citizen subject and the mediated nature of that subject’s relation to objects.ⁱⁱⁱ To stage this assault on Enlightenment epistemology, Brown poses a series of questions that proceed from Locke’s theories: can empirical experience alone ever be sufficient for rational self-government? What happens if the prerational subject proves incapable of accruing intellectual property? What if the guardian to whom the rational development of the prerational subject is entrusted proves to be a bad mimetic example? What effect will cognitive abnormality have on the subject’s sympathetic and contractual relations? In offering responses to

these questions in the form of Mervyn's preparation for and reactions to his Philadelphia encounters, Brown turns the tropes of Lockean subjectivity inside-out. If we take Locke's self-governing, autonomous subject as the measure of Enlightenment humanity, then Mervyn emerges as less than human for his porousness, lack of agency, and inability to turn his experience in the world into the stuff of rational consciousness.^{iv}

I want to argue that the gothic qualities of the novel are an aesthetic byproduct of these experiments with Lockean thought. Locke's model of reason is predicated on a universe that separates subjects and objects, where the individual that inhabits that universe preserves its autonomy by observing and maintaining the distinction between itself and the surrounding objects. Gothic tropes – imprisonment, seduction, the animation of objects, possession, secret histories – take over the narrative when the separation between subject and object worlds breaks down. The gothic erodes the ground beneath representation, so that the history lending intelligibility to objects regresses into an infinite past. This gothic demolishes the realist notion that the object in question has a point of origin in a world outside language from which both narrative subject and reader can draw a stable meaning. Where realism insists that it represents a world out there, the gothic insists that the world out there is a product of language that violates the categories of rational thought. Realism, argues the gothic, depends on the illusion that something exists outside language, and that something, I would add, is inherently unknowable in the gothic not just by virtue of being hidden, but also by virtue of its questionable ontological status. The gothic effect rests on the conception of the secret history, which posits a vanished and often unknowable point of origin that continues to reverberate causally in the present and visible past. A secret history, in other words, does not lead back to a

newly discovered point of origin, but instead casts doubt on forms of identity that depend upon materializing such an origin.^v

The gothic effect relies on an epistemological space within which meaning is withheld, signaling that such a secret history is in operation. Within such a space, traditionally designated as a castle, objects acquire histories according to the stories that circulate around them. I shall argue that Welbeck's linguistic mastery, exercised within the gothic space of his Philadelphia mansion, allows him to change the status of both subjects and objects. When Arthur Mervyn comes to reside in this gothic space, he is transformed from a subject to an object as Welbeck dresses him in a dead man's clothes and infuses him with multiple meanings none of which Mervyn can fathom. In this sense, the secret history of an object exists outside its material being, and this separation of signified and signifier produces illegibility. We might call this illegibility a "gothic excess." Under these conditions, the object generates stories, or fictions, to compensate for the history that it has lost by its repositioning within the castle.^{vi}

Mervyn is particularly eligible as the hero of a gothic novel for his representational excesses, or for the way a "real" Mervyn perpetually retreats behind a multitude of linguistically-constructed Mervyns. Critics follow realism's mandate when they rush to say who or what Mervyn is and make the notorious ambiguities of the novel somehow correspond to political or historical referents.^{vii} They assume, in other words, there is a real Mervyn under the dead man's clothes that he dons in Welbeck's "castle." I read *Arthur Mervyn* for how it challenges the assumptions of realism, and this reading requires that we first look at Enlightenment letters for the conceptual models of subject,

emotion, and aggregation that Brown critiques.^{viii} To see how Brown turns this critique into a gothic novel, I turn to Locke's theories on intellectual property.

I. Property and Self-Possession

Having evacuated the mind of all intrinsic information, Locke begins the second Book of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* with perhaps his most famous analogy:

Let us suppose the Mind to be, as we say, white Paper, void of all Characters, without any *Ideas*; How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless Fancy of Man has painted on it, with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of Reason and Knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, From *Experience*: In that, all our Knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives it self."^{ix}

According to this model, experience provides the raw materials of sensation, or information derived from the object world. The faculty of reflection turns the subject's gaze inward to classify and sort these sensations as ideas about the world. The subject's ability to perform this cognitive classification comes from the faculty of judgment, which matures through the continued operations of reflection. The subject may eventually arrange and combine ideas to form new ideas, which build up into an archive of thoughts against which it can measure subsequent information. The archive thereby provides an ever-evolving, working knowledge of the world. This internal world of ideas constitutes the subject's intellectual property, or "mind," which Locke accounts for by drawing a comparison between cognitive and physical labor. Of personal property he has this to say:

every man has a property in his own person: this nobody has any right to but himself. The labor of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left in it, he hath mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes his property.^x

By describing property in individualistic terms, Locke makes the subject's willingness to mix his intellectual labor with the information gleaned from sensations correspond to his willingness to mix his physical labor with the land. Both create property that belongs to him alone. By mapping intellectual sovereignty onto political sovereignty, Locke turns reason into the basis for both individual and political rights. The logic of *terra nullius*, or empty territory awaiting the inscription of sovereignty, transforms self-ownership (or property-in-oneself) into self-government, where the subject's development of the faculty of judgment makes him sovereign over his own cognitive domain. Conversely, the blank subject lacks self-possession because there is nothing there yet to possess – self-ownership is only possible once the blank slate has been inscribed with characters in the same way that labor entitles the individual to the proceeds of his own hands. As the magical ingredient that transforms the individual into a rational subject, property becomes the original condition of virtue and government.

The readiness with which Locke's model was taken up and developed by subsequent thinkers, from Scottish philosopher Francis Hutcheson to American founding father James Wilson, is a testament to its intellectual mobility and political power.^{xi} But Locke's model, it is worth noting, rests on a tautology, and this tautology blossoms into contradictions that Locke attempts to ward off by casting them as merely preposterous examples.^{xii} Reflection, to begin, is a function of sensation – it exists as a potentiality until the subject's experience in the world activates it. Sensations thus precede the reflection that enables judgment, because reflection cannot start its operations until experience feeds it sensations. But the subject is only capable of organizing its sensations into ideas if it is already capable of reflection. Thus the capacity for reflection

must be there within the mind ready and waiting to go to work on worldly experience. Its dependence on this chicken-and-egg paradox makes Locke's notion of a self-enclosed consciousness something of a contradiction. This contradiction, as I intend to show, has the latent power to destabilize property as the foundational category of the subject's mind. Rather than collapse its carefully constructed house of cards, Locke's model succeeds in obscuring its own contradictions, in part, I would argue, by rendering the possibility of alternatives improbable and in part because the mainstream of Enlightenment philosophy and fiction naturalized the Lockean system as a way of measuring the world.

Brown breathes life into the very flaws in Locke's thinking which Locke sought to render impossible. In *Arthur Mervyn*, he dissects the paradox of rational consciousness by making reflection independent of worldly experience (and thus capable of fabricating that experience), and removing property as the pre-condition of self-government. If we examine our initial encounter with Mervyn against the backdrop of Locke's theories on experience and property, a compelling picture emerges. Brown repeatedly draws attention to Mervyn's naivety, worldly "inexperience," and his inability to organize the bewildering sensations with which he is bombarded.^{xiii} With not much experience and only a capacity for belated reflection, Mervyn initially comes to us as the very personification of Locke's blank slate. As such, he possesses all the familiar qualities of a novelistic protagonist – the kind of protagonist, indeed, with whom Ian Watt enjoins us to identify in what he termed the rise of the British novel.^{xiv} But in contrast to those novels Watt privileges, Brown ends his with precisely the same vacuous protagonist – one of professed inexperience and limited understanding – with which he began. In demonstrating Mervyn's failure to develop into a self-regulating subject, the

novel suggests that not all the sensations in the world will make such a subject if reflection won't organize those sensations into ideas that mirror the outside world in the mind. Instead, Brown argues that all empirical information – about subjects and objects – comes to us as a product of language, and thus mediated and already interpreted.

To map out these alternative conditions of consciousness, Brown makes Mervyn the unsuspecting butt of a sinister practical joke on the very evening he first enters Philadelphia. Penniless and friendless, Mervyn is enticed by Wallace – a young man whose profligacy Mervyn fails to recognize – to the house of Thetford, a wealthy Philadelphia merchant. Here Mervyn finds himself locked in a closet for the night before a hairsbreadth escape forces him to abandon his shoes. Having trapped his protagonist in a darkened closet before stripping him of property, Brown deprives Mervyn of the very foundations on which the development of rational consciousness depends. In doing so, he also deprives these categories of their status as natural and normative. To understand this rhetorical feat, we must consider another of Locke's famous figures of "mind": "the *Understanding* is not much unlike a Closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible Resemblances, or *Ideas* of things without" (II.i.17). According to this analogy, the understanding forms ideas by receiving bits of visible information that it organizes and combines. In contrast to the blank page, Locke uses the closet to stress the work of the senses as the portals of the understanding. Also in contrast to Locke's closet, however, the confined space within which Mervyn is trapped has no "little openings" through which to gain ideas "of things without." Mervyn's sense of sight is impaired to the point that he must rely wholly on auditory clues. Thus in eavesdropping on a conversation between Thetford and his wife, he only half-grasps their

meaning because he has no knowledge of the people or things they are discussing. On the basis of this linguistically mediated information, Mervyn creates a mystery rather than ideas that simulate reality itself. Indeed, he later refers to this closet as “an extensive cabinet of secrets” (73).

Rather than the visible bits of information required by Locke’s model, Mervyn gets snippets of other people’s stories. He reports,

This incident . . . filled me with speculations on the nature of the scene . . . Many facts of the most *secret* and momentous nature were alluded to. Some allusions were unintelligible. To others I was able to affix a plausible meaning, and some were palpable enough (37, my emphasis).

As he labors to make sense of what he hears, we must see Mervyn’s notion of the world is the product of interpretation or “speculation,” as opposed to understanding. Any plausible referent recedes behind the stories that are generated in that referent’s place. Reviewing his bizarre evening, Mervyn imagines himself relating this adventure in the closet to the folks back home, who will no doubt rank him “with the story tellers of Shirauz and Bagdad” (32). Cast as a storyteller himself, his account removes the reader even further from tangible events. This origin retreats yet further when we remember that Mervyn’s biography is almost entirely Dr Stevens’ own transcribed account (a transcription that has been commissioned by Mrs. Wentworth). The whole novel, in other words, is an act of retelling that masks rather than reveals a prior reality in things and people. By placing Mervyn within a darkened closet, then, Brown departs from Locke by discarding empiricism as the basis of consciousness. He departs a second time when he strips Mervyn of his shoes in the dead of night, a misfortune that leaves Mervyn utterly destitute. This detail, trivial at the level of plot, completes the symbolic divestiture of Mervyn’s material property, a process that began when Mervyn’s father

disinherited him and ejected him from the family farm. In taking away Mervyn's shoes, Brown displaces the notion of his protagonist's origins. By divesting Mervyn of the bases of both material and intellectual property, Brown suggests that origins themselves are an illusion.^{xv}

Set at the beginning of the novel, the closet scene defines experience as strata of stories, story-telling, and reinterpretation. Indeed, this model of experience constitutes the formal structure of the *Second Part* of the novel, which renders Mervyn conspicuously unreliable as a narrator.^{xvi} In this volume, which Brown published one year after the *First Part*, Mervyn comes to us mediated by rumor and reputation, as conflicting reports about his character and motives emerge from contrastingly reliable eyewitnesses. Where the first volume had questioned our ability to know the world of objects, this second volume turns on the subject and exposes it as something we encounter strictly in and as interpretation. The novel deliberately withholds the "real" Mervyn from the reader – is he a naïve innocent or an opportunistic conman? – and sends us chasing a perpetually retreating truth. Thus our experience of the novel is, like Mervyn's, mediated by layers of interpretation. We cannot tell who Mervyn is, nor whether he is telling the truth. When his account of himself conflicts with alternative accounts, he switches back and forth – from a subject, constructed by himself, to the status of an object in other people's narratives.

His vacillation between subject and object positions is characteristic of a destabilized object world whose meaning is purely linguistic. It is a world, to put it another way, where referentiality – like Mervyn's shoes – has been pulled from beneath his feet. Locke imagined the mind as a version of the empirical world in miniature,

separate from the world by virtue of its being made of ideas rather than of things.

Mervyn remodels the object world by inventing stories in the absence of true (causal) histories that explain the relations among objects. In doing so, he mixes his mind with the world, collapsing subject and object precisely where they should be kept apart.

Mervyn's closet, in contrast to Locke's, shows that the world-out-there is only ever a series of narratives which the subject must sift, reflect, and test in order to make sense of the world. Mervyn is capable of reflecting on the information he receives, but he seems totally incapable of testing that information against material phenomena. Thus he cannot refine or correct his ideas and so establish a better working knowledge of the world.

II. The Bad Tutor

Why have a protagonist who cannot tell the difference between interpretation and truth?

Mervyn doggedly insists that by putting forward "an honest front and a straight story" (333), he can represent himself faithfully to the world, but at every convoluted turn, this novel testifies that there is no such thing as a straight story. Brown certainly suggests that the Enlightenment distinction between subject and object can't hold up in the face of linguistic mediation, but he appears particularly invested in the problem of interpretation. How, he seems to ask, might the subject come to understand the relation between words and the objective reality they claim to represent? How might he recognize as subjective a world that presents itself as objective? The answers to these questions lie in the issue of mimesis, or how the subject learns the skills needed to sort good interpretations from bad. Locke himself opened up this question only – or so history would prove – to shut it preemptively.

In order to individuate the human mind and defend that autonomy from external forms of causality (which might constitute a secret history), Locke had to provide strictly internal causes for that individual's actions. To accomplish this, he has to account for the emotions in the same way that he accounts for ideas. Sensations of pleasure and pain enter the mind where they are transformed through the process of reflection into "passions," which in turn move the subject to action. According to Locke, this locates the "forebearance or performance" of any individual action wholly within the subject's mind: "Every one, I think, finds in himself, a *Power* to begin or forbear, continue or put an end to several Actions in himself" (II.xxi.7, my emphasis). Locke's insistence on the self-enclosure of the individual mind here implies that rational self-government is internally generated by the mind alone, working only with the supposedly unmediated materials it receives as sensations from the object world. Locke is far less willing, on the other hand, to address the possibility that empirical information may enter the mind already infused with affect or meaning. He is content to say that the mind will avoid the taint of mediated information if in full possession of its rational faculties. Brown questions this assumption. What, he would seem to ask, would happen if mediated information is all there is? How could we then ensure that the rational faculties would know how to deal with this?

It is only fair to note that Locke qualifies his claim in the chapter entitled "Of Paternal Power" in *The Second Treatise* that reason is strictly self-generated. Here, Locke develops a model of civil society that depends on the reproduction of a subject who possess all the qualities of a citizen – autonomous, educated, well-bred, in full possession of the rational laws that govern intellectual beings, a subject who is himself

capable of reproducing another subject just like himself. In order to displace (but not dismantle) the prevailing theory of absolute sovereignty, Locke has this brand of rational education pass genealogically from father to son. By granting the mother equal rights in raising her child (but not equal political rights, as these are predicated on the possession of reason alone), Locke establishes the absolute autonomy of the household, thereby making that household into a “little commonwealth” (*Second Treatise* 126). The paternal figure and pupil form an arrangement analogous to the social contract of a sovereign state; in exchange for protecting and developing the child’s mental faculties, the guardian receives the duties of honor and obedience. Once the child has learned the laws governing the operations of reason, he will be entitled to the same political rights as his father. In “Of Paternal Power,” then, Locke successfully installs a cultural logic of paternalism as a model of political power.

In doing so, however, he introduces a new and potentially corrosive element of mimesis into his model of subject formation. The quality of the individual’s mind depends on the child’s upbringing and pedagogical influences. The subject requires a rational model to imitate if it is to be likewise rational. The mimetic model does not, in theory, compromise self-enclosure, as the son’s mind will contain the same knowledge as the father’s in duplicate. In Locke’s portrait, paternal authority is entirely self-authorizing, as the same set of rational conditions and rules are reproduced across generations. But what would happen if the father was somehow remiss in his duty to transmit the qualities of citizenship? As if to prevent that possibility from destabilizing his model, Locke returns to the reproduction of the subject in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. If the absolute end of education is the reproduction of the qualities of a

citizen, then theoretically anyone with the requisite rational qualities can act as tutor. While a father may be best suited to instill the precepts of reason and understanding in his son, he has no natural right to do so – he has no “absolute arbitrary dominion” (*Second Treatise* 126). Should he fail in the responsibilities of mentorship that turns sons into citizens, he forfeits his rights as a parent. When the father cannot or will not do the job, Locke proposes, a substitute should take the father’s place. But a surrogate, as Locke well knows, can pose as grave a danger to a susceptible mind as a bad father. No doubt for this reason, he devotes considerable energy in *Some Thoughts* to prescribing minutely the desirable qualities of a substitute guardian. This guardian must not only be able to instruct his charge in all the formal qualities of a gentleman – breeding, civility, learning, politeness – but he must also inspire emulation: “As the father’s example must teach the child respect for his tutor, so the tutor’s example must lead the child into those actions he would have him do.”^{xvii} The tutor is therefore equal parts instructor and paradigm, responsible at both levels for the development of the child.

Unsurprisingly, such a man is hard to come by, and “you are not to wonder,” Locke warns, “if you find it difficult to meet with such a tutor as we desire” (64). Behind this acknowledgement lurks what Locke ominously calls the “other kind of tutor[],” who would deform the susceptible child by his bad example. This shadowy figure would dissuade the prerational subject from the counsel of reason so that “[he] may have the government of [that child] and make him believe he goes like a man of himself, by his own conduct and for his own pleasure” (68). The bad guardian, in other words, feeds bad ideas to the subject who lacks reason to defend himself against the power of such suggestion. In so doing, the bad guardian appropriates the child’s capacity for self-

government. With no means of comparison, the child might think that it is learning the art of rational self-government when it is actually nothing more than a self-deluded puppet. In short, the bad tutor exercises an external influence on the subject's mind that can move the subject to action and in doing so steals its liberty and autonomy.

This figure poses a challenge to Locke's theory of autonomous agency by making the subject susceptible to control from the outside. Locke tries hard to keep him at bay by exerting the protection of the good guardian:

Besides being well-bred, the *tutor* should know the world well: the ways, the humors, the follies, the cheats, the faults of the age he is fallen into and particularly of the country he lives in. These he should be able to show his pupil as he finds him capable, teach him skill in men and their manners, pull off the mask which their several callings and pretenses cover them with, and make his pupil discern what lies at the bottom under such appearances that he may not, as inexperienced young men are apt to do if they are unwarned, take one thing for another, judge by the outside, and give himself up to show and the insinuation of a fair carriage or an obliging application" (66-67).

By pulling the mask off dissimulation, according to Locke, the good guardian offers his charge an unmediated (and hence accurate) view of the world. With such clarity of vision, the inexperienced young man is less apt to fall into error by mistaking appearances. Under such care, Locke concludes, the pupil can follow a straight and easy path to citizenship. Locke is not particularly successful in dismissing the figure of the bad guardian, however, because he never adequately addresses the potential for mischief that a mimetic model throws open. Like that of the rational mind, the concept of good guardianship relies on a realistic understanding of the world. In a world like Mervyn's, which is always already mediated, the relative positions of the good and bad tutors are difficult to differentiate. In such a world, empiricism paradoxically provides the mask of dissimulation. Anyone who tries to tell the young subject that he can know the world

simply by looking for the truth of things is himself guilty of dissimulation and automatically qualifies as a bad tutor. In Brown's topsy-turvy universe, the good tutor would have to teach the subject how to distinguish good from bad readings of the world.

Where Locke sidles around the problem of bad mimesis, then, Brown places the issue center-stage. As we have already seen, Brown devotes considerable energy to dismantling the Lockean concepts of mind and property as the foundations of reason and citizenship respectively. We can now add Locke's model of the family – the primary unit in the mimetic reproduction of the citizen – to the list of things Brown debunks as he creates an alternative to Locke's empirically-founded world. Mervyn's father, at best a simpleton and at worst an abusive drunk, shows himself incapable of self-government when he habitually submits himself to the guidance of others. Moreover, he violates the autonomy of the family unit when he marries Betty, a gold-digging dairy maid whose scheming leads to Mervyn's disinheritance. By Lockean standards, the Mervyn household fails spectacularly when Mervyn Senior neglects his duties as the paternal head, the family consequently fractures, and Mervyn is thrust headlong into the world. As one of Mervyn's former neighbors declares, "it was impossible for such a family to keep together" (219).

At the beginning of the novel, then, Brown goes to considerable lengths to rule out empiricism, property, and the family as foundational categories. Coming from a home that breaks up and disappears beneath his feet, Mervyn exists as what we might call pure potentiality thrust into a world of appearances, and the terms for his identity will be based on the world as interpreted by the father figures he encounters there.

III. Inside the Castle

Locke was of course aware that language posed a problem to his empirical model for its ability – like the bad tutor – to come between the subject and the world in a way that disfigures both. He calls this disruption “the abuse of words.” Language needs to be spare and lean; any excess at the level of the signifier is capable of misleading the subject as to the true order of things outside the mind and leaves room for interpretation. Indeed, such excess is itself the result of multiple interpretations. When ideas become confused – when “inconsistent parts are jumbled together” (II.xxxii.26) – then the subject, according to Locke, becomes vulnerable to misunderstanding, the most extreme form of which is a belief in things that don’t exist. In his insistence that language should be true to the material qualities of things, Locke can be regarded as the proponent of literary realism, where language represents a world as common sense would interpret it and objects in that world exist as the sole origin of meaning. His notion of the abuse of language, conversely, hands power back to words, which alone authorize their objects and are thereby capable of creating a world with no empirical referents. This is the world the gothic castle.

We enter this epistemological space as Mervyn enters Welbeck’s house and places himself under the protection of a father figure who flaunts the role of “paternal power” as Locke would have it. By this, I don’t mean simply that Welbeck destroys Mervyn’s ability to read the world “as it really is.” For him to destroy a realistic group of things would presuppose that an empirical world preexists the world as Welbeck represents it. In that case, Mervyn could simply cut through misrepresentation and excavate the “real” world, and the “real” Welbeck, on the other side of language.^{xviii} In the closet scene, Brown makes it clear that realism is not the governing principle of his

novel. Welbeck's dissimulation is no straightforward brand of villainy, but a display of fiction's powers to create the very world it appears to represent, and Mervyn is just one of the characters whom Welbeck forms and narrates. Welbeck understands, as no other character in the novel does, what it means to live in a world made of language. By passing himself off as a wealthy foreigner living large in Philadelphia high society, he lays bare language's power. He alone understands realism as basic to any successful fiction.

Welbeck capitalizes on the illusion of realism by bringing a new object world into being, one where he trades off his appearance as a rich aristocrat. But his fidelity to mediation in a mediated world serves his self-interest at the expense of his reason and virtue. In Welbeck, Brown gives shape to a problem that simply isn't there in Locke – that the possession of rational faculties do not necessarily make the man. As Welbeck admits:

What it is that made me thus, I know not. I am not destitute of understanding. My thirst of knowledge, though irregular, is ardent. I can talk and feel as virtue and justice prescribe; yet the tenor of my actions has been uniform. Once tissue of iniquity and folly has been my life; while my thoughts have been familiar with enlightened and disinterested principles . . . My virtuous theories and comprehensive erudition would not have saved me from the basest of crimes (81-82).

According to this confession, Welbeck possesses the full apparatus of a rational mind, which in Locke's world should be enough to make him a moral being. All the attendant functions of desire, will, foresight, and so forth should take their cue from and obey the injunctions of reason, but Welbeck poses a challenge to this assumption. As the syntax of this quote makes clear ("I can talk and feel as virtue and justice prescribe; *yet* the tenor of my actions has been uniform"), his reason does not determine his actions. Where they

should be guided by his observations and reflections, Welbeck's desires always run contrary to his rationally-founded opinions. The presence of the rational faculties does not, in Welbeck's case, guarantee rational deeds. He finds it advantageous to conceal this trait by acting like a subject with property even though he possesses none. He is, in other words, very good at mimicry.

Welbeck's performance of a good subject is credible because he wields such a powerful mastery over language. He alone assigns meaning to his fictional world, which he inhabits in the role of a gentleman, but he feeds this fiction to Mervyn as unmediated information. In this mediated world, Welbeck cannot be a good parental surrogate to Mervyn because he capitalizes on Mervyn's misplaced faith in a realistic reading of things, and for this reason exercises a "disastrous influence" (317) over his charge. If a good guardian, Welbeck would show Mervyn how to distinguish between the kind of interpretation that originates within the subject, and the kind that comes from another source without. Instead, he withholds meaning and offers Mervyn an object world that comes prepackaged with Welbeck's own self-interested interpretation. Trapped in this world, Mervyn takes Welbeck's version of things for truth. He is as good as trapped, in other words, within a gothic castle.

One of Welbeck's first acts upon installing himself as Mervyn's new surrogate guardian is to intrude in Mervyn's consciousness and raise doubts as to whether he is the same person as before he entered Welbeck's service. As Locke would have it,

[t]he Identity of the same *Man* consists; viz. in nothing but a participation of the same continued Life . . . [but] our consciousness being interrupted, and we losing the sight of our past *selves*, doubts are raised whether we are the same thinking thing; i.e. the same substance or no (*Essay*, II.xxvii. 6, 10).

Welbeck detaches Mervyn's past from his present by dressing him up in a dead man's clothes and making him promise not to reveal his pre-Philadelphia history. In his new French finery, Mervyn is so completely transformed that he bears more than striking resemblance to Lodi (the dead brother of Welbeck's mistress, and the original owner of the clothes), not to mention Clavering (another deceased young man of some consequence in Philadelphia). Such is the power of the signifier that this change in his appearance as object changes who he is as subject:

You can imagine, if you will, the sensations which this instantaneous transformation produced . . . I could scarcely forbear looking back to see whether the image in the glass, so well proportioned, so galant [sic], and so graceful, did not belong to another. I could scarcely recognise the lineaments as my own . . . Surely some insanity has fastened on my understanding. My senses are the sport of dreams. Some magic that disdains the cumbrousness of nature's progress, has wrought this change (48-49).

What Mervyn encounters in the mirror is the excessive signifier he has become, one whose meaning he cannot understand by looking.^{xix} In stripping Mervyn of the ability to recognize himself, Welbeck has appropriated even the minimal property that Mervyn possesses in his self. Consequently, Mervyn's "transformation" not only estranges him from that self but also transfers his ownership into Welbeck's hands. Mervyn is both possessed (he is controlled by Welbeck and figuratively inhabited by the dead Lodi) and dispossessed (he no longer owns himself as body or mind). This loss of autonomy turns the world inside out. Reason is replaced by the magic of the signifier to create that to which it refers.

With Welbeck passing as a wealthy foreigner and Mervyn dressed in a dead man's clothes, neither of which correspond to their material or intellectual property, it is fair to say that excessive signifiers come to dominate the language in and about

Welbeck's mansion. Mervyn finds himself overtaken by such an imbalance in meaning when his appearance as an object bears no relation to himself as a subject. He can interpret neither himself nor the other inhabitants in the castle. At this point, stories rush to fill the vacuum of meaning that overwrought signifiers have created, and Mervyn runs through a series of conjectures about Welbeck's origins and sources of wealth, compiling his deductions from a mixture of "confused ideas" (53) and speculations. On the supposition that Welbeck is a European nobleman, Mervyn concludes:

[E]very appearance that I had witness was easily solved . . . Perhaps Welbeck would adopt me for his own son. Wealth has ever been capriciously distributed. The mere physical relation of birth is all that intitles us to manors and thrones. Identity itself frequently depends upon a casual likeness or an old nurse's imposture . . . But if the cause be trivial and falacious [sic], the effects are momentous and solid. It ascertains our portion of felicity and usefulness, and fixes our lot among peasants or princes (53-54).

Having settled on a story that fits appearances, Mervyn proceeds to deal with the world that Welbeck has created. In this respect, Mervyn is indeed the reproduction of his tutor in that he proves adept at weaving fictions out of falsehoods. But in contrast to Welbeck, who presumably knows the difference between realism and his falsification of it, Mervyn proceeds to infer a world of objects from a purely fabricated reality. Modern adults consider this behavior delusional.

Mervyn's construction – which becomes more and more strained as it fails to explain Welbeck's behavior – comes to us in gothic tropes. As he sees it, his claim to Welbeck's inheritance is no less valid than the capricious rules of primogeniture that bestow "manors and thrones" on those fortunate enough to be born to them. Inheritance, he concludes, is often subject to the whims of mistaken identity or "an old nurse's imposture." These are but two signals to the reader that Mervyn's world resembles the

gothic fiction that developed in England alongside the rational tradition inaugurated by Locke. The fantasy that Mervyn the son will be adopted by Welbeck the aristocrat rests on the assumption that Mervyn has acquired new family origins by taking Welbeck as his surrogate father. Locke, in turn, authorized this family romance when he admitted that substitute guardians were sometimes necessary – especially in America^{xx} – thereby allowing the subject to rewrite the origins of his personal and material property as independent of blood or birth. But this fantasy assumes that the subject has origins to reinvent, and Mervyn – inchoate, inexperienced, and lacking judgment – has no such fixed point of reference. To the degree that he is everyman, any claim to origins would be more or less fictional insofar as they arise from an example that may itself be groundless.

Mervyn's unsuccessful search for a surrogate parental figure – from Welbeck to Hadwin to Stevens to Achsa – can be read as an unsuccessful search for a model worthy of imitation. Ideally, this model would be a masculine property owner making his son eligible for the same political rights when he acquires his father's rationality. Thus the Lockean notion of mimetic reproduction would ensure the reproduction of masculinity across generations, where the measure of that masculinity is a knowledge of the world. But if, like Mervyn, the son received a "defective education" (279), then he would remain in a state of cognitive infancy.^{xxi} Childishness being the lack of masculinity in this model, it is not surprising that Mervyn admits to being "a mere woman" (381), not to mention "childishly unlearned and raw" (418). Lest we fail to make this connection between femininity and a lack of autonomous agency, Brown establishes a comparison between Mervyn's helplessness and that of Clemenza Lodi, Welbeck's Italian mistress.

Both Clemenza and Mervyn are destitute and friendless to the point where their bodies constitute their only resource. Both are figuratively imprisoned by Welbeck in his mansion and made to comply with wishes not their own. This forces them to relinquish what Locke means by their freedom:

Every man is put under a necessity by his constitution, as an intelligent Being, to be determined in *willing* by his own Thought and Judgment, what is best for him to do: else he would be under the determination of some other than himself, which is want of Liberty (*Essay* II.xxi.48)

It is precisely this kind of freedom that Mervyn surrenders to Welbeck, who in turn robs him of his mind or property-in-himself in much the same way that he steals Clemenza's inheritance and virtue. The loss of agency that accompanies the lack of a natural grasp on the world puts Mervyn at the same disadvantage as the gothic heroine who inhabits the novels of Radcliffe and Walpole. Even their actions, when they are able to act, are not strictly speaking their own.

Clemenza's status as a captive female invokes the familiar association between helpless femininity and a loss of agency, or the disenfranchised woman-as-object in a masculine economy. But in bringing this association to bear on his male protagonist as well, Brown makes feminized dispossession a figure for the highly volatile distinction between subjects and objects in the space of the gothic castle. With neither property nor agency, Mervyn and Clemenza have both become objects in Welbeck's self-interested narrative. In other words, the figurative power of female disenfranchisement provides Brown with a convenient way to talk about the relatively unstable category of the Enlightenment subject when the individual's liberty is constrained. Confronted with the possibility that subjects and objects might switch categories, Locke sought to render such

a likelihood unthinkable, as in this bizarre comparison between a tennis-ball and a twitching arm:

A Tennis-ball, whether in motion by the stroke of a Racket, or lying still at rest, is not by any one taken to be a *free Agent*. If we enquire into the Reason, we shall find it is, because we conceive not a Tennis-ball to think, and consequently not to have any Volition, or preference of Motion to rest . . . So a Man striking himself or his Friend, by a Convulsive motion of his Arm, which it is not in his Power, by Volition or the direction of his Mind to stop, or forbear; no Body thinks he has in this *Liberty*; every one pities him, as acting by Necessity and Constraint (II.xxi.9).

A part of a man's own body – the body Locke would have him own – acts like a tennis-ball as it is moved by a force other than its own volition. That Locke feels compelled to prove that a tennis-ball is something other than a thinking agent should tell us that the analogy between object and human being is a perplexed one. The gothic return of the dead performs just this transfer of subjective life to an inanimate object. Indeed, reanimation epitomizes the mobility between subject and object positions when it reassigns subjectivity to a body that was itself once a subject. “Distempered by terror” (103), Mervyn imagines that the murdered Watson (Welbeck's nemesis) is still alive when he and Welbeck try to bury him. To create this fiction, Mervyn shifts the ontological status of the corpse from object back into a body inhabited by a subject. In short, Mervyn's feminization and Watson's reanimation are two sides of the same coin, where subjects become objects and vice versa. The gothic castle makes the mobility possible, which calls into question Locke's strict division between the two categories.

IV. Adam Smith goes to the City

Brown's model of consciousness is designed to make Locke's normative individual the exception that proves the rule rather than the standard that individuals normally meet.

Having established the notion that words determine referents rather than the other way

around, Brown next takes aim at the Enlightenment notion of sympathy to demonstrate that language is the cause rather than the expression of feelings. To do so, Brown resuscitates the family as a unit of affective social relations in order to make it a testing ground for the operations of sympathy in a world where gothic conditions prevail. Immediately following the Welbeck episode, the novel switches gears, as Mervyn installs himself in the country household of the Hadwins, a domain crafted from the materials of domestic fiction:

The manners of this family, quiet, artless, and cordial, the occupations allotted me, the land by which the dwelling was surrounded, its pure airs, romantic walks, and exhaustless fertility, constituted a powerful contrast to the scenes which I had left behind, and were congenial with every dictate of my understanding and every sentiment that glowed in my heart (117).

Mervyn's feelings mirror the natural feelings that prevail within the Hadwin family. As he observes, the two Hadwin sisters Eliza and Susan "smiled and wept in unison. They thought and acted in different but not discordant keys . . . [and] this diversity was productive, not of jarring, but of harmony" (117). In this family, feelings are the adhesive that hold it together, as its members can rely on each other to feel roughly the same way about things. Indeed, the strength of this domestic fantasy is sufficient to suggest that the issue of Mervyn's parental substitution will be resolved in Hadwin, toward whom Mervyn feels ungrounded nostalgia:

Methought I could embrace him as a father, and entrance into his house, appeared like the return to a long-lost and much-loved home. My desolate and lonely condition appeared to be changed for paternal regards and the tenderness of friendship (116-17).

Mervyn's imagined homecoming appears to return the Lockean fantasy of paternal origin to the control of the novel. Hadwin, Brown suggests, is indeed the father Mervyn should

have had. But how Mervyn's life might have worked out within the framework of a domestic fiction rather than gothic romance, we shall never know.

The Hadwin episode is overshadowed by the city's encroachment and its ability to destroy the affective relationships that govern the family. The domestic fantasy therefore proves short-lived when the rules governing emotions in the city intrude into the sentimental domain of the country, sparking a train of events that end with Hadwin's death and the horrific disintegration of the household. I want to suggest that Brown deflates the Enlightenment notion of sympathy as a model of social cohesion in order to carve a space for an alternative form of community. Sympathy, as Brown sets out to prove in the Hadwin episode, just won't work in the city because it relies on an homogenous community composed of like-minded but self-enclosed individuals. It relies, in other words, on the natural sameness of people like Susan and Eliza, who can trust each others' emotions because there is no significant difference between them to overcome in the first place. The diverse inhabitants of a city like Philadelphia, on the other hand, will have equally diverse interests and interpretive strategies. An urban environment, to put it another way, must make allowance for cultural difference. What is the cosmopolitan alternative, and how does the novel go about setting it up?

Brown suggests that something like sympathy might work if we first acknowledge that language creates rather than reveals feelings. To understand this move, it is helpful to turn briefly to Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, where he lays out the terms for his concept of sympathy. Through the late eighteenth century, Smith's model of emotions worked hand-in-glove with Locke's model of mind. For Smith, sympathy is a strictly imaginative process that begins and ends within the individual. To experience a

sympathetic connection with another, the individual must make an imaginative leap, as it were, putting himself in the position of the individual whose emotions are on display:

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation . . . It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations^{xxii} (11-12).

As Smith's qualifications make clear ("as it were", "in some measure"), sympathy is not the direct transmission of emotion from one individual to another. The spectator never shares the emotions of the "agent" – to do so would endanger his autonomy – but instead experiences a compatible though lesser degree of feeling that is strictly imaginative:

What [spectators] feel, will, indeed, always be, in some respects, different from what [the agent] feels, and compassion can never be exactly the same with original sorrow . . . these two sentiments, however, may, it is evident, have such a correspondence with one another, as is sufficient for the harmony of society. Though they will never be unisons, they may be concords, and this is all that is wanted or required" (27).

Reason ensures that "concord" does not yield to "unison," or the spontaneous and direct transfusion of emotion that Smith labels "contagion" (180). Emotions, in other words, cannot come from outside the body, but are first and foremost an internal response to an external spectacle.

Reason also ensures that the individual's emotions are assessed according to standards of decorum or "propriety." From histrionics to boorish insensibility, Smith declares, the unregulated display of emotion should not be dignified with a sympathetic response. It is up to the internal spectator to prevent this from happening:

When I endeavour to examine my own conduct, when I endeavour to pass sentence upon it, and either to approve or condemn it, it is evident that, in all such cases, I divide myself, as it were, into two persons; and that I, the examiner and

judge, represent a different characters from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of. The first is the spectator, whose sentiments with regard to my own conduct I endeavour to enter into, by placing myself in his situation, and by considering how it would appear to me, when seen from that particular point of view. The second is the agent, the person whom I properly call myself, and of whose conduct, under the character of a spectator, I was endeavouring to form some opinion (131).

The judge within operates in a manner similar to Locke's good father, providing the standard by which the agent not only measures the responses of other individuals but also measures himself, so as "not only to be loved, but to be lovely" (132).

According to this model of sympathy, the emotions formed within are regulated by a "spectator" that is strictly internal but, at the same time, an imitation of someone other than the subject. It is another's agonies, "brought home to ourselves" (12), that provide us with emotional information that ultimately yields a normative model. The internal spectator thus has its source in the external world, and should that source be diabolical, we may assume, the subject would internalize its lessons and become likewise diabolical. In relation to feelings, the internal spectator operates in much the same way as judgment does with regard to sensation. Although Smith would have emotional displays enter the mind directly and without mediation, the "spectacle" of emotion, by the simple virtue of being a visual display, is nevertheless performative. That performance, moreover, always falls short of the emotion it represents, because it is mediated by the normative model Smith calls the "internal spectator." Insofar as a performance may be "genuine," or a faithful representation of an internal feeling, might it not equally seek to mislead its spectators? Might it not be concealing as well as revealing emotion? Furthermore, Smith's model rests on the assumption that all people will respond in approximately the same way to any given spectacle, but what is to say that everyone will

develop much the same internal spectator? If they do not, then how is the novel to make a community out of self-enclosed individuals? In short, Smith's model is vulnerable for assuming that we imagine feelings just as the performer experiences them and that nothing but our own self-enclosure and the censorship of our internal spectator stands in the way of our experiencing them directly.

For at least two decades, American literary criticism has itself been preoccupied with the antebellum preoccupation with sympathy and its metaphoric potential as a social adhesive.^{xxiii} The fate of the Hadwin family suggests Brown's deep skepticism about the figural appropriateness of the sentimental family, especially when sympathy is called upon to extend the limits of the community beyond the narrow confines of the family unit. Brown exposes sympathy's assumptions, I would argue, by making the spectacle of emotion only arbitrarily related to feelings within. Smith tells us that emotion arises from within to be expressed on the surface of its body. Taking its cue from this model, sentiment implies relation between feeling and its expression that unites as one sign. In Welbeck, however, Brown separates the spectacle from its meaning. Welbeck, as Mervyn often notes, is a hard man to read for the way he conceals his emotions and adapts his performance to suit the occasion. Indeed, this performance is calculated to misdirect the emotional responses of others. He produces a fiction, in other words, that rewrites affect in his spectators. With Welbeck, there can be feeling without expression, and expression without feeling, and thus Mervyn can only respond to pure spectacle when there is no correspondence between the performance of feeling and the actual internal emotion. Instead of that form of imaginative identification we call sympathy, we have a superficial exchange based purely on performance. In this kind of exchange, the

spectator gains no privileged knowledge of the spectacle's feelings, nor does the agent divulge those feelings.

To be sure, Welbeck abuses this model, but it does not necessarily follow that the novel condemns this different kind of purely performative sympathy as a bad thing in and of itself. Far from it. Indeed, we might say that Welbeck ushers in a uniquely modern form of social attachment, which he can exploit for self-interested purposes only because his victims read him in Smithian terms. The inhabitants of a cosmopolitan city must be able to relate to each other and cohere as a group on a basis other than the organic sameness that characterizes the Smithian community. The cultural differences that characterize an urban space displace the similarity between spectator and agent necessary for sympathetic exchange. Social cohesion in an urban environment must therefore find a way to allow for opacity and tolerate diversity. Rather than rely on a model of community based on an essential sameness, might not the conflicts, instabilities, and uncertainties arising between the very different constituent groups in a large cosmopolitan community provide an alternative basis for cohesion? Under such circumstances, the pure performance of emotion allows spectator and agent to treat each other with equally superficial affability. There is a tacit agreement between them that this strictly performative identification would not require either party to feel the same as or become responsible for the other, unless they are somehow important or necessary. Viewed in this way, "superficiality" sheds its unfavorable associations and becomes a marker of a new modern citizenship or radical democracy. It is, in short, a way of dealing with cultural difference.

To make a case for this more modern form of social cohesion, Brown must first expose the sentimental family as an inadequate expression of sympathetic identification in a cosmopolitan setting. We might consider, then, his description of Philadelphia in the grip of the Yellow Fever. Brown's account of the plague's effects constitute a full-blown assault on Smith's model:

Terror had exterminated all the sentiments of nature. Wives were deserted by husbands, and children by parents . . . Men were seized by this disease in the streets; passengers fled from them; entrance into their own dwellings was denied to them; they perished in the public ways (122-23).

Panic in the City of Brotherly Love has destroyed every emotional attachment, including those of the family. Brown overturns the sympathetic social body by reducing it to its constituent parts, making it quite literally a case of each man for himself. In dismantling the affective bonds of familial sentiment, he throws into doubt the adaptability and mobility of the family as a metaphor for other forms of community that might include foreign elements. The Yellow Fever provides Brown with an alternative and apt metaphor for the anti-individualistic model of aggregation that Smith calls "contagion." Sympathy requires that the psychological boundaries between individuals remain intact, but contagion erodes these boundaries and allows emotion to flow freely among the population. Brown then asks us to imagine the effect that contagion, as both an infection and an alternative epistemology to individualism, might have on an affective community like the Hadwins. As we shall see, the metaphor of the family cannot survive this assault.

Contagion reaches the Hadwin household through rumor, which acts as an extension and equivalent of the Yellow Fever in that it spreads from person to person and changes how each person sees the world. Indeed, rumor sends Hadwin outside the household where he picks up the infection. Safely ensconced in this country, Mervyn

learns about the effects of the Philadelphia plague through second-hand information. Rumor's potency lies less in its purported truth than in its ability to grow, spread, and transform itself. It eclipses its own object of signification in that it masks its point of origin and gains momentum as it circulates through many different people. In other words, rumor expands as the plague recedes and thereby acts, in a very real sense, as the plague's representative and extension. With rumor, emotion no longer originates in an individual or individuals, but comes from an external source – language – that invades the subject, like an infection, from without.

As it eclipses the actual source of suffering, rumor creates an excess of meaning that allows for very different responses. In this respect, it breaks up the community of feeling before it demolishes the sentimental household, in fact. Emotion spreads as rumor repeats itself, but

[its auditors] were very differently affected. As often as the tale was embellished with new incidents, or inforced [sic] by new testimony, the hearer grew pale, his breath was stifled by inquietude, his blood was chilled and his stomach bereaved of its usual energies . . . Some were haunted by a melancholy bordering on madness, and some, in consequence of sleepless panic . . . were attacked by lingering or mortal diseases (123-24).

The operations of fiction (“as often as the tale was embellished”) are held directly responsible for these different reactions. In order to show how sympathy is no more normative or natural a response than any other, Brown includes an auditor who grows pale and breathes with difficulty – one, in other words, who experiences a lesser form of the disease itself, in compliance with Smith's notion of sympathy. But then there are the people who take the news too personally (“some were haunted by a melancholy bordering upon madness”). If these people are badly affected by the rumor, then those who experience sleepless panic experience the story as if it were the disease-ridden city

itself. They cannot distinguish fiction from fact, which, in Brown's view, amounts to contracting the disease.

Presenting in the various tropes of infection, insanity, and panic, rumor ushers in a gothic situation in that it detaches suffering itself from the spectacle of suffering. In this respect, it acts much like Welbeck does when he detaches the appearance of feeling from feeling itself. With the performance of suffering detached from its source, Mervyn reacts to the news as pure spectacle:

This rumor was of a nature to absorb and suspend the whole soul. A certain sublimity is connected with enormous dangers, that imparts to our consternation or our pity, a tincture of the pleasing . . . My own person was exposed to no hazard. I had leisure to conjure up terrific images and to personate the witnesses and sufferers of this calamity. This employment . . . was ardently pursued, and must therefore have been recommended by some nameless charm (123).

Unlike the other auditors, Mervyn responds to the rumor as a fiction that allows him to aestheticize the sufferings of the plague victims. According to Smith, anyone far removed from a spectacle of suffering – anyone like Mervyn and the other auditors, that is, who are “exposed to no hazard” – should react to the spectacle of suffering with sympathetic distance or not react at all. As he puts it, “[w]hatever interest we take in the fortunes of those with whom we have no acquaintance or connexion [sic], and who are placed altogether outside our sphere of activity, can only produce anxiety to ourselves, without any manner of advantage to them” (161). But in a devastating critique of the Enlightenment model, Mervyn's distance from the spectacle of suffering produces an avid sense of aesthetic “charm,” as opposed to the moderated feeling that supposedly accompanies disinterest. This in itself would invalidate Smith's notion of sympathy, which depends on proximity to the spectacle, but Mervyn's ability to take pleasure in others' pain marks him as lacking any form of internal spectator.

Rather than rush to condemn Mervyn for this lack or regard him as somehow deficient (two assumptions that tacitly reinscribe Locke's individual as the norm), let's consider the implications of his response. Insofar as he reads suffering as pure performance and makes no claim to know, feel responsible for, or care about the agents involved, Mervyn's reaction to the rumor might be considered the kind of expedient, superficial sympathy that allows him to respond to people wholly unconnected with him. Might not this be a kind of cohesion that could bridge cultural difference without allowing that difference to disrupt the social body? To test this hypothesis, let us see how Mervyn's version of sympathy proves inimical to the sentimental domain, but infinitely adaptable in the city.

Insofar as he responds only to pure spectacle, Mervyn becomes the agent of disease that destroys the sentimental community. As the city extends its network of communication through rumor to incorporate the domestic domain, the closed system of the sympathetic community opens up through the metaphor of infection. Once this has happened, the sympathetic operations of the sentimental community start to change as its constituent members can no longer assume that they will think and act alike. Like all the other country auditors, each Hadwin family member reacts to the same rumor in different ways, the most extreme form of which is Susan Hadwin's "paroxysms of a furious insanity" (126). When, driven frantic with worry for her absent fiancé Wallace,^{xxiv} she tries to kill herself, her feelings step out of line with the rest of her family. When the country becomes an extension of the city, the natural bonds of sympathy are severed, and Susan's exaggerated reaction and eventual demise snap the fragile bonds of the Smithian community. Mervyn, on the other hand, proves adaptable in the face of this paradigm

shift. For all his nostalgic longing, he never really was part of this community in the first place because, as we have seen, he operates according to a contrary model of sympathetic identification. Mervyn remains a cultural outsider throughout the Hadwin episode, his integration inhibited by such “obstacle[s]” (118) as religion and economic status. This inassimilable difference prevents the formation of sympathetic bonds in the Smithian sense. When he brings his own version of sympathy – performative, superficial, expedient – to bear on this community, it disrupts their cohesion.

Consider his response to Susan’s suffering in the face of her fiancé’s absence. Mervyn responds to her exaggerated distress in much the same way that he responded to rumor – as pure performance. This time, however, he creates the fiction himself when he imagines the sentimental scene that would greet his return were he to bring back Susan’s fiancé safe and sound from the city:

With what transports will his arrival be hailed? How amply will their impatience and their sorrow be compensated by his return! In the spectacle of their joys, how rapturous will be my delight! (128)

Like so many of Mervyn’s reflections, this series of purely conjectural statements has no foundation in anyone’s emotions but his own. There is no such spectacle to read, only his urge to produce one. As a fictional construct, this fantasy nevertheless has the power to change the object world. Its artificial allure and the approval he stands to gain prompts Mervyn – in search of the truant fiancé – to disappear without telling anyone of his intentions. This decision triggers a disastrous chain of events (Hadwin follows Mervyn to the city and is fatally exposed to the Fever in the city, a raving Susan dies of consumption, and the family farm falls to a brutish uncle who shares none of the Hadwin family feeling). In making his plans, Mervyn never considers that his actions may have

dire consequences because he assumes that, if their situations were reversed, the Hadwins would think and act the same way he does. Once difference has infected the sentimental domain, however, Mervyn's brand of superficial identification makes any assumption of similarity destructive where before it was cohesive. In short, Brown suggests that a superficial sympathy can prove destructive as a basis for action insofar as it can eradicate individual differences.

Throughout the novel, Mervyn's affective attachments do not assume any commonality at an intimate level. Mervyn treats everyone, from loved-ones to enemies to mere acquaintances, with the same degree of geniality. This democratic approach to sociability proves destructive in those sentimental spaces – like the Hadwin house – that presuppose intimacy at a deeper level. But it serves Mervyn extremely well in situations where differences rather than similarity prevails. Hadwin's brother Philip is a self-interested bully whose violent anger is kept at bay only by Mervyn's unshakable yet entirely staged affability. The apparently irreconcilable differences between Mervyn and Philip are suspended by a performative stance that Mervyn consciously adopts for the purpose of self-preservation. As he acknowledges, "I was indebted for my safety to an inflexible adherence to this *medium*" (291, emphasis mine). His performance allows their differences to provide the basis of a functional unity rather than disrupt the community. Difference, this episode seems to suggest, should not be allowed to destroy cohesion. The trick is to tolerate difference without letting it become destructive.^{xxv}

His emotional expediency makes Mervyn ideally suited to cosmopolitan living. Indeed, for the way his emotional attachments are characterized by the immediacy and spontaneity of transfusion – he wants to "exchange" and "mingle" (379) with others

rather than preserve and distance himself – Mervyn himself might be regarded as an extension of the city. To put it another way, he defines himself as an urban subject for the way he ignores individual boundaries, much as the Fever does. From the moment he first stepped into another man’s clothes, we should remember, Mervyn occupies the subject position of another. Like Smith, Mervyn may regard the end all and be all of emotional attachment as “to love and be loved.” Nevertheless, he repeatedly violates the foundational distinction between subject and object implicit in this formula – to love as a subject and to be loved as an object. The indiscriminate way in which he forms emotional attachments shows that, for him, there is no difference at all:

I was formed on purpose for the gratification of social intercourse. To love and to be loved; to exchange hearts and mingle sentiments with all the virtuous and amiable . . . I felt no scruple on any occasion, to disclose every feeling and every event. Any one who could listen, found me willing to talk. Every talker found me willing to listen. Every one had my sympathy and kindness, *without* claiming it, but I *claimed* the kindness and sympathy of every one (379-80, italics in original).

Mervyn is governed by a desire to mix with and mirror the world, to be one with the social group, rather than maintain the imaginative distance required by sympathy. In the country, however, his propensity to “look into other people’s concern, and to make their sorrows and their joys [his]” (317), leads him to appropriate their emotional property by replacing that property with his own. Brown dramatizes this principle by having Mervyn invade people’s houses, bedrooms, parlors, even prison cells. This intrusion into private interiors reflects and produces a lack of social separation, analogous to his unwillingness to observe the imaginative boundaries that separate people’s emotions. In those spaces where autonomy prevails, Mervyn’s intrusions violate the contractual obligation to respect that autonomy. By assuming that people are just like him, he breaks the Lockean

rule of one-mind-per-body and introduces the possibility that one mind may exist across two or more bodies. The logic of individualism demands that such a possibility be foreclosed, and Mervyn is consequently abjected whenever he violates such boundaries. From being shot by a prostitute to being denounced as a thief, each violent reaction against Mervyn is an attempt to preserve individualism from a force that would destroy it.

The gothic conclusion to the Hadwin episode, delivered in the tropes of madness and disease, suggests that sympathy can only work in a hermetically sealed domestic domain where it is indeed possible to know one's neighbor. There are some communities, like the family, which support and are supported by the illusion of the self-enclosed individual. But this model does not hold up in the cosmopolitan pressures of the city (indeed, the novel hints that the plague itself is a consequence of international commerce). The city disrupts the epistemological category of the individual and severs the relation between feeling and expression. There Mervyn fits in when he treats everyone with the same superficial affability ("Every one had my sympathy and kindness, *without* claiming it, but I *claimed* the kindness and sympathy of every one"). What gets him into trouble in the country, where individualism prevails, seems to qualify him for citizenship in the urban environment of Philadelphia. How does this reshape the way we imagine the social body as a whole?

V. The Gothic Contract

To address this question, I want to turn to Mervyn's marriage to Achsa Fielding, a sentimental resolution that the novel represents in such insistently gothic terms as to raise questions about contractual relations in general. In the final chapters of the novel, Brown puts the marriage contract to work in the anti-individualistic space of the cosmopolitan

city, when he unites Mervyn with the wealthy, widowed, and experienced immigrant Achsa Fielding. Like the social contract, the marriage contract can only perform its rhetorical operations if it unites two people whose individualism, in the Enlightenment sense of the term, is extended and completed by those operations. The contract at the end of *Arthur Mervyn* seeks to unite two people who cannot be thus individuated, because each brings qualities to the union that already exceed the strict limits of Enlightenment subjectivity. They are not, to put it another way, wholly human according to the artificial standards laid down for such a category. While not prohibiting the contract, their excesses do upset the sentimental rhetoric of exchange that presents itself as normative. For this reason, we must assume, the marriage is represented in the gothic mode. As I see it, the “gothic contract” proposes new rules for marriage in a cosmopolitan setting which cannot rely upon a coherent body of individuals to unite as one figurative and culturally discrete family.^{xxvi}

According to the logic of the social contract, the individual voluntarily gives up his anti-social tendencies and enters into a mutually beneficial agreement with other individuals who likewise relinquish their disruptive qualities.^{xxvii} The individual forfeits his acquisitive impulses in exchange for the protection and guarantee of his political and personal rights under the state’s authority. In submitting to the authority of a group comprised of individuals just like himself, the subject has, in effect, submitted only to his own authority. As an alternative to a government based on force, then, the civil state becomes an extension of the individual himself. As Locke argues elsewhere in the *Second Treatise*,^{xxviii} the prerational subject can acquire the rights of a citizen once he knows the laws that govern the rational individual. But the rhetoric of the exchange

suggests that those rights are themselves the product of the contract. If the party entering the exchange is in a prerational state and hence incapable of the consent required for contractual exchange, then individualism is itself the product of the contract. At this point, the rhetorical behavior of the contract parts ways with its logic. The contract is not an originary act that marks a founding moment, but an ex post facto fiction that evokes an origin and creates rather than regulates the constituent parties involved. The rhetorical power of the social contract lies in its ability to produce rather than unite new forms of political authority.^{xxix}

The sentimental novel attests to the powerful afterlife this paradoxical construction experienced in fiction even as it fell out of favor in political and philosophical thought. Like the social contract, the marriage contract proceeds on assumptions of lack (where each constitutive party is fulfilled by the acquisition of some component in the other) and emotional equality (where each reciprocates the other's compassion and understanding). It is an exchange based on merit rather than status, where the woman's sympathy, sensibility, and innocence is regulated by the man's experience, reason, and judgment, and vice versa.^{xxx} The marriage contract therefore extends and perfects the individualism of the constituent parties by giving each party something he or she didn't have before, making between them a complete individual at the macrocosm – i.e. level – of the household.

It is fair to say that the rhetoric of the social contract is itself sentimental insofar as the union thus formed is supposed to complete the process of each party's maturation. The developmental trajectory of the individual reaches its apotheosis in the contract, which transforms the inchoate subject into a citizen with all the accoutrements of self-

government. Brown is clearly aware of this sentimental promise of individual fulfillment through marriage, as it governs his decision to refuse a union between Eliza Hadwin and Mervyn. Critics commonly interpret Mervyn's rejection of Eliza in favor of Achsa Fielding as evidence of Brown's disenchantment with his youthful Godwinian radicalism and his slide towards a more conservative politics,^{xxx} but I would prefer to consider what Mervyn's choice of a marriage partner tells us about the principle of social cohesion in a cosmopolitan setting. Mervyn's prospective union with Eliza clearly operates within a sentimental paradigm:

My thoughts have ever hovered over the images of wife and children with more delight than over any other images. My fancy was always active on this theme, and its reveries sufficiently extatic [sic] and glowing; but since my intercourse with this girl, my scattered visions were collected and concentrated. I had now a form and features before me, a sweet and melodious voice vibrated in my ear, my soul was filled, as it were, with her lineaments and gestures, actions, and looks" (278-79).

A true man of feeling in this regard, Mervyn's visions of domestic bliss are wholly confined to a blooming young wife, offspring, and "an hundred acres of plough-land and meadow" (278). Eliza appears to be Mervyn's counterpart, his social equal and sentimental exemplar, yet her suitability as a partner exists only at a superficial level. Mervyn changes his mind on contemplating the mental qualities of his prospective bride. Although Eliza possesses the "thrilling sensibility and artless graces" (261) that might tempt any man into marriage, she also possesses a degree of inexperience that "gave her sometimes the appearance of folly" (271). This prompts Mervyn to question the suitability of this match:

I considered my youth, my defective education and my limited views. I had passed from my cottage into the world. I had acquired even in my transient sojourn among the busy haunts of men, more knowledge than the lucubrations and employments of all my previous years had conferred. Hence I might infer the

childlike immaturity of my understanding, and the rapid progress I was still capable of making. Was this the age to form an irrevocable contract; to chuse the companion of my future life, the associate of my schemes of intellectual and benevolent activity? . . . marriage was a contract awful and irrevocable (279-84).

According to his own self-assessment, Mervyn is still in a state of “immaturity,” which in terms of the logic of the contract makes him less than an individual. On the other side of the exchange, Eliza lacks the literacy that would allow her to complement her husband’s position and power with taste and affection. Mervyn’s reluctance to contract with Eliza therefore stems from the logic of the contract itself, which would see the perfection of the constituent parties through their union. As Mervyn is well aware, neither of them has much of anything to exchange, as both are inexperienced, destitute, and uneducated, and their union would augment neither one.

Mervyn rejects Eliza because the product of their combined deficiencies would only result in something less than the individual at the level of the household. In this case, the novel seems to endorse the sentimental rhetoric of the contract when Brown refuses their union on the grounds of deficiency in the constituent parties. On the other hand, Mervyn’s rejection of Eliza also draws attention to the logic of exclusion upon which the contract rests, not to mention the thoroughly artificial limits it places on individualism. In rejecting Eliza as inadequate, the novel forces us to consider a question latent in the contract’s rhetoric: what else might be the product of the contract, if not Enlightenment individualism? Insofar as the contract polices who can marry whom, nothing short of the basis of civil society is at stake in its operations. Thus when Brown demolishes the sentimental kinship unit as the basis for this society, what, we might ask, does he propose as a substitute? To provide one possible answer, Brown next asks whether, if not on the basis of lack, there might be a union based on excess? What if the constituent parties

added up to *more* than an individual in the Enlightenment sense? Following the same logic as the rest of the novel, wouldn't the sentimental rhetoric of the contract turn gothic when its assumptions are put to the test and its constituent elements endowed with a figurative excess?

To set the stage for this distinctly gothic version of the contract, Brown initially presents the union between Achsa and Mervyn as a celebration of a national fantasy. Fleeing a disastrous marriage in Britain, Achsa comes to America for a second chance in the form of a family romance that would permit her to rewrite her history. But we should pause to consider why she hopes to realize that second chance in marriage to Mervyn. As antagonistic as Mervyn might be to normative categories of selfhood and affect, he is also, by the end of the novel, something of a proto-citizen. By the time he meets Achsa, Mervyn has arguably come to possess many of the *external* accoutrements of American masculinity. Outwardly, Mervyn is autochthonous and has transcended the position assigned to him by birth. He is also a young man of remarkable good looks and is busy acquiring cultural capital as an apprentice doctor welcome in the polite circles of Philadelphia. We can assume that Achsa falls for Mervyn because he embodies the masculine qualities that can make her an American.

But if we turn this union on its head, so to speak, it also comes to us as the mirror image of the sentimental exchange whose constituent parties are inversely gendered. Mervyn is often presented in feminized terms, possessing all the affective qualities of sensibility traditionally found in a sentimental heroine. Recall his weeping confession that he is "a mere woman," (381). He may present externally as an American man-on-the-make, but the internal deficiencies of inexperience and a limited understanding that

prohibited his marriage to Eliza are still there. By way of contrast, Achsa is, figuratively speaking, a man in that she possesses many of the qualities of Enlightenment masculinity. As Mervyn notes, she has “experience” in the world and is “abundant in that very knowledge in which [he] was most deficient” (411). She is also wealthy, literate, and independent, and considerably older than Mervyn. Mervyn may like to call her his “mamma,” but she is not a maternal woman; she abandoned her eight-year-old son from a previous marriage in Britain and she certainly doesn’t mother Mervyn. Moreover, she lacks the physiognomy of a traditional love object; she is as “unsightly as a *night-hag*, tawney as the moor, the eye of the gypsy, low in stature, contemptibly diminutive” (416). Achsa acquires dependents (such as Eliza) who rely on her for patronage. At a superficial contractual level, therefore, Achsa compensates Mervyn’s femininity with the attributes ordinarily assigned to masculinity, and Mervyn supplements her masculinity with feminine sensibility. In terms of their emotional property, he brings to the contract the feelings and dependency of a female, while she brings the experience and property of a male.

This neat inversion at the level of gender, however, cannot produce a sentimental couple. The split in Mervyn – presented along gendered lines as autochthonous (masculine) Americanness and vacuous (feminized) inexperience – prohibits a sentimental union because Mervyn brings *more* than just inexperience and dependency to the contract. He also brings indigenous manhood. He has, in other words, a kind of excessive individualism that upsets the sentimental rhetoric of the contract regardless of who actually gets to wear the pants in this relationship. Likewise, Achsa brings something to the union beyond her masculine attributes. Let me explain further.

When Achsa's unfavorable appearance is portrayed as that of a "night-hag," a "moor," or a "gypsey," we are clearly in the presence of something in excess of both masculinity and femininity. This excess is presented in racialized terms: resembling both a moor and a gypsey, Achsa is a British Jewess of Portuguese descent who tries, unsuccessfully, to hide her creole origins Mervyn.^{xxxii} Significant to my purposes, Mervyn spontaneously guesses the secret of her essential difference without the aid of sensory clues. There is just something about her that tips him off, prompting him to interrupt one of their conversations:

As I live, my good mamma, those eyes of yours have told me a secret. I almost think they spoke to me; and I am not less amazed at the strangeness than at the distinctness of their story.

And pry'thee what have they said?

Perhaps I was mistaken. I might have been deceived by a fancied voice; or have confounded one word with another near akin to it; but let me die, if I did not think they said that you were – *a Jew*.

At this sound, her features were instantly veiled with the deepest sorrow and confusion. She put her hand to her eyes, the tears started and she sobbed.

(398, italics in original).

Achsa's reaction to Mervyn's conjecture suggests that her Jewishness is a mark of abjection and shame. She had hoped, she tells Mervyn, "that [he] should know nothing of [her] but what [he] see[s]" (398). That Mervyn simply guesses her origins suggests that her secret history continues to govern events in America even though she left her original identity behind in Great Britain. Thus Achsa possesses an uncontainable excess, presented at a racial level, that forces her out of sentiment discourse and into the register of the gothic.

Achsa's monstrous, excessive individualism is matched in Mervyn, who likewise enters the gothic register when his split self presents as double-mindedness. As he admits,

When with [Achsa], I was not of myself. I had scarcely a separate or independent existence, since my senses were occupied by her . . . the being called Mervyn is not the same in her company and in that of another (412-14).

In Achsa's company, "the being called Mervyn" divides in two, both parts of which occupy the same body but only one of which is triggered by Achsa's presence. This is the very case of anti-individualism that Locke went out of his way to invalidate. To render any alternative to knowledge through experience "inconsistent and impossible" (*Essay* II.i.1), Locke uses the example of the sleeping man who thinks while asleep and is not aware of doing so:

[I]f it is possible, that the Soul can, whilst the body is sleeping, have its Thinking, Enjoyments, and Concerns, its Pleasures and Pain apart, which the Man is not conscious of, nor partakes in: It is certain, that *Socrates* asleep, and *Socrates* awake, is not the same Person; but his Soul when he sleeps, and *Socrates* the Man consisting of Body and Soul when he is waking, are Two Persons" (II.i.11).

Locke relies on the self-evident absurdity of this example to dispel the uncomfortable prospect of two minds cohabiting the same body. But even as Locke relegates this aberration of subjectivity to the realm of impossibility, double-mindedness finds a gothic afterlife in the trope of sleepwalking, where the subject does indeed find himself split in two when his nocturnal activities are not even recalled by his waking self. To make it clear that Mervyn is not fulfilled but rendered another person by his prospective marriage, Brown sends his protagonist sleepwalking after Mervyn discovers that Achsa loves him. Mervyn's somnambulism shows us that two minds have indeed come to occupy his body. Manifesting as split subjectivity, his excessive individualism explains why Mervyn reacts to Achsa with equal parts horror and joy: "I was half-delirious, and my delirium was strangely compounded by fear and hope, or delight and terror" (418).

Mervyn's divided reaction is organized along the same line that divides the two minds of "the being called Mervyn." The external part of Mervyn – the American, masculine part with whom Achsa has fallen in love – wants nothing to do with the equally masculinized and monstrous Achsa. This half of Mervyn is still governed by the sentimental logic of the marriage contract, which recognizes Achsa as a disastrously inappropriate choice. In a sentimental register, Achsa's masculinity, elevated social status, racial identity, and lack of personal beauty disqualify her several times over as a match for the newly made Mervyn. Indeed, the novel insists upon presenting Mervyn's reaction to their union in gothic terms. On recognizing that he is on the verge of marriage, Mervyn is "lunatic" (415) and "possess[ed]" (418) by "a nameless sort of terror" (419); his "unhallowed" (419) ideas leave him with "a mind lost to itself; bewildered; unhinged; plunged into a drear insanity" (420). He experiences "a temporary loss of reason" (425), is overcome with "panick," "confusion and horror" (425), and is seized by a sense of "infamy" and "guilt" (426). He is, moreover, haunted by the prospect of Achsa's deceased former husband coming back to life for the sole purpose of murdering his rival. Mervyn's terror and sleepwalking hardly constitute the raptures of a sentimental lover caught up in adoration for his future wife. They are, however, the aesthetic byproducts of a contract that seeks to unite two people who are not wholly human in the Enlightenment sense.

In no uncertain terms, Brown replaces the artificial ideal of the sentimental contract with a gothic union of excessive individualism. The novel takes a gothic turn, in other words, when the sentimental rhetoric of the contract conflicts with the profound excesses of its constituent parties. This does not prohibit the marriage from taking place

– the novel ends with Mervyn laying up his pen in anticipation of becoming “the happiest of men” – but it does shift the terms of marriage in America. As we have already seen, Mervyn cannot fit into a sentimental community for the way his anti-individualism endangers the affective bonds that govern such an environment. Achsa’s excess, presented in racialized and masculinized terms, likewise disqualifies her as a participant in the sentimental community. By bringing them together, the novel tests the conditions under which disparate people of uncertain origins and profound cultural differences can be united in new contractual relationships. This contract does not seek to reproduce a genealogy based on lineage (both Achsa and Mervyn are detached from their origins) nor the politics of paternalism (both parties trade themselves in the absence of male kin). Rather, it replaces the static sentimental model with a civil society predicated on the mutually constitutive potential of radical difference. Brown suggests that this kind of model – which can incorporate difference – will be far more likely, indeed necessary, in a cosmopolitan setting than one which labors to produce abstract or exemplary conditions of kinship under Smithian assumptions of sameness.

VI. The Gothic goes on the Offensive

In concluding, I want to revisit Leslie Fiedler’s assertion that the American novel “is most essentially a gothic one.”^{xxxiii} Drawing on a combination of depth psychology and historiography – a theoretical foundation that is arguably his greatest legacy to the field of American gothic criticism – Fiedler read the gothic for its ability to exorcize the racial and political crimes of America’s guilty national conscience. From my discussion of the gothic form of a novel such as *Arthur Mervyn*, it should be obvious that we need to reconsider the grounds of Fiedler’s famous claim. As a national literary style, the gothic

form has less to do with repression and return, I have argued, than with reimagining the conditions of subjectivity and citizenship for a population that was just beginning to think of itself in urban, commercial terms.^{xxxiv} The late eighteenth-century British gothic worked alongside the British sentimental tradition to modernize kinship relations at the level of the household,^{xxxv} but something rather different happened to novels written and read in the new United States. The American gothic puts the Enlightenment individual on the defensive in order to authorize alternative forms of modern subjectivity. While accepting Fiedler's claim, I also want to revise its assumptions by suggesting that the gothic form flourished here because it explores the potential in precisely those different categories of individual and aggregate that the sentimental tradition would render phobic.

Locke himself relied heavily on the rhetorical power of abjection to eliminate all alternatives to his self-enclosed, autonomous subject. To maintain its coherence, his model of the modern individual must be on constant guard against all other possible psychologies even as it represents itself as normative and natural. Those moments when *The Essay Concerning Human Understanding* itself seems to take a gothic turn – talking parrots, perpetually dancing men, convulsive arms – are, I have argued, all attempts to keep alternatives at bay. We might relabel Locke's epistemology "defensive individualism" for the way Locke must render all variations on his subject either impossible or aberrant. The gothic goes on the offensive when it gives these negated forms of consciousness lives of their own in fiction, where they continue to work corrosively on Enlightenment models of individual and community that sell themselves as normative. Rather than reject these alternatives, as Locke would have us do, Brown explores their potential as equally viable models of individual and aggregate. In *Arthur*

Mervyn, he creates a model of experience where all sensory information is received as already mediated through language, exposing the arbitrary relationship between words and the world they ostensibly reflect. In this model, language is granted the power to reshape reality – Welbeck can create a fictional world with no basis in people or things, and the rumor of the Plague can change the way people feel and act. Moreover, the excessive nature of the signifier in this equation can likewise reshape the subject who takes it in and acts upon it, making him – if *Mervyn* is indicative – at once less and more than an autonomous self-governing individual. Thus the novel can both point out the possibility of impossibility and absurdity, and show the reader the need to interpret the relation between words and the supposedly objective reality they represent. .

Once Brown's gothic exposes the Enlightenment subject as a fiction, the equally sentimental constructs of sympathy and contract fall like dominoes because they rely so heavily on Locke's autonomous individual. Smith's internal spectator is flawed, Brown insists, for the way it assumes that every subject will interpret feelings in the same way, but there can be no shared emotional ground when individuals are essentially different. With the Smithian community exposed as a radically exceptional rather than natural form of aggregation, the sentimental contract loses ground because it too functions only when its constituent parties already resemble one another. There is no room in the social contract, in other words, for foreign or excessive elements. As an alternative, the union between Achsa and *Mervyn* proposes a gothic contract that has the power to incorporate the foreign and strange in the absence of traditional rules of kinship and exchange.

Brown's elaborate reconstitution of individual, affect, and contract should tell us that these were pressing issues for a relatively new immigrant, urban nation. To take up

Fiedler's claim once more, I think it is entirely possible that the gothic proved so appealing for an American readership because it dealt squarely with problems posed by mediation, representation, and interpretation in a heterogeneous cosmopolitan community. As Brown makes clear, the subject never receives information, as Locke would have us believe, in a just-so way. Information always comes to us mediated by values and meanings that are disseminated from multiple sources, many of which are invisible or long gone. In any exchange – emotional, social, or marital – the constituent parties rely wholly on how each person represents him- or herself to another. Achsa, for example, sees Mervyn as a man (even though he comes to us in feminized terms), while Mervyn sees Achsa as his “mamma” (even though she bears more resemblance to a “papa”). The novel's insistence on Mervyn's ambiguous reputation and the rhetorical power of rumor suggests an urgent preoccupation with the problem of information and its dissemination in the early republic. The novel's pedagogical imperative insists on the need to read people and things, as if they had a secret history which is simultaneously concealed and revealed in their appearance and behavior.

Chapter Two

The Gothic Goes Native

My first chapter described the ideal Lockean mind as wholly closed in upon itself and separated from its environment. This model individual, contiguous but not continuous with an external world, dominates Western thought. But there is obviously an alternative, or residual, model that asserts itself in Brown's fiction – and arguably in all gothic fiction. To grasp this alternative as another model of humanity altogether rather than as a disruption of Enlightenment categories or a dehumanization of human beings, let us imagine a mind that is part of a larger circuit of information and feeling that connects disparate people and even people and things and transforms them into a single heterogeneous organism. In this system, the mind is a point of intensification through which formative energies and forces circulate and gather. The individual is thus less important than the lines connecting its various components. To be in this system is to be at once partial and multiple, a fluid singularity that reconstitutes itself in converging with other people and things. Together, these smaller circuits expand outward from multiple centers to form a network without boundaries or limits.

This notion of community observes many if not all the principles of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, a multidirectional network, or "weave," that changes in nature according to the circuits it incorporates and abandons. The rhizome cannot be broken down into its constituent parts because it has none; as Deleuze and Guattari put it, "there are only lines."ⁱ This social body is not defined by its vertices, or the points where individual connections converge, but by the connections themselves that flow as multidirectional rays. The problem with the traditional genealogical, or "arboreal," mode

of thinking, as Deleuze and Guattari identify it, is that “making a clean slate, starting or beginning again from ground zero, seeking a beginning or foundation – all imply a false conception of voyage and movement” (25). Locke’s metaphor of white paper – or the “clean slate” – invokes just such a misleading notion of “voyage and movement,” or in the terms of the master narrative of Western culture, “development.” The rhizome, by way of contrast, allows us to think in terms of people much as we think of ants, crabgrass, or an epidemic; that is, a heterogeneous organism that spreads opportunistically until it runs out of territory to appropriate. As such, the rhizome offers a much older model of collectivity than the elite household of individuals imagined first by Locke and then by such British novelists as Richardson or Austen. As a system where the collective as a whole matters more than the individual, this model has the important qualities of clan or tribal affiliations.

Indeed, a glance at James E. Seaver’s *A Narrative Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* (1824) confirms that American letters were testing its persuasiveness and adaptability as a form of sociability during the early nineteenth-century, suggesting that the Lockean model of a contractual state was still competing for dominance even after the Revolution. Consider the terms in which Jemison accounts for her adoption into a Seneca family:

It is a custom of the Indians, when one of their number is slain or taken prisoner in battle, to give the nearest relative to the dead or absent, a prisoner, if they have chanced to take one, and if not, to give him the scalp of an enemy . . . It was my happy lot to be accepted for adoption; and at the time of the ceremony I was received by the two squaws, to supply the place of their brother in the family; and I was ever considered and treated by them as a real sister, the same as though I had been born of their mother.ⁱ

The perpetuity of the Senecan community is maintained by an economy of retribution and reparation. Here, a captive either supplies the vacated place of the deceased through

adoption, or functions as a symbolic substitute upon which vengeance is enacted. In either case, the individual herself is merely a relay in a network of exchange geared towards the preservation of the community at large. In this system, only the British Jemison herself attaches any significance to the fact that she was not “born of [the same] mother” because she understands kinship in terms of familial blood ties rather than collective equilibrium.

This early nineteenth-century example of a rhizomatic community located in the wilderness requires us to consider exactly what it means to “go native” in American fiction. Rather than read such a change as degeneration from culture to nature (a retrograde version of the “development” narrative), I maintain that it is historically more accurate to see the Indian social structure in light of an earlier modern European concept of community, thus a genuine alternative to the contractual model. In Jemison’s case, going native describes her integration into a community that does not think in terms of individual difference; the family or tribe is a single organism. In *Arthur Mervyn*, the yellow fever epidemic likewise reveals the extent to which this population is a single social body whose members share a common fate. In this sense, “going native” amounts to assimilation to a system that privileges connection over autonomy and so maintains the lineaments of a single corporate body often at the expense of any single member.

We should likewise reconsider the concept of the “wilderness,” that is where “going native” is always a constant likelihood. In the Calvinist, Puritan theological imagination of Mary Rowlandson, for example, faith is tested (or lost) in the wilderness and apostasy is tantamount to going native. When Locke turned the wilderness into uninscribed land ripe for appropriation, he also turned property into the basis for culture.

The trial in the wilderness was no longer a feat of faith so much as a test of cultural identity. In this sense, “going native” means passing over the line from culture to nature, which amounts to a loss of identity that forfeits the subject’s place in that culture.ⁱⁱ In Brown, by way of contrast, the American wilderness in fact represents an alternative culture which supports tribal or clan-like forms of sociability. What is so often represented as a difference between nature and culture is actually a difference between competing cultures.

This line of thought, I am convinced, influenced Brown’s decision to situate *Edgar Huntly* (1799) among the “incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the western wilderness.” His famous rejection of European gothic conventions in favor of an essentially American setting is conventionally interpreted as a call for an internally coherent, indigenous literary culture.ⁱⁱⁱ This reading, however, cannot account for those moments where Brown still resorts to tropes traditionally associated with the European gothic novel (live burial, sleepwalking, murder, insanity, and so forth). In the Delaware wilderness, heterogeneous cultures with multiple interpretative paradigms overlap and vie with one another for dominance. Brown, I argue, brings gothic conventions to bear on this setting in order to propose a subject who can negotiate such cultural interpenetration. In *Huntly*, Brown imagines a subject that changes in nature according to the needs of the larger social organism. This subject relates to its environment through a fundamental continuity of culture and nature, not by a contiguity that presupposes his difference from nature.

In *Edgar Huntly*, the blueprint for this kind of organism originates in Ireland. Brown uses Clithero Edny’s family to imagine a social unit whose constituent parts are

not individuals so much as copies of one another.^{iv} Euphemia Lorimer's illegitimate niece Clarice, whom Mrs. Lorimer raises as her daughter, is the spitting image of Mrs. Lorimer herself ("nature seemed to have precluded every difference between them but that of age" [47]). Mrs. Lorimer also has an adopted son Clithero, and together Clithero and Clarice – whose fungibility is implied through the alliteration in their names – replace her real son in her affections. Nameless, this son disappears from the novel once Clithero assumes his place as Clarice's fiancé (and thereby figuratively marries his patroness as well by affiancing her identical niece). In a situation where one character slides into another, it makes perfect sense for Mrs. Lorimer to feel preternaturally connected to her evil twin brother, also Clarice's father. Convinced that they share an "extraordinary co-partnership[] in being" (74), Mrs. Lorimer believes that the death of one will spontaneously trigger the death of the other. The twins not only operate as one mind in two bodies, but the existence of each body also depends exclusively on its relationship with the other. If the connection is severed, there is no social organism left to preserve. According to this logic, Mrs. Lorimer becomes an obsolete component of a community that no longer exists when Clithero accidentally kills her brother. When Clithero subsequently tries to kill her too, we can see that the logical imperative of such a social organism demands her death, for she exists only as a relationship with her brother.^v

It should be clear from this example that there are in fact no individuals in this family that are not, in some way, replicas of other members. When Mrs. Lorimer's natural son disappears from the novel, the genealogical line of descent gives way to a social body organized by the alternative principles I have identified as a network or rhizome. This body regenerates by copying itself rather than reproducing new

individuals and the normative units of familial relations (mother, brother, son, etc.) are simply positions that virtually anyone can fill. In situating this family in Ireland, moreover, Brown draws on the well-known British tendency to view the Irish as barbaric and, as such, practicing social relations by which they can be called wholly different from those characterizing the English.^{vi} This social structure, I want to suggest, provides the conceptual materials in *Edgar Huntly* for Brown's model of the American wilderness, which converts the territory of the new United States into a metaphoric testing ground for competing models of the individual.

As a geographic metaphor, "wilderness" revisits the conceptual terrain of Lockean property and challenges its ability to serve as a cognitive foundation. In Locke's system, just as the subject mixes his labor with nature to produce property that belongs to him alone, so he mixes his intellectual faculties with sensations gleaned from the external world to produce property-in-himself, or "mind." The subject's uncontested ownership of property thereby serves as the basis for citizenship and hence self-ownership. To imagine a world based on labor, Locke turns to the American wilderness, which he imagines as a blank space that, like the human mind, lacks any prior cultural inscription.^{vii} To declare that "in the beginning all the World was America," he draws on Genesis and the logic of the *terra nullius* which offer models of the world as it was prior to human history. This move forges an enduring division between nature and culture, as Locke establishes progress from one state to the other as the basis for both individual and national development.

In *Edgar Huntly*, Brown offers us a different cultural geography. Unlike the *terra nullius* of Locke's system, Brown's American wilderness is already occupied and

inscribed by Native Americans, for whom possession of the land is a function of movement and strategic advantage. This cultural geography is radically at odds with the British settlers' understanding of "property" and "ownership." Brown stages these competing notions of land by drawing a distinction between the cultivated Solebury farmsteads and the "sterile region" (91) of Norwalk, the sprawling Delaware wasteland inhabited only by panthers and roving bands of displaced Indians. The Huntly farm is one of those homes built on appropriated Indian land, a territorial claim that leads Queen Mab, the Delaware Indian matriarch, to denounce the resident colonists as merely "aliens and sojourners" (199). Mab's comments raise the question of who can be said to "possess" property, when there are multiple claims to that terrain, all of which respect different definitions of "ownership."^{viii} The nomadic Delawares organize geography by traversing nature, or covering it with patterns of human movement. For them, there is no distinction between Solebury and the wilderness; according to Mab, the colonists are merely interlopers. For the colonists, on the other hand, geography is produced by cultivation, which separates nature and culture and authorizes the laborer as an individuated subject.

Seeing the settlers' claims against the background of the Delawares' cultural geography shows us that land is never encountered as a *terra nullius*; rather, it is always already inscribed by competing social groups. In *Edgar Huntly*, "property" and "wilderness" are fluid concepts that overlap one another as seemingly contradictory ways of understanding one's environment. Just as Huntly and Clithero can wander, unbeknownst to themselves, into the wilderness, so the Delaware Indians make regular bloody incursions into the cultivated space of Solebury. The violence of such

interpenetrability suggests that these two spaces are not in fact opposed, but part and parcel of one another as negative components in the definition of each.

Arthur Mervyn showed us how Brown uses gothic language to challenge property as the foundation of reason and citizenship. In *Huntly*, he uses this language to turn the wilderness into the alternative cultural geography I have been describing. Having fallen into a cavern after a bout of sleepwalking dumps him in the heart of Norwalk, Edgar talks about it in these terms:

Methought I was the victim of some tyrant who had thrust me into a dungeon of his fortress, and left me no power to determine whether he intended I should perish with famine, or linger out a long life in hopeless imprisonment . . . Sometimes I imagined myself buried alive. Methought I had fallen into seeming death and my friends had consigned me to the tomb, from which a resurrection was impossible (154-55)

Gothic tropes describe a space that obeys the same epistemological principles as the castle, insofar as the category of rational individualism comes under assault in its domain and nothing is as it appears. Like the castle of the European gothic, then, it contests “reality” – or a world organized according to Lockean empiricism and the ideal internal spectator – as the normative or dominant interpretation. There is a difference, however, between the phobic space of the castle and the space of possibility that is the wilderness.

The European castle only temporarily introduces apparently inexplicable spectral phenomena and aberrant behavior in order to explain them away at the end of the narrative. This move reaffirms the normative reading of nature and society and the distinction between them by rendering phobic any such alternative to the modern social body as was proposed in the castle. In this sense, the castle is nested within the dominant notion of the real as a contained space within which reality can be put to the test. The wilderness, by way of contrast, is without boundaries, proposing an open environment in

which the ontological mobility associated with the castle appears unlimited. Huntly may leave his cave, but as he then admits, “I scarcely knew in what region of the globe I was placed” (174). He may as well be anywhere, suggesting that the wilderness is a potentially limitless terrain over which a person cannot achieve strategic control because its internal signposts are absent or hidden.^{ix} In sum, the wilderness is not contained within the normative interpretation of the real, but encompasses multiple interpretations. “Property” consequently takes on conflicting definitions in the wilderness that undermine the contractual basis for community.

I. The Incorporated Social Body

The subject of the contractual model acquires value apart from wealth and social position by owning the rights to his own labor and body. This exceptional interpretation of property also exists in the wilderness, but in competition with other interpretations that do not understand community in such terms. To see how the wilderness stages this competition in a way that displaces the contractual social body, let us return to Mary Jemison’s captivity narrative. As both a woman and an abducted body in the eighteenth-century, Jemison cannot lay claim to either her body or her labor. Her Indian adoption likewise deprives her of marriagability, or the kind of property that comes from her claim to incorporate Englishness within herself and thus to reproduce English culture at the level of the family. Jemison therefore never owns property in the Lockean sense. Even the piece of land over which she is granted proprietorship is subject to competing legal and social claims from the Senecan Council of Chiefs, the United States Senate, comen, and her extended family. Her status as a woman, a captive, and as someone who has gone native therefore disqualifies her several times over as a rights-bearing individual.

As she loses value in a contractual system, however, she gains it in the eyes of the Senecans as she proves adept at preserving their corporate body. When the needs of this body outweigh those of the individual, Jemison's status as such disappears and she instead acquires value for her adaptability, instinct for survival, and the care with which she contributes to the wellbeing of the larger organism. She stipulates, for example, that the proceeds from her land, whenever it should be sold, be distributed evenly throughout the Seneca tribe. This is not so much altruism or philanthropy, but a social act that preserves the resources of the group and hence the group itself. In this way, Jemison's understanding of property underwrites a community that values incorporation over personal sovereignty. She cannot be regarded as an individual when she is not part of a group comprised of individuals. Even though the story of her captivity presupposes an individual with a story to tell, the narrative of her incorporation dissolves the distinction between the individual and the community to which she belongs. Indeed, the notion that an individual authorizes this narrative retreats yet further when we recall that it is a transcribed account by James Seaver.

In *Edgar Huntly*, Brown takes this notion of incorporation one step further by reuniting the mind with the body from which Locke had alienated it. Consider the terms in which Huntly battles impending starvation by imaginatively taking on the characteristics of an animal:

I felt a strong propensity to bite the flesh from my arm. My heart overflowed with cruelty, and I pondered on the delight I should experience in rending some living animal to pieces, and drinking its blood and grinding its quivering fibers between my teeth (156-57).

Two versions of the subject are at odds in this description. On the one hand, Huntly still owns himself ("my arm") as an object to which he alone is entitled. This is the Lockean

notion of the self that is literally coming under assault in the wilderness. The process of incorporation, however, requires that this body lose its objective status. To put it another way, Huntly's desire to eat himself figuratively reincorporates the body into the subject. In this way, Huntly's model of the social body breaks down the distinction between subject and object at the level of the individual.

In this example, "going native" reveals a relationship to the older, humoral model of the human, which does not distinguish between body and mind or the body and its surroundings. Brown's language invokes this residual theory of the body ("my heart overflowed") to suggest that knowledge in the wilderness is a function of physiology and the environmental conditions to which it is subject. In trapping Huntly within the cave, then, Brown contests the logic of the contract by replacing it with an earlier concept of the social body. When Huntly, deprived of sight, first awakens in the cave, he is as Mervyn was in the closet. Rather than a confrontation between mind and material object, Brown sets the stage in both cases for the individual to encounter the world somatically. When Huntly actually kills and eats a panther, we are tempted to see this event from a Lockean perspective – as a degeneration of mind into body and human into animal. According to the logic of the wilderness, however, this grisly meal represents a kind of vitalism that allows Huntly to know the wilderness by literally taking it in. When Huntly expresses a desire to dismember other creatures ("I pondered on the delight I should experience in rending some living animal to pieces"), the process conventionally known as going "going native" describes not only his self-incorporation, but the opportunistic appropriation of other bodies as well. In this model of community, the metaphor of dismemberment sees individual bodies broken down and ecologically integrated into their

environment. Huntly's survival in this system depends upon seizing its advantages, and he indeed proves a successful scavenger in the wilderness.

Such opportunism violates the negative rights of the social contract, where subjects agree not to encroach upon the rights and bodies of other members. In a community that does not maintain difference at the level of the individual, anything remotely like a sympathetic exchange likewise becomes impossible. As if to signal that his incorporated model will demolish this notion, Brown's description of Huntly's becoming a panther evokes Rousseau's man-in-a-cage model of sympathy. In this well-known argument for the innate social feeling of the individual, Rousseau offers

the pathetic image of a confined man who beholds a wild beast outside snatching a child from his mother's breast, crushing his weak limbs in its murderous teeth, and tearing his palpitating entrails apart with its claws. What frightful agitation will not be felt by this witness of an event in which he takes no personal interest? What anguish will he not suffer at this sight, being unable to give any help to the fainting mother and the dying child?^x

The similarity between Rousseau's beast "crushing [the child's] weak limbs in its murderous teeth, and tearing his palpitating entrails apart" and Huntly's animalistic desire to "grind[] the quivering fibers" of a living animal "between [his] teeth" cannot be merely coincidental. Rousseau insists – as Smith does – that sympathy is a mental experience, where the spectator feels what he feels from witnessing another's anguish, while he remains absolutely separate and unable to participate. He feels what he feels vicariously. He only "knows" what the mother and child must feel from a distance. Indeed, his are the feelings we care about. For Rousseau's reader, the object of sympathy in this deliberately overblown scenario is meant to be the man in the cage himself more than the woman whose anguish he witnesses and still less the child whom the beast is attacking. Huntly's delight in the cruelty of the panther, on the other hand, asks us to

identify with the beast. In revising this well-known model, Brown suggests that the kind of community represented by Huntly's bestial appetites is predicated on the very violations of the body, the family, and the sympathetic community proposed by contractual thinking. Lest we doubt that Brown is really making this case, Huntly later confesses that he "had imbibed from unparallel events which had lately happened a spirit vengeful, unrelenting, and ferocious" (184). In literally "imbibing" the "ferocious" qualities of the panther, Huntly becomes one with his environment.

In doing so, Brown's protagonist comes to resemble the nomadic Delaware Indians, who are likewise described in terms of the panther. As Huntly puts it, the "savages" possess "appetites that longed to feast upon my bowels and to quaff my heart's blood" (215).^{xi} Brown describes the Delawares in the same language as Huntly to indicate that the Indians are part an identical incorporated social body that privilege the group over the individual. Dispersed across Norwalk, this community has no discernable origin or endpoint but rather spreads where there are resources. Attacking the settlers in retribution for the appropriation of their lands, the Indians' two most prominent victims in the novel are both young girls, one a captive and the other "mangled by a hatchet," whose scalped head is "gory and deprived of its looks" (220). Rather than read these instances as unintelligible acts of savagery – thereby inadvertently reinscribing the very division between Indian nature and American culture that the novel wishes to dismantle – we can regard them as sophisticated ritualistic procedures designed to preserve the corporate body. As with the Seneca Indians in Mary Jemison's account, the equilibrium and perpetuity of the collective is protected by this economy of revenge, where the Delawares redress the damage inflicted on the larger social organism by capturing,

mutilating, or slaughtering settlers. In these two cases, the Indians take aim at young girls, thus at the reproductive potential of the European family. This social structure, which the novel presents to us in the “patriarchal” (14) farmsteads of Solebury, damages the Indians’ ability to proliferate when it appropriates their resources, and thus threatens the perpetuity of their own model of community.

II. The Politics of Captivity

In Brown’s hands, the language of the gothic translates the captivity narrative convention of a trial in the wilderness into a testing ground for alternative forms of social relations. In Huntly’s case, his trial proposes a model of group identity in which the survival and proliferation of the social body as a whole takes precedence over individual experience. Indeed, it appears that Brown not only wanted to enter into the debate carried on in the captivity narratives of the period – a debate over freedom and the form of government that best ensures it – but he also decided to use that narrative to revise the English novel based on the self-determining individual and sympathetic community. To think of *Ormond; Or, The Secret Witness* (1799) and *Wieland; Or, The Transformation* (1798) as captivity narratives, we need only imagine Philadelphia (in *Ormond*) or Mettingen (in *Wieland*) opposing the sentimental household in much the same way that the wilderness does. Here, too, savage men (Ormond, Carwin, and Wieland) subject isolated and vulnerable females (Constantia and Clara) to despotic forms of power. In what follows, I want to consider how Brown uses captivity narrative conventions to explore the question of sovereignty in incorporated social bodies. To put it another way, what kind of government should regulate a political model where individuals such as Huntly think of themselves as conduits within a larger network rather than self-governing subjects

brought together in a contractual state? Indeed, when we consider that seventy-five percent of all captivity narratives published in the eighteenth century were published in the last two decades of the century,^{xii} it makes sense to situate Brown's novels within this debate over the nature of political authority in the post-revolutionary period.

Conventional literary histories of the captivity narrative repeat a familiar genealogical story, namely, that the first generation of Puritan theological captivity narratives gave way in the eighteenth-century to "bigoted indictments" of minority cultures, before the nineteenth-century evacuated all "factual" content from the genre in favor of sensationalism and sentiment.^{xiii} The publication history of the captivity narrative tells another story altogether. Reprinted editions of hagiographic narratives by Mary Rowlandson (first published in 1682) and John Williams (1707), for example, were more popular during the early republic than at any prior historical moment, vying with both Indian and Barbary captivity narratives for attention among American readers.^{xiv} That earlier theological narratives rivaled their later secular counterparts in popularity during this period suggests that the genre's very heterogeneity spoke to the interests of this readership. Whether the origin of tyrannical power in these narratives is Native American, North African, French, British, or even Anglo-American, the question of where tyranny comes from and what form it takes is ultimately far less important than the alternative and contending forms of political authority such narratives allowed readers to imagine during the fraught political period when Brown was writing his major novels.

Let us assume that tyrannical power (which invalidates the social contract) exists in these narratives to define good government inversely. In other words, good government is that which protects and guarantees the very rights that have been assaulted

under conditions of captivity. The captive comes to recognize legitimate authority by being deprived of its protection; freedom is therefore the state of not-being-captive. In Williams' or Rowlandson's accounts of captivity, for example, the captive secures a place in his or her cultural home by deferring to God as the higher authority who determines who shall be included in the Christian community. Rowlandson turns physical privation into a test of faith that testifies to her eligibility for membership among those favored in the eyes of God. This elite group is made imaginable through the exclusion and stigmatization of her Indian captors, by definition lawbreakers and heathens and hence representative of bad government. In returning to a reconstituted English household, isolated from intrusive alien elements, Rowlandson makes this social formation the seat of good sovereignty and hence the basis for American identity.

That Rowlandson's narrative experienced such a surge in popularity at the end of the eighteenth century tells us that her static, exclusionary model of the nation held considerable appeal for a post-revolutionary readership. Yet the coincidental vogue for other variations of the captivity narratives likewise tells us that Rowlandson's was simply one of several competing notions for the composition of the new United States. Mary Jemison's narrative, for example, rewrites American identity from the periphery by proposing a model of community based on incorporation and assimilation. The very Indian practices that Rowlandson had to expel from her version of the nation become the basis of inclusion in Jemison's. In adopting native customs and abiding by their laws, Jemison converts cultural differences into new protocols for American identity. By reproducing an English household in the wilderness, she reconfigures the elite and exclusionary social formation of Rowlandson's narrative into one that can tolerate

diversity. In doing so, however, she comes to resemble Rowlandson by imagining American identity in terms of stasis. Her narrative may be structured according to a series of removes west, but she continues to seek a place of permanent settlement. This goal is realized in her parting words: “I live in my own house, and on my own land” (209). The composition of their respective households may differ, as may their understanding on the term “property,” but both Jemison and Rowlandson ultimately install some form of stationary, geopolitically-circumscribed domain as a metonym for the new United States.

It is fair to say that Brown’s protagonists all share the same quality of cultural adaptability we see at work in a figure like Mary Jemison. Just as Huntly can participate in a body of information that he can ingest and know somatically, so Ormond or Welbeck can adopt different cultural guises at will, while Mervyn’s superficial affability allows him to pass between different social spheres. Unlike Jemison or Rowlandson, however, these characters are conspicuously situated in a transatlantic world of cultural interpenetration and exchange. Welbeck, for example, is kept financially solvent by money from the West Indies (also the source of the yellow fever that devastates Philadelphia), Carwin travels the world before coming to America, as does Huntly’s mentor Sarsefield, while Ormond, himself of uncertain Baltic origin, is engaged in shadowy political schemes that cross international borders.

This restless, porous model of community is evidently opposed to the exceptionalism of Rowlandson. For this reason, I believe, Brown’s gothic novels are indebted to the more dynamic model of the nation that we can see at work in the equally popular Barbary narratives of the period. Whereas Jemison and Rowlandson locate

freedom in the ability to settle, these narratives imagine freedom as the unimpeded and continual movement through different cultural spheres. They accordingly endorse the form of government that enables the circulation of goods and people. Drawing explicitly on the conventions of the Barbary narrative to write his novel *The Algerine Captive* (1797), Royall Tyler defines Europeans, Americans, and North Africans by their ability to exchange goods, services, and information in the larger Atlantic world. In the first half of Tyler's novel, Updike Underhill, like so many of Brown's protagonists, searches in vain for "a place of settlement"; regional differences within the United States make it impossible for people to circulate.^{xv} Underhill's skills, interests, morals and manners as a New Englander do not translate well across cultural divides: "every attempt at familiarity," as he puts it, "customary in the northern states, excited alarm [in the South]" (82-83). With Underhill's "New England ideas" (83) always at odds with those with whom he seeks to be at home, Tyler makes it clear that different regional groups within the U.S. will not tolerate outsiders, even if they do observe laws of universal hospitality.^{xvi}

To imagine a model of government capable of negotiating such divides, Tyler relocates his protagonist to North Africa. Once Underhill becomes a captive in Algiers, he comes to recognize good government as that which ensures the free circulation of people across international borders. By contrast, tyrannical rule, which enforces his captivity, impedes his movement and limits his opportunities for observation. He can only accrue the archive of information that provides the substance of his narrative to the degree that his various masters permit him free reign through Algiers. The logic of circulation draws together two halves of an ostensibly disjunctive novel, as the reader

comes to see Underhill's ethnographic descriptions of Africa as mirroring his more picaresque accounts of local American cultures. Although, in behavior and appearance, the places themselves contrast completely, what is more important is the mobility each allows. Both halves of the novel privilege movement and contact between populations and ethnic groups over individual experience. As his refusal to convert to Islam demonstrates, the captive does not need to go native to be part of this international network. Underhill must adapt, by learning the language and respecting Algerine customs, but he can remain part of his ethnic group and still participate in a transatlantic system of exchange. As he describes his relationship with the Mollah, "I was charmed with the man, though I abominated his faith" (147). He may separate himself decisively from Islam, but Underhill can nonetheless imagine sharing a common humanity with his religious adversary.

In turning next to Rev. Aldridge's *Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black* (1795), I want to suggest that Aldridge domesticates the circulatory model of social relations that Tyler's *Algerine Captive* puts to work in a cosmopolitan, transatlantic context. Marrant may be transculturated, but unlike Jemison he regards freedom in terms of mobility and exchange rather than settlement and property. In this respect, he has more in common with Tyler's Underhill. Just as Underhill takes his medical practice to new places and thereby acquires new techniques before moving on, Marrant takes his evangelism to different cultures in an endless pattern of conversion and remove. A black preacher, Marrant is nonetheless defined primarily through his capacity to travel unimpeded between different places and ethnic groups, rather than by his race.^{xvii} His cultural identity, in other words, is a function of his mobility. In contrast

to Rowlandson's tendency to think of every "remove" as a potentially irreparable separation from her point of origin, Marrant's narrative is a long succession of removes. "Unstable as water," Marrant compulsively follows the "inclination . . . to go further on," as his travels take him from New York to Georgia to South Carolina to the Tennessee Indian nations to the Atlantic ocean to Britain before the narrative ends with his imminent departure for Nova Scotia.^{xviii} Even the syntax is transitive ("as I passed along" [184]; "as I was going on" [187]), suggesting not so much a journey between two points but a perpetual movement that keeps his body in constant circulation. When he declares that he "would rather die than return home" (187), Marrant issues a sharp critique of the Rowlandson model of community that defines identity in relation to a fixed home. With this declaration, he redefines captivity as the forced return to a point of origin. If, as Marrant indicates, "liberty" (193) is nothing else but the ability to "continue[] moving" (186), then captivity is an impediment only when it takes bodies out of circulation.^{xix} Thus the measure of the man in this text is his mobility and not his undisputed ownership of himself. Indeed, by questioning property as the basis of humanity, Marrant successfully imagines an inclusionary, mobile version of American identity. Arguably, his status as a free black makes him ideally suited to make this point. Coming from a free family of considerable means, Marrant is anything but a slave and, as such, not to be regarded as a piece of property.

Important to my purposes, Marrant's ability to circulate is a function of his cultural plasticity. His religious conversion to evangelism is doubled in his cultural conversion among the Cherokee when he adopts "the habit of the country" (193). His familiarity with Indian customs and language, in addition to his evangelism, becomes

cultural capital that can travel, securing him entry into yet more cultures and communities. Indeed, he is only permitted to return to his original community once he has undergone this transculturation. Expelled from Charleston because of his evangelism, he returns as a “wild man” (195) whose preaching is now acceptable. His return, in other words, transforms a prescriptive community – one built to the older, Rowlandson model of cultural exclusion – into one that can incorporate diversity through transculturation. In effect, he brings the wilderness back with him when he transforms this community into one without culturally-circumscribed limits. Thus Marrant makes it possible to imagine a transculturated captive who has gone native and yet returned to a reconstituted home. This suggests a diasporic logic that, in the post-revolutionary period, doubtless had considerable appeal for a readership that thought of itself as culturally, if not politically, connected to Britain.^{xx}

III. Brown’s “Transformation” of the Nation

The kind of community Brown proposes in *Huntly* and *Wieland*, I suggest, has much in common with the one that Marrant’s *Narrative* asks us to imagine. In these novels, Brown draws on the tropes of the captivity narrative to imagine a nation whose constituents are united through the circulation and transmission of information, while the subject best suited to thrive in such an environment is one characterized by the same cultural plasticity as Marrant. This imaginative community is hardly pure. Nor is membership reserved for the elite few who enjoy the privilege and meet the standard of self-regulation. As a network of continual movement and exchange, this model of community can travel across spatial boundaries and thereby unite disparate people whose imaginative ties to a culture of origin have long since been displaced by space and time.

In Brown, this notion of community displaces the sentimental household as a paradigm for the nation. That his gothic novels resolutely refuse to end with the easy reconstruction of such a household – even *Arthur Mervyn* could only offer a vexed and self-critiquing version of one – suggests that we need to read his perplexed endings in terms of this diasporic model instead.

Huntly's trial in the wilderness ends with his apparent escape and subsequent integration into the Lorimer household. Mrs. Lorimer's marriage to Sarsefield reconstitutes that household by installing a paternal figure at its head, and Huntly replaces Clithero as its adopted son. At this point, it would appear that Brown has retreated from the dynamic model of collectivity he proposed in *Delaware* in favor of a sentimental resolution that seals off the family from alienating forms of cultural difference, were it not for the fact that an epistolary turn perplexes this model. In the hands of sentimental novelists such as Samuel Richardson or William Hill Brown, letters work in the service of a British model of individual autonomy by proposing and reinscribing an authorial consciousness whose literacy qualifies her to tell her own story. In *Huntly*, by way of contrast, letters break down the boundaries between individuals on which the sentimental household is predicated. These letters undergo unintended detours and digressions, allowing information to circulate through the entire social body, much like the yellow fever. As Sarsefield explains in his letter to Huntly,

I designed that all these proceedings [to capture Clithero] should be concealed from the women, but unfortunately neglected to take suitable measures for hindering the letter which you gave me reason to expect on the ensuing day, from coming into their hands. It was delivered to my wife in my absence and opened immediately by her (284).

We can see here that any attempt to shut down the flow of information is futile, as it transcends individual intention and travels where ever its current takes it. In this case, Mrs. Lorimer miscarries from the shock of the information thus relayed. In Ireland, we should recall, Brown made Mrs. Lorimer's natural son disappear in order to propose a social formation that replenished itself through substitution rather than reproduction. With the death of Mrs. Lorimer's unborn child at the novel's end, the genealogical line of descent is once again displaced, this time by a weave of knowledge that spreads wherever there is opportunity. In this system, Huntly is not so much an individual as a relay through which information passes. Like Marrant, Huntly brings the principles of the wilderness "home," and thereby transforms the community from an endpoint and home to something like a relay station or conduit through which the world circulates.

In turning next to *Wieland*, I want to consider how the novel's subtitle, "The Transformation," operates as a sustained metaphor and draws together the concept of the individual's incorporation in a larger social body with the concept of "going native," as we encountered it in *Edgar Huntly*, and cultural adaptability, as imagined by John Marrant. With Clara Wieland, Brown solves a problem that male captives such as Marrant, Underhill, or Huntly could not address head on-- namely, the problem of cultural reproduction, or how to perpetuate a community organized principles of transculturation and circulation.

Let us first think of Carwin's ventriloquism as the transmission of ideas that do not originate in the sensation of actual things or people. With no discernable origin or destination, these ideas enter the Wielands directly, uniting them in one heterogeneous organism. These specious representations produce Wieland's "transformation" from

devoted father to murderous fanatic in terms taken straight from the captivity narrative. When he thinks his god speaks directly to him, for example, Wieland turns into a man “rapacious of blood,” who behaves just like a “savage.”^{xxi} Indeed, under the influence of Carwin’s ventriloquism, both Wieland and Pleyel “go native” in that they come to resemble the tyrants of a disintegrating sentimental idyll, as they prey on women who are represented as the victims of savagery. The novel darkly hints that Catherine Wieland was raped by her husband before he strangled her, and Louisa Conway, the Wielands’ adopted sister, has her head mutilated – a death obviously meant to evoke the Indian method of scalping. As Clara notes, her family’s brutal death “was worthy of savages trained to murder, and exulting in agonies” (198). Pleyel may not assault Clara’s body but he does cast doubt on her virtue, which makes him, in Clara’s estimation, no different from “the traitor who assailed [her] life” (133).

These descriptions make it clear that the male protagonists have been transformed into Indian captors. Whereas Rowlandson renders the Indian phobic as the representative of a despotic form of authority, however, this novel uses the same figure for its rhetorical possibilities. Here, one’s “transformation” into an Indian is the trope Brown uses to propose a model of community based on the free circulation of information. In Clara’s description of Carwin, this concept of “transformation” becomes a uniquely American brand of cosmopolitanism:

His garb, aspect, and deportment, were wholly Spanish. A residence of three years in the country, indefatigable attention to the language, and a studious conformity with the customs of the people, had made him indistinguishable from a native, when he chose to assume that character . . . He had embraced the catholic religion, and adopted a Spanish name instead of his own . . . On topics of religion and of his own history, previous to his *transformation* into a Spaniard, he was invariably silent (77-78).

Carwin's conversion evokes the conventional association in the European gothic between Catholicism and Old World degeneracy. He therefore enters the novel – much like the Irish immigrant Clithero – already furnished with an objectified brand of barbaric difference, underscored by the fact that he has clearly “gone native” in converting to the Roman faith (he is “indistinguishable from a native”).^{xxii} Importantly, this description makes it clear that Carwin's conversion, like Marrant's, is as much cultural as religious. Indeed, Brown suggests that Carwin is peculiarly adept at appropriating other cultures at will “when he chose to assume that character.” By turning Mettingen into a wilderness, Brown tethers the concept of “going native” as incorporation to the kind of cultural adaptation and appropriation that allows the subject to travel freely, like Marrant, between places and cultures. Thus Carwin not only thrives in Catholic Spain by taking on the appearance and manners of a Spaniard, but he can also appear as a peasant and parrot the kind of rational humanism so appealing to the Wielands. His specious representations allow him to slip between cultural and social spheres; as he puts it, “I scrutinized everything and pried everywhere” (234). This slipperiness allows him to turn Clara into an object of study. From seducing her maid to reading her private journal, Carwin displays a notable degree of ingenuity and adaptability to achieve this end. By refusing to observe individual boundaries, he “transforms” everything into a source of potentially useful information.

IV. Reproducing the Wilderness

Now let us shift our focus back to the female captive, whose refusal to take on “other” cultural practices that might help her adapt to the wilderness determines whether she can remain the bearer of cultural value. Her actions dictate the terms on which a community,

united under the principles of good government defined by what she lacks in captivity, can be reproduced. By placing Clara Wieland in the position of the female captive, Brown suggests how to reproduce a community whose predominant characteristic is the unimpeded transmission of information through a single heterogeneous social body. In order to qualify Clara for the task of transmission, Brown follows the logic of “going native” and incorporates her into the informational network, where she acquires the qualities of cultural mobility and adaptability. Let me suggest how.

First, Brown turns Clara into a captive and takes away any hope of a return to a home to her original community:

I live not in a community of savages; yet whether I sit or walk, go into crouds [sic], or hide myself in solitude, my life is marked for a pray to inhuman violence; I am in perpetual danger or perishing (217).

As Clara observes, she may not live in a wilderness but she is being assaulted as if she were. To put it another way, there is no discernable difference between nature and culture in Mettingen.^{xxiii} Clara can no more escape the wilderness than Huntly can. In this sense, she is eternally “severed” from “the house and name of Wieland” once Mettingen has taken on the characteristics of a wilderness (172). Because there is no escape, Clara must adapt to survive. Brown gives her ample opportunity to kill herself and thereby escape defilement, but the fact that she refuses to die tells us Clara’s sexual – hence cultural – purity is not at stake in this narrative. Instead, she becomes part of the same community of shared knowledge with the rest of her family:

I reflected that this madness, if madness it were, had affected Pleyel and myself as well as Wieland . . . I wondered at the change which a moment had affected in my brother’s condition. Now I was stupified [sic] with ten-fold wonder in contemplating myself. Was I not likewise *transformed from rational and human* into a creature of nameless and fearful attributes? (204-5, my italics)

Clara's introspection ("contemplating myself") presupposes that there is a self to contemplate, or a singular identity that exists as a world unto itself. Her incorporation, however, effaces this subjective status.

Through the process of "transformation," this "rational" model of the human give way to something in the order of the panther ("a creature of nameless and fearful attributes"). Indeed, faced with Carwin's apparent culpability in the destruction of her family, Clara confesses: "I thirsted for his blood . . . and was tormented with an insatiable appetite for his destruction" (253). It is worth noting that, at the point where Clara enters the same network of collective "madness" that gripped the rest of her family, she is also described in the same terms as the Delaware Indians that populate *Edgar Huntly*. By becoming panther, Clara demonstrates a capacity for hybridization that translates into an ability to absorb information and enter into a system of cultural circulation.

It makes sense that, once part of such a system, Clara would, like Underhill or Marrant, be damaged by stasis or a forced return to a point of origin. To make this point, Brown nearly kills her off by rendering her immobile at the end of the novel. Long after her family has perished, Clara retains an obsolete attachment to Mettingen which confines her to her bed and endangers her life. By subjecting her to ennui, a fever, and even a house fire, Brown makes it clear that Clara cannot live while retaining a chimerical belief in origins. In such a case, good government is that which enables – even forces – her continued circulation. Such a model of authority comes to the rescue in the shape of Clara's uncle, who saves her life by taking her to Europe. Here, Clara's ennui gives way to "curiosity" in the face of "living manners and the monuments of past ages" (271). In other words, new information in the form of sight-seeing becomes a

source of vitality, much like Huntly's meal of raw panther. Clara may be severed from her original "house and name" (172), but she is part of a new community constituted through the international exchange of knowledge.

The novel therefore ends with a return to a different cultural home, one that Clara has reconstituted by proving intellectually mobile. Importantly, Brown rewards her cultural receptivity and continued circulation with a household of her own. In remaining eligible to marry a white man (Pleyel, with whom she is reconciled), it is evident that Clara's reproductive value was not compromised by her going native. Indeed, it is fair to say that her very ability to go native entitles her to this household in the first place. This sentimental unit, conspicuously, can only form in Europe once Clara has gone native and thereby proven herself capable of remaining mobile. In this way, Brown fulfills the diasporic fantasy of a daughter's return to and reproduction of a cultural home even after she has gone native.

In *Ormond*, by way of contrast, Brown shows us the consequences of trying to remain culturally pure in America. In notable contrast to Clara Wieland, Constantia Dudley emerges at the end of this novel clearly compromised by her association with a barbaric masculine figure distinguished alike by his "intercourse with savages" and Old World Gothic menace.^{xxiv} Even though her trials have been largely similar to Clara's, Constantia is conspicuously denied the same sentimental sanctuary of marriage, and lives out the brief remainder of the novel in a state of disconsolate half-life. Held captive in the final chapters by Ormond in an isolated country estate and threatened with rape, she emerges from his unsuccessful assault as if he had succeeded in damaging her: "her hands were clasped on her breast, her eyes fixed upon the ceiling and streaming with

tears, and her hair unbound and falling confusedly over her bosom and neck” (272). Described in this way, Constantia is clearly put in the position of a polluted daughter taken straight from the pages of a seduction novel. To understand what Brown achieves drawing on this figure, we need to consider the polluted daughter in a transatlantic context.

In the British tradition, a polluted daughter is no longer qualified to reproduce the culture of her origins because she has entered a system of exchange outside paternal control and therefore cannot reproduce a bloodline. In *Clarissa* (1747-48), Richardson subjects his heroine to the violent ordeal of rape in order to prove a point about the restrictiveness of such authority. While her body may have been appropriated by Lovelace, Clarissa’s mental property (or property-in-herself) remains inviolable. She neither consents to Lovelace’s demands, nor stops writing letters. In this respect, Clarissa belongs to herself alone. She is not a piece of property in a system of exchange between men – she is not her father’s to trade, nor Lovelace’s to steal.^{xxv} Clarissa’s demise underscores the inadequacy of existing forms of masculine authority, thereby updating the norms to include men who would prove capable of recognizing, appreciating, and protecting Clarissa’s interiority. Patriarchal authority replaces a politics of paternalism.

In transforming Constantia into a polluted daughter, Brown is doing something rather different. If the British tradition was invested in updating masculine norms, Brown wants to imagine a polluted daughter as the cultural bearer of reproductive value in the colonies. In *Wieland*, he gave us a heroine who could perform such a task. By comparison, Constantia is disqualified because, unlike Clara, she refuses to hybridize. To make this case, Brown represents her rejection of a union with the racially-indeterminate

Ormond as a narrowly-avoided creolization. It should come as no surprise to learn that such a process is described in terms that evoke the wilderness. Ormond plans to take her “beyond the precincts of civilized existence” – to take her, in other words, into the wilderness by “traversing inhospitable countries, and extinguishing what remained of clemency and justice by intercourse with savagery” (210). In refusing this alliance, Constantia evidently has more in common with Mary Rowlandson in that she refuses to admit intrusive forces of cultural difference. Indeed, the Dudleys go to considerable lengths to seclude themselves – unsuccessfully – from invasive elements such as the plague and nosy neighbors. For this reason, we must assume, Constantia remains a strict adherent to the principles of contractualism throughout the novel, imagining herself united to one who can extend and perfect her own individualism. Given that she can only imagine herself married to someone much like herself, Ormond is, indeed, a poor choice of partner in a contractual system.

To account for the novel’s paradoxical ending, in which the heroine appears polluted yet is actually culturally and physically intact, I argue that two competing models of national sovereignty are competing in the rape scene. On the one hand, Constantia’s literal struggle for sexual purity suggests a British notion of contractualism that requires the contracting parties to share the same cultural notions. This kind of contract abhors a mixture. *Arthur Mervyn*, we should recall, had to work very hard to imagine a contract that could account for cross-cultural alliance. On the other hand, her appearance as the apparent victim of force suggests that to be in America is to be creolized. When Ormond describes her impending rape as “an inexorable and immutable decree” (248), we can see a *de facto* logic of hybridization at work. As a penalty for

refusing this fate, Constantia must sacrifice Ormond's life, her mental fortitude, and her reproductive future. Constantia, in other words, has attempted the impossible in trying to remain true to her origins in America. In terms of a diasporic logic, she cannot return to a home that never existed for her in the first place. Indeed, when she returns to Britain only to live out a life of "eternal anguish" (274), we can see that even to try such a feat is to experience social death. In this novel, a polluted daughter is better than one who remains culturally pure, and Clara is thus a much more successful heroine than Constantia. Clara succeeds where Constantia fails through her willingness to go native – to circulate in a wider system of cultural exchange. This, I believe, constitutes the novel's American difference.

Chapter Three

A Mind for the Gothic

My first two chapters examined a stubbornly residual model of humanity that appears prominently in American fiction of the early republic and which arguably received its best expression in the gothic novels of Charles Brockden Brown. This model, at odds with Enlightenment notions of autonomy and self-government, emphasized a fundamental continuity between the individual and its environment and the mutability of human identity.ⁱ That the constitution of the American mind continued as a matter of debate long after Brockden Brown published his major novels is evident in the welter of different character types that would seem to strive for this status not only in the works of Poe or Hawthorne, but also in the extremely popular but long-forgotten novels of Robert Montgomery Bird's novel of metempsychosis *Sheppard Lee* (1836), or the *Memoirs* of the notorious conman Stephen Burroughs (originally published in 1798, revised and republished in 1804 and 1811). Scholarship has found it difficult to place fiction like Bird's, Brockden Brown's, and even Poe's in the American canon because their characters' apparent inconsistencies and instabilities would appear to disqualify them as novelistic protagonists.

This chapter argues that such seemingly anomalous fiction is planted squarely within a distinctively American literary tradition that sought to reconfigure the human mind for a nation that, by the 1830s, had come to think of itself as a cluster of disparate and discrete parts rather than the network of transatlantic affiliation imagined by Brown. Whenever we encounter protagonists who seem internally incoherent, altogether different in composition, and begging to be measured by a constellation of contradictory norms, I

believe we are in the presence of different and contending notions of what the American character might be, and, moreover, that the congealing of such conflict versus its resolution in favor of one or another is the key to American character. In taking up the short fiction of Poe and Bird's novel *Sheppard Lee*, I want to show how Enlightenment models of humanity continue to shape the contours of this contested psychological terrain.

These two authors meet over this subject in Poe's 1836 review in the *Southern Literary Messenger* of *Sheppard Lee*, a novel in which the protagonist discovers the power to transmit himself into other bodies, undergoing no less than seven transmigrations.ⁱ Otherwise laudatory in his praise for the novel, Poe nonetheless takes issue with Bird's discontinuous protagonist who "very awkwardly, partially loses, and partially does not lose, his identity at each transmigration."ⁱⁱ The novel would have been of greater "interest," Poe argues, had Bird chosen "a character *unchanging*" (401); that is, "a consciousness continually present to itself [with] a secure sense of self-identity"ⁱⁱⁱ This contest over metempsychosis tells us exactly how Poe and Bird diverge in their notions of the mind on which character rests. Poe, I will argue, appropriates Locke to reconfigure the self-enclosed, autonomous rational subject – that is to say, "a character *unchanging*." Bird has more in common with the Brockden Brown in that he reconfigures the mind as fundamental discontinuous and capable of moving freely between different social environments. Both authors, nevertheless, share a common preoccupation with which model of the American mind is best suited to negotiate cultural difference.

I. Poe's Uncommon Sense

I believe that the proliferation of psychological models in narrative form was determined at least in part by the challenge of cross-cultural understanding in a nation comprising autonomous and culturally-distinct social groups. Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820), Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839), and Hawthorne's *Rappaccini's Daughter* (1844) are among those works of fiction that offer a literary landscape populated by small social units whose cultural practices are inscrutable to the uninitiated. A nation that thinks of itself as a collection of different local cultures is evidently an altogether different political formation than Brown's diasporic cosmopolitan community or Locke's contractual state. To fathom the implications of this difference for the American political imagination, let us assume that each discrete community has its own set of cultural practices and interpretative strategies. Each community, moreover, regards its own distinctive cultural codes as normative in relation to other groups. Irving's famous mock-gothic tale demonstrates these principles by staging a collision between two such communities. Ichabod Crane cannot penetrate the cultural codes of Sleepy Hollow because he brings his own interpretative strategies to bear on that community unaware of discrepancy between theirs and his own. Ichabod's inflated confidence in his own erudition leads him to overestimate his eligibility as a husband, discounting the possibility that Katrina van Tassel's understanding of local courtship customs, which she exploits to negotiate her own match, might have any bearing on his success as a suitor. Yet for Ichabod to marry Katrina would in effect destroy the marriage rules that keep the community intact. A closed local group, Irving suggests, preserves its culture by refusing admission to those uninitiated into the rules governing the community. Irving, like Poe, renders such an opaque local world in terms of the

gothic, where the rules organizing this sphere appear as the malevolent manifestations of an invisible, hence supernatural, power.

Ichabod's experience begs the following question: how can cultures negotiate their differences when each group can only account for those differences in its own terms? While Irving leaves this problem comically unanswered, Poe offers a solution that radically revises the Lockean model of how we see the world and draw inferences from it. Poe uses Lockean logic to fashion a new form of common sense peculiarly suited for the new republic, insofar as it accounts for information that appears hidden to those uninitiated into the cultural practices at its source.^{iv} To make this case, I must briefly rehearse some of the components Poe borrows from Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Here the empirical subject acquires knowledge of the world through repeated sensory encounters that Locke calls "experience." Processed through the faculty of reflection, these sensations accrue as an archive of ideas that mirrors the order of the external world. As sensory information accumulates, the individual not only comes to know the world of objects but also builds a more extensive and reliable classification system which he brings to new experiences.

As long as we assume that all men in possession of the rational faculty will interpret objective phenomena in roughly the same way, this model of the individual holds up. But the minute a novel relocates that individual in a milieu comprising different communities each with its own cultural practices, the limitations of the British model becomes strikingly clear. In Irving's *Sleepy Hollow*, for example, the same object means different things to different people, depending on their preconceived notions of "experience," or what we might call local culture. Fed by an appetite for ghost stories,

Ichabod sees a headless horseman, while the Sleepy Hollow inhabitants, familiar with the antics of Brom Bones, see a prankster wielding a pumpkin. Each local group, Irving suggests, has its own predefined interpretative system, which renders the visible world legible in terms specific to that system.

As American authors were quick to recognize, the Enlightenment model of a strictly Lockean model of reason rests on the assumption that common sense can provide an accurate description of the physical world. What works in a system of Old World social hierarchies – that all rational men, by definition landowners, are constituted in roughly the same way and see roughly the same reality through a sense they share in common – becomes an impossible fantasy on American soil. There can be no “common” sense when men of varying cultures share little in common in the first place and will necessarily see different realities that are mediated by their own distinct practices. Poe takes aim at conventional reason in *The Man of the Crowd* (1840) and the Dupin tales to make just this point. Consider, for example, Dupin’s critique of “mathematical reason” in *The Purloined Letter* (1844):

The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what is called *pure* algebra, are abstract or general truths. And this error is so egregious that I am confounded at the universality with which it has been received. Mathematical axioms are *not* axioms of general truth . . . There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of *relation*.^v

Using the language of mathematics, Poe exposes the problem of any empirical system based on “observation upon form and quantity” that claims to produce “abstract or general truths.” These truths only hold “within the limits of relation”; that is, they offer a conclusion that only holds true within a delimited and closed set of terms.^{vi} The notion of “abstract or general truth” is always and entirely dependent on the set of assumptions

that one brings to the primary act of observation. Any sense of the “typical” or “normal” is consequently useless in a diversified world, where one’s own way of reading necessarily encounters different local cultures. To assume that one’s own system of interpretation is universally applicable inevitably leads to dangerous cultural misreadings of the true situation.

Poe’s *The Man of the Crowd* exposes the limits of a conventional reason that assumes it can account for the whole world. Observing a crowd of people flowing past his window, the narrator divides its members into generic categories based on their social function: merchants, noblemen, prostitutes, pickpockets, and so on. Pre-established ideas determine how he classifies these sensations. He recognizes the “tribe of clerks,” as he puts it, because “the manner of these persons seemed to me an exact facsimile of what had been the perfection of *bon ton* about twelve or eighteen months before” (389-90). Until the illegible stranger appears in its midst, the crowd can be read as the sum of its discrete parts. There is nothing to challenge the narrator’s categories.

The appearance of a stranger who defies such classification stages a problem latent in Locke’s model of reason. When an individual draws ideas from sensations, his faculty of reflection abstracts an essence from sensations, and that abstraction stands for the properties of the thing itself. In other words, reflection converts material phenomena into generalized types.^{vii} If we infer types from the phenomena we encounter and bring those types to bear on new experiences, then either the entire universe must fall within those categories or we have mistaken our own cultural classification system for the entire world. In either event, we are unable to account for information that lies outside that system of classification. Sensory information comes to the mind in the shape of received

notions, and we in turn come to view the world much as we expect to see it. These notions, then, and not the world itself, constitute everyday experience.

Poe's narrator dramatizes the risks and potential advantages of breaking one's reliance on the already-seen. This narrator does not view the crowd in an every-day, common sense state of mind: "I found myself in one of those happy moods . . . of the keenest appetency, where the film of the mental vision departs . . . and the intellect, electrified, surpasses greatly its every-day condition" (388). With heightened sensibility comes recognition of the limits of habitual perception; he is keen for an epistemological adventure. Such acute sensory awareness suggests that the narrator is in a position to see the mundane and familiar as themselves constructed categories. He can see, in other words, that the preconceptions produced by his culture are traditional categories that do not necessarily reflect material circumstances. Where common sense wants to reduce the crowd to familiar types, this unusual state of mind renders him keenly sensitive to anything that resists those categories, anything that is out of place. Embodying nothing if not such out-of-placeness, a stranger in the crowd supplies an additional element, wholly outside the narrator's prior experience, that cannot be incorporated into the world according to common sense:

[I viewed] a countenance which at once arrested and absorbed my whole attention, on account of the absolute idiosyncrasy of its expression. Any thing remotely resembling that expression I had never seen before . . . there arose confusedly and paradoxically within my mind, the ideas of vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness, of avarice, of coolness, of malice, of blood-thirstiness, of triumph, of merriment, of excessive terror, of intense – of supreme despair (392).

Unable to convert sensory information into everyday experience, the narrator responds with a string of contradictory adjectives – adjectives, we might say, in search of a noun.

As a piece of information that fits into none of the narrator's functional categories, the

stranger is a form of excess for which no pre-existing “idea” can account. Poe turns to the language of the gothic – that of “excessive terror” and “supreme despair” – to signal that this excess has shattered the mimetic illusion, as it dislodges the set of ideas conventionally equated with reason from the world those ideas are designed to mirror. The man of the crowd is what we might call a “gothic object,” in that his meaning quite literally keeps retreating from the narrator as he pursues the stranger around the streets of London in a vain attempt to “satisf[y] myself in some measure respecting him” (394) and patch the hole in his classification system.

For lack of a function, the narrator assigns a dysfunction to the one thing that cannot be explained by a system that thinks only in terms of types. To preserve his “reason,” he translates the stranger’s illegibility into a negative category when he calls him “the type and genius of deep crime” (396). We do catch a glimpse of “a diamond and a dagger” (393) in the stranger’s cloak by way of clues to some malevolent act, but neither the origin nor the function of these objects is ever explained; they are legible only as signs of the stranger’s illegibility. His crime, we must conclude, is not an assault on the mores of respectability so much as a refusal to fit into normative categories that would allow us to judge him.

Crime is Poe’s term for sensory information that exposes the limits of a rationality that rests on traditional categories of everyday life and the causes that observe certain norms for interaction among those categories. Crime pitches an object or a person out of its assigned place in a classificatory system so that we cannot identify it for what it is, infer a cause, or anticipate a result. To understand such information, we need an interpretative strategy that can see objects independent of the categories of everyday life

– a strategy, in other words, that can go one step further than the narrator’s ability to simply identify that which lies outside his field of knowledge. Such a strategy would open up a space of possibility where new information can emerge. It should come as no surprise that Poe describes such a space as “[lying] frequently among recesses of thought altogether inaccessible to the ordinary understanding” (*Murders* 398).

Poe lays the groundwork for this way of reading the world in the anecdote of “odds and evens” in *The Purloined Letter*. As Dupin tells it, a schoolboy unfailingly wins his friends’ marbles through “mere observation and admeasurement of the astuteness of his opponents” (689). The schoolboy, in other words, does not assume that his opponents think as he does. Knowing that each player may, in all probability, begin from a different set of assumptions about the game of marbles, he knows that different interpretative strategies rather than varying skills at marbles are in play.^{viii}

The logic of the game of marbles operates on a larger narrative scale in the triangular collision between the competing strategies of the Prefect, the Minister, and Dupin. As Dupin observes, the Parisian Police fail to find the letter, purloined by the Minister, because

They have no variation of principle in their investigations . . . they extend or exaggerate their old modes of *practice* without touching on their principles . . . [The Prefect of Police] has taken it for granted that *all* men proceed to conceal a letter, - not exactly in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg – but, at least, in *some* out-of-the-way hole or corner suggested by the same tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg (690).

Poe clearly identifies the Police with a form of reason that never questions whether ideas based on past sensory encounters can explain a situation explicitly designed to exploit those expectations. The Prefect’s intellectual inertia is the consequence of having “one set of notions regarding human ingenuity” (690) based on the “presumable and

presumed” (691). Like the narrator of *The Man of the Crowd*, the Prefect sees what he expects to see. He expects the letter to be hidden, so he searches for a hiding place where such an object might be concealed. In his “Seminar on the Purloined Letter,” Lacan describes the Prefect’s way of thinking as

the realist’s imbecility, which does not pause to observe that nothing, however deep in the bowels of the earth a hand may seek to ensconce it, will ever be hidden there, since another hand can always retrieve it, and that what is hidden is never but what is *missing from its place*.^{ix}

As Lacan reminds us at another point in “The Seminar,” “purloined” does not mean “theft” so much as the deviation of an object from its intended course (43). In this sense, the term “purloined” has much in common with the definition of crime we encountered in *The Man of the Crowd*, where crime was a metaphor for information what, in Lacan’s words, goes “missing from its place.”

In this light, it is fair to say that the Minister’s crime is not stealing the letter so much as disturbing the order of objects. As a “poet” (691), he understands exactly what expectations the Prefect will bring to bear on the letter and how to exploit them. Much like the boy who wins at marbles, the Minister knows how his opponent thinks, so he leaves the letter in plain sight, modifying only its external appearance. He is a “fool” (691) as well as a poet, however, because his ingenuity extends only as far as inverting the realist’s expectations – a strategy as transparent to Dupin as it is opaque to the Prefect of Police.

Dupin’s intellectual mastery over both the Prefect and the Minister stages, in narrative form, Poe’s appropriation of Lockean common sense. Like the narrator of *The Man of the Crowd*, Dupin recognizes that crime recodes sensory information in a way that makes it inaccessible to interpretative strategies that rely on a sense of the ordinary.

In contrast to that narrator, however, he also knows how to make sense of that information:

It is by these deviations from the plane of the ordinary, that reason feels its way, if at all, in the search for the true. In investigations such as we are now pursuing, it should not be so much asked ‘what has occurred,’ as ‘what has occurred that has never occurred before’” (*Murders in the Rue Morgue* 414)

The power of this statement – which Poe repeats practically verbatim in *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt* (1842-43)^x – lies in the way it deftly revises the Enlightenment model of reason. For Dupin, reason is only rational when it confronts and deals with what lies beyond ordinary experience, or that which “has never occurred before.” Importantly, Poe does not discard the category of experience altogether as the means of measuring future encounters. Dupin admits that he knows the Minister well – they have tangled before – and this knowledge tells him precisely what expectations others will bring to the game, expectations corresponding to what we mean by common sense. By taking the intellectual measure of both the police and the Minister, Dupin assesses not only what they consider “ordinary” (a word Poe uses nine times over the course of the tale) but also what exceeds the ordinary.

In contrast to the boy who wins at marbles, the Minister knows but one way of defeating the Prefect’s expectations, and that is to invert those expectations by hiding the letter in plain sight. Where the Prefect looks for resemblance between the original letter and the purloined letter, Dupin seizes on differences between the two as the important information – differences that announce themselves as the properties of a letter in disguise:

it was, to all appearance, radically different from the one of which the Prefect had read us so minute a description . . . the *radicalness* of these differences; the dirt;

the soiled and torn condition of the paper, so inconsistent with the *true* methodical habits of [the Minister] (696).

Understanding both the ordinary and then its inversion, Dupin sees the situation from outside the black box of everyday reason with the uncommon sense of the victorious marble player. To use Lacan's phrase, Dupin looks for that which is "missing from its place" – a letter that, by its very deviation in appearance from what one would expect of the Prefect and the Minister, sticks out like a sore thumb. It is from such a vantage point that readers can see otherwise inexplicable phenomena – a missing letter, or a headless horseman, for example – as the products, not of magical thinking, but of competing cultural logics. By divorcing sensory phenomena from their preconceived categories, Dupin's uncommon sense offers a way of acquiring information under conditions of cultural relativism.

This reading, I believe, accounts for the peculiar status of objects in the Dupin tales, where Poe rhetorically removes all abstract qualities from things and designates them as wholly substantive. The purloined letter, for example, begins its itinerary as something much like a gothic object – similar to the stranger in the crowd – in that its excessive meaning outstrips its materiality. As an object, the letter itself may have no intrinsic value but its never-revealed content always retains the power to overturn the established order of things by toppling the government. Poe inverts this relationship at the end of the tale by having Dupin substitute his own facsimile letter to decoy the unsuspecting Minister. The original now safely retrieved, the forgery spells the Minister's downfall because it is not the object it appears (to him) to be: "being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it was. Thus he will inevitably commit himself, at once, to his political destruction" (697).

Unlike the original, the facsimile's power resides wholly in its materiality; its content has no power to change the physical world because it merely reveals to the Minister the identity of his nemesis. By evacuating all intrinsic meaning from the letter, Poe shifts our focus to the object's surface – a reversal that Dupin anticipates at the beginning of *The Purloined Letter* when he announces that the mystery's solution will be altogether “plain” and “self-evident” (681). This surface announces an object out of place, put there by the Minister and thus indicative of his crime.

The same principle is at work in *The Murders of the Rue Morgue*, where Dupin solves the murders on the basis of their “outré” (414) character, a word whose etymology points us toward outer or external qualities. The very absence of any identifiable cultural pattern tells Dupin the culprit must be an animal: “in regard to the shrill voice, the peculiarity is . . . each [witness] spoke of it as that *of a foreigner* . . . No words – no sounds resembling words – were by any witness mentioned as distinguishable” (415-16). By casting the unidentified culprit as a “foreigner,” Poe evokes a figure that eludes cultural codification because it is always and already at odds with – or outside – the cultural milieu it enters. He draws on the racist tropes of slavery to underscore the objective status of the orangutan: stolen from its native country and disciplined by whipping, it merely “mimics” civilized human behavior – in this case, shaving – before being sold as a commodity. Poe's insistence on the ape's out-of-placeness and strict materiality in the absence of any cultural codification makes it, like Dupin's facsimile, an object whose meaning is entirely extrinsic. It therefore makes sense that Dupin is skeptical of any interpretative strategy that relies on “undue profundity”:

There is such a thing as being too profound. Truth is not always in a well. In fact, as regards the more important knowledge, I do believe that she is invariably superficial (412).

The facsimile letter and the orangutan are both “superficial” objects because their materiality outstrips the idea previously attached to them. Indeed, the “undue profundity” of the Police leads to disastrous consequences: they arrest the wrong man for the Rue Morgue murders, the letter nearly brings down the monarchy, and Marie Rogêt’s killer almost gets away scott free. In the case of the Rue Morgue murders, their “apparent insolubility” (414) presents a troubling breach in the Parisian police’s understanding of crime, and they try to fill that breach by creating a “motive” (421) and a human culprit when neither exist. To put it another way, the police exhibit a tendency to assign a deeper meaning where none is called for, a tendency that Poe literalizes in *The Purloined Letter* in the Prefect’s microscopic probing of chair legs and book covers. That the Police repeatedly fail where Dupin succeeds shows us that reading “superficially” is no easy matter when one is habitually bound by one’s own assumptions.

II. The Gothic as Hyper-Rationality

When the Parisian police arrest the wrong man on spurious grounds in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, they try to repair an ontological tear in their system of interpretation, which depends on maintaining the logic of cause and effect, or motive and murder. The moment that logic breaks down, the language of the gothic assumes control of the narrative. Consider, for example, the narrator’s response to a simple inquiry from Dupin in *The Murders of the Rue Morgue*:

He asked me, suddenly, if I had observed anything *peculiar* at the scene of the atrocity. There was something in his manner of emphasizing the word “peculiar,” which caused me to shudder, without knowing why (413)

The term “peculiar” hints at a distinctiveness or specificity that tips the murders out of the realm of the ordinary, a discrepancy that makes the narrator shudder. Crime, like the gothic, creates a disjunction between the order of objects and the corresponding system of ideas that we call “meaning.” From this perspective, the gothic potential of the purloined letter lies in its ability to bring down an entire government because it has gone “missing from its place.” The gothic operates according to the same logic as a crime by arranging objects in defiance of the realist’s world view. Thus out of place they seem to be susceptible to a number of interpretations and thus subject to none. Because gothic objects share this characteristic with crime, it makes sense that the hyper-rationality of a Dupin would see gothic phenomena for what they are and instantly demystify them. If there is any truth in what I am saying, then we should expect to find Dupin’s hyper-rationality in the most irrational of genres.^{xi} *The Fall of the House of Usher*, perhaps Poe’s most famous story, will serve as my test case.

The house of Usher is precisely the kind of closed, local domain that defies what elsewhere passes as common sense. A mysterious principle has apparently robbed objects – cultural and natural – of their conventional meaning:

What was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back on the unsatisfactory conclusion, that . . . there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us (317).

In this environment, everyday objects have formed new “combinations” that bear no resemblance to the narrator’s own categories of knowledge, and this mobility has created a breach, or “mystery,” that defies his interpretative ability. Like the narrator of *The Man of the Crowd*, he is “forced to fall back” on “unsatisfactory” – i.e. pre-established –

categories of thought to account for that which lies outside his understanding. By implicitly including the reader in his incomprehension (“this power lies in among considerations beyond *our* depth”), the narrator normalizes his own interpretative strategy by making us partners in his bafflement. In that the narrator personifies common sense as the Lockean tradition would have it, it should come as no surprise that his experience does not provide a reliable guide to understanding the place. This is crucial to Poe’s creation of a gothic affect:

While the objects around me . . . were but matters to which . . . I had been accustomed to from my infancy – while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this – I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up (320).

Through time and repetition, the narrator has come to attach certain “accustomed” ideas to such everyday, “familiar” objects. To put this in strictly Lockean terms, this individual has compiled an archive of ideas from sensory phenomena and this archive has evidently served him well. In both examples cited above, once familiar surroundings now inspire “fancies,” implying that things are here foundationless ideas, we might say ghosts of themselves, ideas that spring from ideas rather than from material objects.

To expose the limits of a mind that relies on everyday expectations, Poe chooses what Dupin would call the most “outré” of scenarios; the live burial of a friend’s sister. By putting Madeline into the grave prematurely, Roderick removes her from her assigned place in the household. Thus out of place she assumes the power of a purloined letter to overturn the established order of things, generating phenomena that conventional categories cannot locate or name. Important here is the contrast between the reactions of Usher and his narrator-friend to barely perceptible changes that follow Madeline’s funeral. The narrator observes that

[Roderick's] ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten . . . a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror, habitually characterized his utterance. There were times, indeed, when I thought his unceasingly agitated mind was laboring with some oppressive secret, to divulge which he struggled for the necessary courage. At times, again, I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness, for I beheld him gazing upon vacancy for long hours, in an attitude of the profoundest attention, as if listening to some inexplicable sound (330).

As the conventional way of putting the dead to rest, the funeral assures the narrator that Madeline Usher is indeed an inert object, devoid of volition. As the repeated use of the term “ordinary” indicates, the narrator continues to measure Usher’s increased agitation against his own normative perception. In this case, his sense of the “ordinary” only perceives a change in Roderick’s everyday occupations or function in the world. Rather than doubt the evidence of his common sense, which assures him that Madeline was indeed laid to rest, the narrator deems Roderick’s extreme anxiety groundless and classifies his friend “mad” for believing in things with no apparent material origin and cause. In this case, “madness” serves the same purpose as “crime” in the stories previously discussed – as a placeholder for categorical dysfunction that preserves the everyday order of things and behavior.

While the irony of this scene lies in the fact that Roderick has realized his mistake long before the narrator catches on, its importance lies in the way it introduces something much like Dupin’s hyper-rationality into the language of the gothic. What the narrator diagnoses as “madness” is actually Usher’s attempt to reconcile cause and effect; he suspects he has made a disastrous mistake and listens intently for sounds from the crypt of his still-living sister. Thus the narrator’s common sense explanation of “madness” is itself a fiction without material grounding. Roderick hears the sounds of a sister sealed prematurely in the tomb, a truth well beyond the narrator’s experience.^{xii} In this respect,

the narrator fulfills his own definition of madness by preferring groundless fiction to material phenomena that simply defy common sense. This is nowhere more obvious than in the climactic scene of the tale. Hearing the sound of Madeline clawing her way out of the crypt, the narrator encrypts those sounds in the medieval romance he is reading and uses fiction to displace the truth closing in on his friend:

there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear . . . a low and apparently distant, but harsh, and protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound – the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon’s unnatural shriek as described by the romancer (333).

So dependent is he for his very being – or mind – on his commonsensical categories that he would rather relegate truth in excess of common sense ideas to the fanciful world of romance than adapt common sense to unexpected forms of experience.

Roderick, on the other hand, attends closely to the sensations – in this case, audible information – that do derive from the object world yet which defy the strictures of everyday expectation. His response to the return of the dead is to emphasize the material nature of these events:

Not hear it? – yes, I hear it, and *have* heard it. Long – long – long - many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it . . . *We have put her living in the tomb!* Said I not that my senses were acute? I *now* tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them – many, many days ago (334).

Everyday expectations tell us that a body that has been ceremonially laid to rest should not be making such a racket. But Roderick knows from experience that Madeline suffers from a wasting illness, the chief symptoms of which are the death-like seizures of catalepsy. The heir to the decrepit house of Usher may seem as mad as a hatter—Poe certainly invites us to see him that way—but rather than inhabit a delusion, he can, like Poe’s hyper-rational detective hero, make sense of the excessive information that renders

his world fundamentally unintelligible to the outsider. The similarity between Poe's descriptions of the two men is striking. Dupin combines a "wild fervor" and "vivid freshness of the imagination" with a "frigid and abstract manner," the result, we are told, of "an excited or perhaps diseased imagination" (*Murders* 400-2). Similarly, Usher is both "vivid and sullen," "vary[ing] rapidly from tremulous indecision . . . to the energetic concision . . . of intense excitement" (322). Dupin's hyper-rationality comes to us as more than a little mad, his "diseased intelligence" resembling Usher's "excessive nervous agitation" (321). Poe presents both men in the language of madness, in other words, because their form of reason contests the common definition.

Poe's protagonists succeed in becoming protagonists to the extent that they can move beyond common sense to seize on the differences that are the signs of the new and the not-yet-coded. In adapting "ordinary" reason for a culture of discrete localities, Poe does not abandon but rather appropriates Locke. In Roderick, Poe maintains the self-enclosed individual – even more so than even Locke himself – in the face of new circumstances that defy everyday expectations. In contrast, the narrator of *Usher* undergoes a significant change in constitution to account for the same events. If to abandon the archive of everyday experience we call common sense is to abandon one's reason, then in Lockean terms, abandoning common sense amounts to abandoning one's self. On this basis, we can say that the narrator becomes someone else entirely when he ceases to believe that his sensations originate in material things and instead embraces as truth what he knows to be a fiction. Lest we miss the point, the narrator admits to have been "infected" (330) by Usher's terror, which is the same as relinquishing self-enclosure for the discontinuous, porous form of subjectivity that we encountered in the first two

chapters. In exposing Roderick and the narrator to the same set of extraordinary events, Poe defends the category of the individual against that altogether different model of cognition deeply hostile to Enlightenment notions of autonomy, continuity, and reason.

Yet with the narrator's flight from the house of Usher, this tale suggests that common sense not only must but will survive what has become the doomed model of social relations authorized by Old World bloodline and inheritance. Leaving the House of Usher restores the narrator to himself: "from that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast" (335). In the detective stories, Poe appears to question whether common sense is indeed feasible in a nation of discrete kin-groups whose cultural norms – of reason versus madness, even life as opposed to death – are entirely relative. In the gothic stories, by contrast, Poe suggests that common sense is absolutely necessary for the inhabitants of such a world, because the alternative threatens individual autonomy. To make this point, Poe renders Roderick susceptible to the very permeability that temporarily robbed the narrator of his reason. With his literal collapse under the weight of Madeline, who, teetering at the door of his chamber, "fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother" (335), we also witness the figurative collapse of Roderick's autonomy. Thus his gothic tales challenge the practicality of Dupin's uncommon sense and confine that model of mind to an aesthetic framework. The price of a higher form of reason under conditions of cultural diversity appears to be a specific form of alienation – an inability to feel at home in a nation of many different local or regional cultures.

III. Contesting the American Mind

This problematic places Poe's fiction in a much larger antebellum literary debate over the model of psychology best suited to a nation of culturally discrete regions and populations.

Poe's solution to this challenge is to reinvent and defend the one-mind-per-body rule of modern subjectivity – or what in his gothic tale of *Morella* (1835) he calls “the sameness of a rational being” (235) – against an individual who, like Arthur Mervyn, adapts to radically new cultural environments by becoming what amounts to another person. In his introduction to Robert Montgomery Bird's *Sheppard Lee*, Christopher Looby offers a valuable account of this other model of humanity, which bears striking resemblance to the porous social body I see at work in the novels of Brockden Brown. According to Looby, the kind of individual we encounter in Bird's novel is one of “extreme personal discontinuity and plurality, [where] one fiction of identity disassembles or decomposes and a new set of habits, propensities, sensations, and so forth is reassembled, by virtue of a new “fiction or imaginary principle of union,” into a person.”^{xiii} Characterized by what Looby calls “the radical possibilities of self-metamorphosis” (xxxix), this adaptive model of the individual is arguably a staple of American literature, from Franklin's *Autobiography* to Jemison's *Narrative* to Melville's *Confidence Man*. By privileging a mutable, plastic model of the individual, the preponderance of early national fiction follows the same cultural logic that informs Brockden Brown's gothic novels.

Poe therefore stands out from the literary canon as an anomaly for defending “a character *unchanging*,” thereby setting that character apart from the mainstream of the American gothic tradition, and, arguably, most of popular fiction as well. The potential of Brockden Brown's gothic lies in its ability to imagine new forms of social relations among individuals capable of escaping Locke's one-mind-per-body restriction. From Mervyn in the closet, Huntly in the cave, or Clara Wieland in her house, metaphors of entrapment and escape in Brown's novels invariably signal that alternative forms of

subjectivity are taking shape and combining bodies into a single social organism. In Poe's gothic fiction, by contrast, entrapment is the price his protagonists pay for the preservation of their reason and self-enclosure. Usher is nothing if not trapped by his house and genealogy, much as Dupin remains, for the most part, a social recluse in the gloom of "a time-eaten and grotesque mansion" (*Murders* 400). By housing the mind strictly within an individual body and restricting its domain to itself and that body, Poe conscientiously forecloses the potential to produce the altogether new forms of human interaction we found in Brown's novels. Poe certainly raises the possibility of a porous model of subjectivity when he infects narrator with Roderick's emotions. The narrator, however, evades this fate by fleeing Usher's House, at which point Poe as good as admits his own departure from the American gothic tradition. Indeed, from *Ligeia* (1838) to *The Gold Bug* (1843) and *The Cask of Amontillado* (1846), the gothic tropes we encounter in Poe's fiction – metempsychosis, madness, live burial, and so forth – are the aesthetic byproducts of a model of psychology in which the mind is wholly enclosed within a body that separates it from the physical world. To show how that Poe's Enlightenment model of identity is an exception among antebellum gothic works, I want to draw a comparison to Bird's *Sheppard Lee*, as representative of the more popular gothic form to circulate during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Drawing on the metaphor of metempsychosis, Bird follows in the footsteps of Brockden Brown when he imagines the ideal American mind as culturally adaptive, free to move between different environments, and biologically continuous with other bodies. Much like *Arthur Mervyn*, *Sheppard Lee* begins by systematically stripping its protagonist – who possesses little capacity for either physical or intellectual labor – of all

material property, thereby opening up a space of possibility in which an alternative model of the mind, built in terms other than property-in-oneself, can emerge. Whereas Brown imagined human character as a function of external forces (contagion, ventriloquism, etc) acting on the body to change the constitution of the individual in accordance with the needs of the larger social group, Bird's model of consciousness is shaped by physiology, so that the body constitutes and controls the mind:

I do verily believe that much of the evil and good of man's nature arises from causes and influences purely physical . . . Strong minds may be indeed operated upon without regard to bodily bias, and rendered independent of it; but ordinary spirits lie in their bodies like water in sponges, diffused through every part, affected by the part's affections, changed with its changes, and so intimately united with the fleshy matrix, that the mere cutting off of a leg, as I believe, will, in some cases, leave the spirit limping for life (141).

Lee's acknowledgment that "strong minds" can ignore somatic directives suggests something like the individual imagined by Locke and defended by Poe, insofar as the "strong" mind controls the body and not the other way around. For Bird, this is nonetheless an exceptional mind-body relationship in comparison to that enjoyed by "ordinary spirits." In this alternative formulation, the seat of consciousness is located in the body, which exerts its influence over a passive mind. Each new incarnation, Lee tells us, "takes its shape from the mould it occupie[s]" (200). As a "mould" or "sponge," the body is imagined as absorbent – an open form that gives shape to the energies poured into it. As a "host" (51) or "tenement" (52), moreover, it is also imagined as a purely temporary dwelling, able to relinquish the very energies it shapes. Accordingly, the mind becomes an itinerant tenant capable of projecting beyond the confines of its body to take on an entirely new self:

The spirit of Sheppard Lee was widely different from those of John H. Higginson and I.D. Dawkins, as, I think, the reader must have already seen; and yet, no

sooner had it entered the bodies of these two individuals, than the distinction was almost altogether lost. Certain it is, that in stepping into each, I found myself invested with new feelings, passions, and propensities – as it were, with a new mind – and retaining so little of my original character, that I was perhaps only a little better able to judge and reason on the actions performed in my new body, without being able to avoid them, even when sensible of their absurdity (140).

It is striking that the ability to “judge and reason” does not make the man; rather, Lee’s new “character” is constituted by unique and innate “propensities” that reveal themselves as unavoidable “actions” of the body. The rational faculties do not transfer whole and entire with each transformation, nor does experience acquired in one body inform the mind in the next.^{xiv} Poe’s dissatisfaction with Bird’s version of metempsychosis makes perfect sense because his ideal rational individual depends on exactly the kind of continuous, simple identity that Bird throws into doubt.

Bird’s theory of physiological determinism is arguably part of a larger sea-change in antebellum American thought yielding what Ezra Tawil has identified as a new discourse of “racial biology,” where the “biological inheritance of somatic traits” accounts for difference between types of bodies.^{xv} The episode in which Lee comes to occupy the body of Tom, a contented slave, undoubtedly draws on the racist stereotype of the black man lacking in temporal consciousness:

I forgot that I had once been a freeman, or, to speak more strictly, I did not remember it, the act of remembering involving an effort of mind which it did not comport with my new habits of laziness and indifference to make, though perhaps I *might* have done so, had I chosen . . . Perhaps this defect of memory will account for my being satisfied with my new condition. I had no recollection of the sweets of liberty to compare and contrast with the disgusts of servitude. Perhaps my mind was stupefied – sunk beneath the ordinary level of the human understanding, and therefore incapable of realizing the evils of my condition . . . The reader may settle the difficulty for himself (341-42).

The fact that Bird consciously shies away from accounting for Tom’s complacency wholly in terms of race – slavery could just as equally have ruined Tom’s mind – tells us

that something more is at stake in his model than making personal identity a simple matter of biology. Indeed, the “sponge”-like porousness of Bird’s model suggests that the body is still subject to external, environment influences (the very source of difference that racial biology sought to dispel in favor of intrinsic, biological qualities).^{xvi} Looby accounts for Tom’s ambiguity on the cause of his memory loss as Bird’s impatience with “moralistic complacency” in the face of a “national struggle over slavery” (xxxv). I disagree. I would simply prefer to consider how Bird’s theory of physiology places him in much the same camp as Brown, Irving, and Hawthorne, insofar as it allows him to imagine a way of encountering and negotiating cultural difference.

Having taken aim at reason and property-in-oneself as the basis of consciousness, Bird draws on David Hume’s *Treatise On Human Nature* and the metaphor of metempsychosis to imagine an individual that opportunistically dishabits one identity and reassembles itself in another. Hume’s theory of self begins by questioning Locke’s assumption that objects and people are continuous across time and space. That coherence, Hume argues, is nothing but a fiction created by the imagination:

There are some philosophers, who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF . . . I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.^{xvii}

Working with the organizing principles of “association” – resemblance, contiguity, and causality – the imagination combines this loose assemblage of ideas to construct an illusion of “perfect identity and simplicity” (*Treatise* 164). Where Locke imagines experience as an archive of information produced by sensory encounter, Hume sees experience as a set of customary patterns into which impressions and ideas can be

arranged. By following these patterns, the imagination runs along a set course, so the fiction of a stable identity becomes the byproduct of “habit” (146) or “custom” (147). We come to associate “flame” with that “species of sensation we call heat,” for example, only through their “constant conjunction” (61). Over time, observing “frequent instances” of this conjunction, we infer flame’s existence from heat and vice versa. We get into the habit, so to speak, of associating one object (or idea) with another, and it is on this basis alone that we accrue a sense of identity of the self or of objects in the world.

Bird’s debt to Hume is perhaps most obvious when, after each transformation, Lee’s new avatar gradually regains his mental coherence by reassembling his thoughts and recollections according to the “processes of association” (69). The language of “association” does indeed invoke a model of consciousness that has no origin or core; rather, it is made up of contiguous ideas that form and abandon conjunctions in constantly shifting patterns. Association creates a fiction that betrays, in Looby’s words, “our natural propensity to posit identity or sameness where it does not truly exist” (xviii). I am especially struck by Bird’s repeated use of the term “habit” to describe the characteristic behavioral traits of Lee’s incarnations, a term he uses more times over the course of the novel than any other in reference to his model of consciousness. This term, I am convinced, allows Bird to turn his model of mutable identity into a political model of social relations. Consider, for example, Lee’s first transition from disenfranchised farmer to retired, gentrified artisan:

Although I had acquired along with his body all the peculiarities of feeling, propensity, conversation, and conduct of Squire Higginson, I had not entirely lost those that belonged to Sheppard Lee. In fact, I may be said to have possessed, at that time, two different characters, one of which now governed me, and now the other; though the squire’s, it must be confessed, was greatly predominant . . . The difficulty was, that I could not immediately shake off my old Sheppard Lee habits,

and the influences of these . . . more than the absolute retention of any other native peculiarities, drive me into the inconsistencies of which I was for a short time guilty (59-60).

Bird begins the process of metempsychosis with exactly the case of anti-individualism – two minds in one body – that Locke went out of his way to invalidate in Book II of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.^{xviii} He evokes this gothic scenario, I believe, to draw our attention to Lee’s “habits” as the point of connection between his two identities. Even after making the transition into Higginson’s body, Lee’s original identity continues to run on its rails, so to speak, following a course determined by the established pattern of behavior Bird calls “habit.” Lee’s continued, albeit faint, existence in Higginson’s body is not the continuity of a unified, Lockean self whose “native peculiarities” transfer from one mind to the next; rather, it is a set of customary ideas associated with the being called Lee that continue to reverberate in its new tenement.

Habit accounts for Lee’s ability to move between different cultural milieux, as he acquires and shakes off the traits associated with that group. Consider, for example, the way in which Lee, as the omniscient narrator, relates his encounter, as Dawkins, with Dawkins’ attractive and intimidating cousin:

While recording my adventures in the body of Mr. I.D. Dawkins, I feel my old Dawkins habits revived so strongly in my feelings, that I cannot avoid giving some of the coloring of his character to the history of his body. I do not presume to say what women should be, or what they should not: in confessing a fear that my cousin Pattie was witty, I only record the horror with which I, while a dandy, in common with all others of the class, regarded any of the sex who were smarter or more sensible than myself (146).

We are invited to see Dawkins, like all of Lee’s avatars, as the satirical representative of a certain “class” or cultural type – in this case, the impoverished fop. One of the habits associated with this type, Lee informs us, is a feeling of horror on encountering a smart

woman. That Lee can still experience this horror long after he has vacated Dawkins' body is possible because Lee absorbed this particular "coloring of [Dawkins'] character" when he became part of "the history of his body." Biological continuity between bodies – a shared "history" – allows the assemblage of associated ideas Bird called "character," itself a function of habit, to move between radically different local groups.

This model of the mind, I am convinced, makes sense of Tom's complacency in the face of enslavement. The key term in his account is "habit": "laziness and indifference" are the traits Lee has acquired along with Tom's body, and changing those habits would be tantamount to becoming a new person. Habitual laziness explains Tom's lack of temporality more than biological determinism or mental stultification by the institution of slavery. Important to my purposes, Tom's mental inertia bears a strong resemblance to Lee's description of himself at the beginning of the novel:

My natural disposition was placid and easy, – I believe I may say sluggish. I was not wanting in parts, but had as little energy or activity of mind as ever fell to the share of a Jerseyman (10).

Despite attending Princeton and inheriting of his father's farm, Lee possesses none of the mental attributes that, according to Enlightenment thought, should accompany landownership and education. His own slave, Jim Jumble, has greater proprietorship over the estate than Lee himself, "planting and harvesting, and even selling what he raised, as if he were the master and owner of all things" (21).

By figuratively placing Lee in the position of a slave on his own estate, Bird makes it clear that Lee lacks anything resembling property-in-himself, despite possessing all the external accoutrements of the Enlightenment subject. With no mind to speak of, Lee cannot claim ownership of his own body as something to which he alone is entitled.

Bird literalizes this principle by subjecting Lee's corpse to competing claims of proprietorship: an itinerant German doctor opportunistically snatches it, embalms it, takes it on a profitable scientific tour around the country, then vehemently resists Lee's reappropriation at the novel's end on the grounds that Lee has stolen the doctor's own property. Much like a slave, Lee is robbed of his intrinsic property when his body is appropriated for another's profit. In the slave narrative tradition, this appropriation means social death for the slave; in staging Lee's actual death, Bird takes that convention and turns it into his foundation for a new form of subjectivity.^{xix} If we have no property-in-ourselves, Bird seems to ask, on what grounds can we constitute the individual mind?

In this novel, property – down to and including the body – avoids any orientation toward a fixed or culminating end. With bodies quite literally up for grabs (body-snatching is a recurring trope), we are invited to think of the body less as a piece of property subject to a single person's ownership and more like a commons. For this reason, we can assume, the novel punishes any force that tries to arrest the circulation of property. The foppish Dawkins, who only spends money, is no different from the moneylender Skinner, who only hoards it, insofar as both interfere with the rules governing the exchange and conversion of money into property and vice versa. Accordingly, the novel makes sure they meet suitably dire fates: the former ends his existence at the hands of a mob of angry creditors, while the latter is left miserable and alone in a snowdrift. By way of contrast, Bird offers us the notably successful businessman Mr. Periwinkle Smith, who takes money otherwise lying "idle" and converts it into profitable mortgages. If we think of mortgages as deeds or promissory notes that stand for physical property in the abstract – that is, always in a state of potential and

easily transferable – then Periwinkle Smith’s way of managing property is entirely compatible with Bird’s theory of the individual. Indeed, Bird uses much the same economic lexicon to describe Lee’s multiple metamorphoses: like Smith’s “idle” money, the initially “sluggish” Lee finds himself “invested . . . with a new mind” each time he appropriates a new body (140). Bird plays on the double sense of “invested,” meaning both “to dress” – suggesting that Lee’s avatars are as easily discarded or assumed as a suit of clothing – and a form of investment, or a conversion of one species of property into another on the expectation of future dividends. In imagining Lee’s identity as an investment, Bird keeps his protagonist in much the same continued state of potential as a mortgage.

That Lee only acquires a “new mind” *after* taking possession of another body suggests that property in the world precedes property-in-oneself. This reverses the order of conventional Enlightenment thought, which gives primacy to property-in-oneself as the individual’s original possession. A quick glance at Locke will remind us of this point:

every man has a property in his own person: this nobody has any right to but himself. The labor of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left in it, he hath mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes his property (*Second Treatise* 111-12).

In its original, British formulation, the capacity for rational thought determines, hence precedes, the individual’s entitlement to landownership. In Bird’s novel, by contrast, this material property determines the character of the individual who possesses it – as if to say that one is possessed by material circumstances.

This reversal of Lockean logic tells us that Lee’s state of vegetative inertia at the novel’s start must be a byproduct of the property he owns; namely, an extensive farm he

inherits after his father's death. Yet Lee's reacquisition of this same farm at the novel's end converts him into something like an exemplary citizen. If the quality of one's property determines the quality of one's mind, then logically something happens to Lee's property over the course of the novel that eventually permits his final transformation. The difference rests on the way Lee acquires the farm in each case.

That this property must disappear entirely before Lee can begin the process of metempsychosis tells us that Bird sets out to dispense with such anachronistic notions that attach social being to geographic place or consanguinity. As the sole male heir, Lee is initially shaped by a system of transmission associated with Old World patrilineal relations that oversees the transfer of property whole and entire within a closed kinship group. For this reason, I suspect, "inheritance" is a particularly vexed notion throughout the novel. Consider, for example, the episode in which Lee (now as Squire Higginson) learns that, "along with the wealth of John H. Higginson" (87), he has also been saddled with the gout:

[The doctor] left me to endure my pangs, and to curse Squire Higginson's father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and, in general, all his forefathers, who had entailed such susceptible big toes upon the family (79).

As an hereditary disease that afflicts male subjects, gout conveniently stands in for a piece of "entailed" property that each successive generation passes to the next. As both a physical disease and as a rhetorical device, moreover, the gout inhibits circulation at both a physiological and literal level: forced into "confinement" by sluggish circulation, Higginson finds himself claustrophobically incarcerated with his tyrannical wife. An unwelcome legacy in the form of an hereditary disease transforms Higginson's body and house into a prison, from which he seeks escape through suicide. That Bird transforms

the domestic circle into a gothic castle of comic proportions suggests that the gothic trope of entrapment here takes aim at any system of social relations, like the family unit, that removes property and bodies from circulation and exchange.

In this way, Bird establishes a distinction between two forms of identity. At the novel's start, it comes from Lee's attachment to physical place or dwelling, from which one draws a stable identity. In grammatical terms, this makes identity a noun, or a culturally recognized marker. Against this, Bird proposes a sense of self that can only be described as an incessant state of "becoming" – a set of "associations" without beginning or end – that proliferates beyond the restrictions of geographical place or blood. Identity here operates like a present participle insofar as it comes to mean what it does as an activity repeated over time, or "habits."^{xx}

It therefore makes sense that Lee's return to his farmstead at the novel's end, hence the new and exemplary identity he assumes by reacquiring his property, is accompanied by a radical change in the nature of that property: Bird converts it from an hereditary entailment to something resembling a commons. Before his adventures in metempsychosis took off, Lee frittered much of his father's estate away on doomed financial ventures before his overseer, Aikin Jones, embezzled the rest. By defrauding Lee of the family farm, Jones not only forces Lee out of a system of fixed positions, but converts the property itself into a moveable quantity that can circulate outside the family unit. Aikin Jones, Lee's brother-in-law informs him,

finding himself dying, and being seized perhaps with compunction for the wrongs he had done you, he left you a legacy, – no great matter, indeed, considering how much of your estate he died possessed of (417)

Lee is bequeathed a “legacy” by one whose claim to that property was entirely spurious and independent of the bonds of kinship. This endowment, moreover, bears little resemblance to the original property Jones defrauded as it has been substantially reduced through its keeper’s extravagances. Once in possession of this reduced estate, Lee relinquishes his old “habits of idleness” (418) to be “confirmed . . . in new habits of industrious and active application” (417). In assuming the “habits” conventionally associated with a diligent farmer, Lee performs yet another role – and is, in the terms of this novel, quite another person. Bird invites us to view this exemplary, landowning subject as simply one more iteration of the being known as Sheppard Lee.

It is striking that, to all outward appearances, this new version of Lee has all the accoutrements of a novelistic protagonist in the British tradition: he achieves individual fulfillment through worldly travail before being justly rewarded with property and social position. Bird revives the tradition of development and telos, I believe, in order to subordinate it to his competing theory of social being. Lee never marries, hence never reproduces the household that would reinstate the kind of identity that locates self in place or family. Instead, his society consists of his slave Jim Jumble and his wife Dinah – who use the farm just like a commons when they plant and harvest their own crops – and a nephew named Sheppard Lee Alderwood, named after his uncle, to whom Lee Sr. imagines bequeathing the farm. By forecasting Lee’s future in terms of what, for all practical purposes, is a copy of Lee himself, Bird consolidates his model of the self as a series of performative, non-finite actions without dispensing with the American fantasy of the self-made man.

IV. Conclusion

By way of conclusion, let us imagine the debate between Robert Montgomery Bird and Edgar A. Poe over the constitution of the American character as one waged in terms of competing notions of property. In defending an autonomous self, Poe reinscribes property-in-oneself as the first condition of American identity. By presenting Dupin and Usher, his hyper-rational protagonists, as relics of a faded aristocratic world, Poe associates his version of the rational mind with Old World aristocracy, the original landowners Locke had in mind when he described property in individualistic terms. This model runs into problems at the level of the local; although both of Poe's hyper-rational heroes can make sense of information ordinarily hidden from cultural outsiders, neither can participate in a world outside his own restricted milieux.

When Bird suggests that property in the world determines the characteristics of one's mind, he contradicts Poe's understanding of character. In *Sheppard Lee*, the world of substances continues to constitute the American character from the outside-in, much as it did in Brown's fiction. Whereas Brown's model absorbed its components into a transatlantic network of circulating information, Bird's version does something rather different. By having the body constitute and direct the mind, Bird makes the American self a byproduct of its physical and repeatable actions. Unlike Usher or Dupin, whose enclosed minds are outwardly represented as an inextricable attachment to place in the form of decrepit mansions, Lee is detached from any fixed position. Always on his way to another identity, never taking full possession of any one of his multiple incarnations, Lee presents a model of the American mind that is not so much an entity as an infinite potentiality. In Bird's model, there is no such thing as a single coherent self so much as

several potential selves held together by the most tenuous set of actions or habits, which are built into a body multiply inhabited.^{xxi}

Chapter Four

The Limitations of Liberal Society in *The Scarlet Letter*

While not conventionally regarded as a gothic novel, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) nonetheless draws on gothic conventions, I argue, to cancel out the mutually dependent categories of the self-enclosed individual and the social contract in order to make room for an alternative political formation, embodied in Hester and Pearl, that comes to us as something to the order of a population. Hester and Pearl have many of the characteristics usually associated with the gothic, including exclusion from society, loss of property in one's person, and absorption in and by a fluid and heterogeneous group – qualities also associated with what Giorgio Agamben and others have called “bare life.” Paradoxically, Hawthorne turns these same gothic conventions against the world produced by contractual relations in order to render that world phobic, yet in so doing arguably exposes the potential of that heterogeneous group I will be calling “population.” One cannot say that the excluded life designated by *The Scarlet Letter* and its illicit offspring is utopian by any stretch of the imagination. It is simply there, as the larger and paradoxically more modern – more American in this respect – context against which Hawthorne allows the contractual relations defined by Dimmesdale and Chillingworth to fulfill their logical implications. To pursue this line of argument, I will follow the formal framework of the novel by comparing the first scaffold scene to the last to show how the gothic reconfigures the community we initially confront.

I. A is for Antipathy

The novel's opening scene mobilizes all the conventions of an Enlightenment model of sympathy. Using the very terms found in Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*,

Hawthorne refers to Hester as a “spectacle” standing before a crowd of “spectators,” whose emotional responses are monitored to meet normative Puritan standards of severity under the regulatory gaze of the town elders.ⁱ To all outward appearances, Hester is an object worthy of sympathetic identification, as the narrator carefully fosters the reader’s pity and admiration for a woman whose “serene deportment” (52) in the face of such public ignominy appears a mastery of self-command. This scene, with its obvious debt to the triangulated Smithian structure of spectacle, spectator, and internal spectator, nonetheless conspicuously fails to produce a sympathetic community, at least any kind that Smith would recognize. The spectacle on the scaffold positioned smack in the center of town consolidates a community not through fellow-feeling, but through a shared antagonism to an “object” (56) of “common infamy” (71). The foundational assumption behind Smith’s model of sympathy is the principle of recognition, which allows the spectator to see and imaginatively respond to some element of him- or herself in the spectacle, but no such recognition takes place here. Taking Hester “out of the ordinary relations with humanity,” the scarlet letter so “transfigure[s] the wearer” that Hester is unrecognizable, and those “who had been familiarly acquainted with Hester Prynne, were now impressed as if they beheld her for the first time” (51).

Were this a domestic novel, we might expect the sight of an anguished mother holding a distressed child to produce collective commiseration, but something has obviously gone horribly wrong. Indeed, with this tableau as the novel’s centerpiece, the educated reader would in all likelihood have associated the Puritan view with Rousseau’s man-in-a-cage, the figure he uses to depict his own version of sympathetic identification. In that scenario, we are invited to the “dreadful agitation” of a helpless spectator

witnessing a mother's torment at the violent death of her child, the attachment to which both Smith and Rousseau declare universal.ⁱⁱ Such an allusion sets up the expectation of sympathy from the crowd. Yet when we turn our attention away from Hester to the people surrounding her – as the allusion to the man-in-a-cage metaphor would have us do – we see only antipathy. Why should a major novel – a classic of American literature – use a sympathetic model to stage a scene of collective antagonism?

The man-in-the-cage metaphor features two spectators: the caged man watches the mother's anguish as her child is attacked by a wild beast; and Rousseau's reader watches the "pathetic image" of the man's own "anguish." Crucially, the woman is central to this scenario only to the extent that she is a catalyst for the caged man's emotions; she is also entirely peripheral as a feeling subject in her own right because Rousseau never invites his reader to imagine her pain. The emotional focus of this triad is the man in the cage, and his are the emotions we are supposed to care about. This tripartite structure organizes the scaffold scene that opens *The Scarlet Letter*, with Hawthorne's readers placed in the position of Rousseau's second spectator by the narrator, who implicates us as witnesses to the Puritans' spectatorship. Given that the language, spatial configuration, and mother-and-child centerpiece of this scene all seem to conform to the triangulated sympathetic structure famously spelled out by Rousseau, we must now consider what induces us care about the Puritans' reaction to Hester?

As other critics have noted, the scaffold scene stages much the same power relations that Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish*, where the public punishment by which the state visibly renews its authority always implicates its spectators as agents in the spectacle, ideally as passive "guarantors" to the state's judgment.ⁱⁱⁱ Civil unrest

becomes part of the spectacle only when the crowd enters into sympathetic identification with the victim. The temptation is to read Hester's humiliation in terms of Foucault's spectacle on the scaffold in that both kinds of spectator described by Foucault are present in the crowd as Hawthorne depicts it. Most spectators, like this Puritan matriarch, take the side of the town fathers against Hester:

“They should have put a brand of hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead. Madam Hester would have winced at that, I warrant me. But she, – naughty baggage, – little will she care what they put upon the bodice of her gown! Why, look, you, she may cover it with a brooch, or such like heathenish adornment, and so walk the streets as brave as ever!”

Another spectator is even more vehement in expressing her disaffiliation. Social death is too light a punishment for one who has disgraced the entire community:

“What do we talk of marks and brands, whether on the bodice of her gown, or the flesh of her forehead?” cried another female, the ugliest as well as the most pitiless of these self-constituted judges. “This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die.” (49)

Wedge between and drowned out by two disciples of the state is the voice of traditional sympathy:

“Ah, but,” interposed, more softly, a young wife, holding a child by the hand, “let her cover the mark as she will, the pang of it will be always in her heart.”

By doubling Hester in the young mother clutching a child, Hawthorne gives us the figure of imaginative fellow-feeling and Rousseau's ideal spectator. But this voice barely reaches above a “soft” whisper in this scene and in the novel at large; entirely alone in her compassion, this anonymous younger woman disappears from the novel until the final scaffold scene, where Hawthorne resuscitates her only as an individual who has long since died. In so pointedly killing off an otherwise minor character, Hawthorne as good as kills off the domestic brand of sympathy she embodies.

With conventional sympathy figuratively buried at the novel's start, one cannot help but have reservations about the young woman's sympathetic identification with Hester's heartache. But neither will Hawthorne allow us to feel as the heartless Puritans do. Indeed, that we are not meant to identify with either kind of spectator is, I believe, entirely the point. A closer look at his description of Hester reveals that Hawthorne's narrator keeps us deliberately in the dark as to how much we can infer from this woman as a spectacle, hence what kind of response Hawthorne would elicit from readers. Equal parts "dignity" (49) and "disdain[]" (54), she is habitually presented to us in the speculative mode:

Haughty as her demeanour was, she *perchance* underwent an agony from every footstep of those who thronged to see her, *as if* her heart had been flung into the street for them all to spurn and trample upon. (52, my emphasis)

This passage pulls readers in opposite directions, as the narrator makes it hard for us to feel either sympathy or antipathy in response to a spectacle that is simultaneously pitiable and alienating. We simply cannot tell whether she is disdainfully dismissive of Puritan norms – as both her sin and her ostentatious embroidery certainly seem to suggest – or whether she is marshalling a degree of stoicism worthy of a martyr. Given that the narrator refuses to grant us the kind of access to her interior life that would allow us to feel some measure of what she feels and, at the same time, refuses to objectify Hester as wholly despicable, we must conclude that the kind of community Hawthorne has in mind for this scene has nothing to do the subjective recognition of sameness or the abjection of difference. Simply put, Hester is neither like the Puritans nor unlike them. Hence she can be neither assimilated nor cast out.

With the evident collapse of sympathy (into antipathy) and antipathy (into indecision), we must ask ourselves what social dynamic organizes a community that assembles in the hope of seeing the vicious brutalization of a woman variously described as “saint-like” (73), “a martyr” (77), even “the image of Divine Maternity . . . whose infant was to redeem the world” (53)? Given that Hawthorne clearly does not have Adam Smith’s urbane, lettered, and disinterested spectator in mind for his community of the righteous, I find it helpful to think of the Puritans in terms of an early Christian hagiographic tradition of spectatorship. Religious historian Elizabeth A. Castelli has shown how early Christian polemic, speaking out against the torture of Christians for entertainment in the Roman arena, denounced popular spectacle as spiritually enervating even as that same tradition appropriated the spectacle of martyred suffering as a source of spiritual revelation.^{iv} To manage the double potential inherent in the scene of suffering, Christian liturgy relocated the spectacle of martyrdom from the world of objects to the imagination, where it can be invoked in the words of a sermon. This move calls into being what Castelli identifies as a “spiritual” spectator. While a materially-minded observer, such as the Roman onlooker, sees the martyr’s persecution purely as a matter of somatic torture, the spiritually-minded spectator “will see past the surface of violent display to the truer, more spiritually uplifting narrative that underlies the blood spectacle” (122). Importantly, the spiritual event conjured through the words of the liturgy does double service: it distinguishes and preserves the Christian spectacle from the idolatrous representations of popular display, and it works as a social adhesive, binding the Christian community together in shared bonds of spiritual revelation. In Hawthorne’s hands, this hagiographic tradition produces an altogether different kind of community.

When Hawthorne puts a “saint-like” woman on display before a crowd that longs to see her branded, if not executed, the disturbing irony of this scene becomes all too clear: the Puritans bear closer resemblance to Romans at the arena than to spiritually-minded Christians. To use Castelli’s term for the Romans, these are, indeed, “materially-minded” spectators, chiefly concerned with the visual markers on the surface of Hester’s body; the matriarch would prefer to see Hester branded because it would permanently distinguish her as an object of shame. This strictly antagonistic response to spectacle also changes the way they respond to the liturgy, hence how they coalesce as a religious community. Hester may be a “living sermon against sin” (58), but the “spiritually uplifting” meaning derived from that sermon is the negative reaction of fear: when a clergyman delivers a “discourse on sin, in all its branches,” the assembled crowd experiences “new terrors” as “the ignominious letter . . . seem[s] to derive its scarlet hue from the flames of the infernal pit” (63). Hawthorne cancels out the possibility of spiritual revelation by making the letter an object of social and material antagonism. Held up as a visual deterrent and object lesson on the dangers of social transgression, Hester is punished as a criminal rather than a sinner. Her pain is not that of a martyr but that of one stripped of social identity – one who, like Agamben’s *homo sacer*, cannot be sacrificed but is allowed to die.^v

We are now prepared to revisit the question I posed at the beginning of this section; namely, why use the inclusive language of sympathy to describe a unity based on a wholly antagonistic response? As I see it, this rhetorical ploy creates a formal paradox transforming a Smithean model of community based on sympathy into one based on what Amanda Emerson describes as “negative affiliation.”^{vi} When the Puritans come together

to reject Hester, it is fair to say that they experience *positive* social cohesion through *negative* bonds of antipathy, or what Hawthorne aptly calls “the centrifugal force of . . . repugnance” (213). Given that this social model rests on the idea that conflict can also make communities, Georg Simmel’s *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations* (1908) offers a set of sociological principles that will help us put flesh on this thesis.

According to Simmel – writing a mere sixty years after Hawthorne published his novel – sympathy naturally capitulates to antipathy because these two social “motivations” are in fact deeply implicated:

Natural hostility as a form or basis of human relations appears at least side by side with their other basis, sympathy. The strange lively interest, for instance, which people usually show in the suffering of others, can only be explained on the basis of a mixture of the two motivations. This [is] a deep-lying antipathy.^{vii}

For Simmel, the relationship between sympathy and antipathy is *prima facie*: the sympathetic interest one takes in another’s pain “can only be explained” on the grounds that sympathy is, at its heart, a “deep-lying antipathy.” While Simmel never develops this intriguing connection further, we can fill in the logical steps by turning briefly back to Adam Smith, who reveals that Hawthorne exploits an assumption at the heart of the Enlightenment model of community. According to this model, the degree of sympathy felt for another’s expression of emotion depends on the character of the spectacle; that is, whether it is deficient or excessive in relation to its cause. The norms that regulate sympathetic response come from the social milieu shared by spectator and spectacle. Ideally, then, sympathy occurs when the display of feeling measures up to pre-established social standards. This is a model of social relations that requires types of emotional display, a script before the performance one might say, much as common sense, as Poe’s Dupin explains it, requires us to know what we are going to see before we see it. It

follows that when the agent's expression of pain or pleasure exceeds or falls short of expectation, that individual forfeits his or her place in the sympathetic community, as does, for example, the man in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* whose reaction to "any little piece of good fortune" is to be "too happy or too much elated." This discrepancy between cause and emotional display leaves us feeling "disobliged," Smith tells us, and "because we cannot go along with [the man's joy], [we] call it levity and folly."^{viii} Thus the positive, inclusive embrace of the sympathetic community relies on a latent logic of exclusion or disaffiliation. This is the operation of objectification of cultural difference, to which Simmel attributes "the consensus and concord of interacting individuals, as against their discords, separations, and disharmonies" (17).

That sympathy capitulates all too easily to antipathy is, I think, the formal principle on which Hawthorne builds the scaffold scene. Yet as he clearly understands, both sympathy ("you are inside the community because you are like me") and disaffiliation ("you are outside the community because you are unlike me") quite obviously depend on a strict binary logic of inside and outside. Negative affiliation, by contrast, collapses that separation by weaving the community's discords into its constitutive parts. Emerson says it well when she identifies this model as "the elicitation of positive identities out of specific conflicts, incongruities, and instabilities in a society . . . that endeavors to "resolve" divisive conflicts of value and definition not by eliminating those conflicts, but by making the tension between them official and binding."^{ix} When the Puritan crowd experiences a collective sense of "terror" at the Letter, this conflict-based form of social cohesion comes into play, in which the inner divergences and antagonisms actually cultivate the conditions of coexistence, or positive

social relations, between inassimilable elements. In Simmel's terms, this kind of "unity" is "the total group-synthesis of persons, energies, and forms, that is, the ultimate wholeness of the group, a wholeness which covers both strictly-speaking unitary relations and dualistic relations" (17). A community thus constituted does not strive for "exhaustive harmonization" (15); rather, it revitalizes itself around irreconcilable antagonisms that are an integral part of the group dynamic.

From this perspective, Hester occupies a unique social position that Giorgio Agamben identifies as "inclusive exclusion" (*Homo Sacer* 8) – she is cast out of the community but nonetheless remains at its heart because her very exclusion makes the Puritan community coherent, as she seems to realize:

With her native energy of character, and rare capacity, [the world] could not cast her off, although it had set a mark upon her, more intolerable to a woman's heart than that which branded the brow of Cain. In all her intercourse with society, however, there was nothing that made her feel as if she belonged to it . . . [she was] as much alone as if she inhabited another sphere, or communicated with the common nature by other organs and senses than the rest of human kind. She stood apart from mortal interests, yet close beside them (76).

The politics of negative affiliation are hard at work here: as the anti-social element that the world cannot "cast-off," Hester is included in the everyday interests of society as that which must be emotionally excluded, thereby ensuring the cohesion of a society made up of those that do belong. Let us now probe the double enigma of how such a unique and paradoxical social position appealed to a nineteenth-century readership, and why Hawthorne chose a Puritan setting to make it flesh.

II. Civil Subjects and Mass Life

As the opening scene makes clear, the purity of the Puritans, so to speak, is preserved through a strict obedience to penal laws in the form of prohibitions and restraints. Put in

slightly different terms, this political body regulates and maintains its health by issuing commands in the rhetorical mode of the Decalogue (“thou shall not . . .”). This religious community resembles the secular contractual state in that both obey a logic of negative rights: the constituents of the social contract agree *not* to encroach on one another’s property, mental or material, in exchange for the protection of the state, which guarantees the right to property, labor, self-autonomy, and so forth.^x

The similarity between the religious community and a civil society turns Hester’s moral drama into a political one. She is not only branded a sinner in accordance with Puritan doctrine, she has also forfeited her right to protection under the social contract, which dictates that a woman’s social position is confined to the domestic household and acquired only through her alliance to a male citizen.^{xi} Thus Hester’s entitlement to the civil body’s protection was only ever contingent on her marriage to Chillingworth. Having violated the integrity of that marriage, she loses her status as a wife, hence the protection afforded her under the cultural logic of liberal paternalism. It makes sense that, having committed what in contractual terms constitutes a crime against property – that is, Chillingworth’s household – Hester is treated more as a criminal than a sinner when placed in symbolic proximity to the pillory, “a penal machine [and] as effectual an agent in the promotion of good citizenship, as ever was the guillotine among the terrorists of France” (52). Just as the social contract produces citizens by dictating what they cannot do, the Puritans produce “good citizen[s]” by negatively enforcing that category with the visible threat of punishment. Figuratively allied with revolutionaries, moreover, Hester is tarred by same the brush of factionalism, or what Madison famously defined as any force, “united and actuated by some common impulse of passion or of interest, adverse to the

rights of other citizens.”^{xii} Not simply a religious apostate, she is also a threat to the civil state.

Accordingly, Hester’s political status changes when the letter is attached to her bodice. As she comes to represent life which has no claims to membership in the civic body but which is nonetheless included in it, she loses the social position – in this case, that of a wife – that is otherwise created by and protected under the terms of the contract. When the Puritans affix the letter to her chest, her identity comes from an externally allocated source and not from some intrinsic quality housed within her mind and body. To my mind, this marks Hester’s transition from a politically inflected, institutionalized form of life (wife, mother, citizen, etc.) to a physical entity that is measured quantitatively as an object. The scarlet letter figuratively maps this transformation: made into a letter of the alphabet, Hester loses her status as an individual and becomes known for small deviances from abstract norms. Indeed, she becomes the very type of deviance itself, and in so being exists only by virtue of a negative relation to the body of citizens.

Were Hawthorne invested in championing the civil state as a model of social relations, we would expect to see Hester’s loss of individuality rendered in the phobic terms of a degenerative form of social life. Instead, she becomes a redemptive force and a positive form of social being. As far as the state is concerned, Hester matters not at all as an individual but exists only as an abstraction; as one town-member puts it, “I know thee Hester, for I behold the token” (210). The narrator as good as describes this transformation from autonomous subject to object of classification when he tells us that, in “giving up her individuality, [Hester] would become the general symbol at which the preacher and the moralist might point, and in which they might vivify and embody their

images of women's frailty and sinful passion" (71). I see Hester's change in status as Hawthorne's way of producing a difference between humanity in a contractual state versus humanity as a population.

I hope, in previous chapters, to have made it evident that American novelists were quick to recognize the civil state as an exclusionary political formation on the grounds that it defines human life in the highly restrictive terms of the individual – a fantasy combination of reason, autonomy, self-government, and property-ownership in an exclusively masculine body. Membership in the civic body is only guaranteed by each individual's submission to the social contract, which binds individuals to respect the property and rights of other individuals. All other forms of life – women, children, servants, slaves, etc. – are ostensibly incorporated into the civil body by the logic of the marriage contract.^{xiii} Under the supervision of a male citizen, the domestic household grants social position and protection to its subordinates even as it confines them to that sphere. Thus contractual logic is deceptive in that it appears to grant the rights of protection to all forms of human life, but human life as defined by the contract is restricted only to those who meet its elite criteria of personal sovereignty. We have seen contractual logic strained to its breaking point in the hands of a novelist like Brockden Brown, who reinvents the very categories of individual and contract to expose profound cultural difference between contracting parties. By the mid-nineteenth century, I believe, a novelist like Hawthorne took the contract to task on the grounds that the civil state excludes too much of humanity: a vast quantity of people who have property neither in themselves nor in the material sense. The state – and, by extension, the household – cannot claim to protect all people, nor is it separate from those it excludes. Those people

called citizens constitute a small subset of the much larger human mass of men we call a population.

Where the civil state can be understood as the sum of its individuals, the population organizes people as a single mass that is more than the sum of its parts because it cannot be reduced to individuals. In his 1798 *Essay on the Principle of Population*, Thomas Malthus confronted this concept of mass life as a social body that reproduces according to the operations of human desire – an irrefutable and “fixed” law of nature – and the consumption of available resources.^{xiv} Without external checks, each human being carried within it the potential to become exponentially more. Rearticulating this model for the late twentieth century, Foucault saw the population as a way of classifying “man-as-species” as “a multiplicity of men, not to the extent that they are nothing more than their individual bodies, but to the extent that they form, on the contrary, a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on” (*Society Must Be Defended* 242-43). The population, then, is a mass rather than an aggregate of individuals. Thus defined, human life conceptually contradicts the concept of the individual and the contractual state, as Foucault goes on to explain:

The theory of right basically knew only the individual and the social body constituted by the voluntary or implicit contract among individuals . . . [by contrast,] what we are dealing with in this new technology of power is not exactly society (or at least not the social body as defined by the jurists), nor is it the individual-as-body. It is a new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while they might not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted (*Society* 245).^{xv}

The series of qualifications Foucault makes in claiming that the population is neither society nor a collection of biological bodies carefully extracts any residue of the

individual from this new, “multiple body.” When it comes to “man-as-species,” there is “absolutely no question relating to an individual body” (246). As the representative of such a body, Hester is no saint.

That Hester’s transformation from individual citizen to abstraction takes place on a platform in the middle of a market square could hardly fail to resonate with a readership familiar with the conventions of the slave narrative, where the market turns people into objects and tears families apart. What Hester experiences on the scaffold, in other words, is nothing less than the social death of the slave, a category of non-being to which Hawthorne metaphorically alludes each time he likens Hester to a dead woman, a corpse, or a ghost.^{xvi} Indeed, important to my purposes, he draws a connection between Hester’s socially dead condition and her new position as an outsider on the inside: “she stood apart from mortal interests, yet close beside them, like a ghost that revisits the familiar fireside, and can no longer make itself seen or felt” (76). Like the slave on the block, the martyr in the arena, or the Indian in the forest, Hester represents those whom civil society has set outside the pale, but who nonetheless remain included within its everyday operations as the threat to its cohesion.

The scaffold scene places center stage a form of human life that is part of but unprotected by the state. Indeed, there is a huge cast of nameless characters that reside outside “the little metropolis of the colony” (197) not as individuals but as mass life: sailors, paupers, the sick, Indians, children, isolated women, and so forth. In contrast to the “politically qualified life” of the citizen, this is the “bare life” of humanity that the contractual state disavows.^{xvii} It is therefore vital to Hawthorne’s purpose, I would argue, that Hester remain a social non-being on the grounds that she represents that segment of

the population that cannot be incorporated into a society of individual citizens. It is for this reason, I am convinced, that Hester never regains her property-in-herself, the letter remaining affixed to her breast for the rest of her life. Even though the meaning of the letter may change (“Able” (141), “Angel,” (138), etc.), hers remains the extrinsic mode of identity of one paradoxically pushed to the margins of the community and yet absolutely central to its self-definition. Much like the anguished mother in Rousseau’s scenario, she is both catalyst and absence, center and periphery, of the community that forms around her:

While Hester never put forward even the humblest title to share in the world’s privileges . . . she was quick to acknowledge her sisterhood with the race of man, whenever benefits were to be conferred. None so ready as she to give of her little substance to every demand of poverty; even though the bitter-hearted pauper threw back a gibe in requital . . . None so self-devoted as Hester, when pestilence stalked through the town. In all seasons of calamity, indeed, whether general or of individuals, the outcast of society at once found her place (140).

As a “self-ordained . . . Sister of Mercy” (141), Hester attends to an anonymous, undifferentiated mass body (“the race of man”) that presents not as individuals but as generalities (“the bitter-hearted pauper”) subject to the processes of death, illness, poverty, etc.

Insofar as she takes care of those in the same paradoxical state of inclusive exclusion, she offers the kind of protection conspicuously denied her by the Puritan civil state. In this way, Hawthorne poses a question that would have acquired considerable urgency in the years leading up to the Civil War: how do we imagine a government that extends its protection to all those people who fall outside the contractual relation of citizen to community? Indeed, this appears as a recurring preoccupation of mid-nineteenth-century American fiction. Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* (1850),

Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), and Fanny Fern's *Ruth Hall* (1854) are just a few of the novels that take up the fate of women and children who fall into this category by virtue of their lack of a household.^{xviii}

From Clithero Edny's Irish family in *Edgar Huntly* to the charivari swarming the streets of *My Kinsman Major Molineux*, the kind of mass life we have encountered in previous works is usually presented as a gothic loss of individuality. In Hester, and especially as Hester reproduces herself in the figure of Pearl, Hawthorne inverts this convention by giving mass life a positive valence as the alternative to citizenship. Unlike her mother, who belonged to civil society before losing the status accorded her as part of Chillingworth's household, Pearl starts life as something else entirely – an expansive, adaptable, vibrant entity, incapable of sin, virtue, or obedience to the law:

Pearl's aspect was imbued with a spell of infinite variety; in this one child there were many children . . . This outward mutability indicated, and did not more than fairly express, the various properties of her inner life. Her nature appeared to possess depth, too, as well as variety; but – or else Hester's fears deceived her – it lacked reference and adaptation to the world into which she was born. The child could not be made amenable to rules. (81)

Much like Foucault's multi-headed social body, Pearl is legion, encompassing "many children." She is also, as the narrator makes clear at several points in the novel, impossible to discipline. Born outside the institutions of civil society (she is raised in neither household nor church), she cannot be trained as an individual.

This puts her permanently at odds with the religious and civil body of the Puritans: little fists raised in "puny wrath" (84), she casts "a witch's anathemas" at anyone who would treat her with antipathy. Not just a witch, but a "sprite" (82), an "elf" (83), an "imp" (84), and a "demon offspring" (88), Pearl's atavistic nature makes her a-social and a-religious. Her emotions, which encompass the whole spectrum of human feeling, are

always expressed in their full extremity, suggesting her lack of the emotional regulation required by the Enlightenment definition of the civil self. She has no place in society to which she is attached. Indeed, Pearl's chief characteristic is her "mutability," or her capacity to be an altogether different entity depending on place, occupation, or circumstance. Much like Sheppard Lee, she is always moving, or on the point of flight, thus bearing a nomadic affinity to the sailors and Indians that occupy the periphery of the novel. From this perspective, she resembles Beecher Stowe's Topsy, a similarly animating presence who cannot be disciplined without first undergoing a sentimental transformation at the hands of Little Eva. Given that Hawthorne places her at the center of "an absolute circle of radiance" (81), it is fair to say that she is also the novel's vital center.

Insofar as Pearl enacts, in miniature, the principle of the population, she extends outward into both people and objects:

The spell of life went forth from her ever creative spirit, and communicated itself to a thousand objects, as a torch kindles a flame wherever it may be applied . . . It was wonderful, the vast variety of forms into which she threw her intellect, with no continuity, indeed, but darting up and dancing, always in a state of preternatural activity" (85).

With her transfigurations guided by the principle of contiguity rather than "continuity," Pearl animates her surroundings with the stochastic, oscillatory motion of Brownian movement. Like Hester, who wears her heart on her sleeve in the form of a highly embroidered letter A, Pearl is never wholly contained within her mind and body but expands psychologically where ever she happens to make contact. In this respect, Pearl dramatizes the logic of being that her mother practices by extending herself through charity to those in need.

III. The Gothic Citizen

I have described the principle characteristics of a population as I see them embodied in Hester and Pearl. In order to authorize this model of the political body, the novel devalues the reigning notion of a civil society – that is, that group of self-governing, autonomous men installed at the head of a household. Having imagined an alternative social body that acquires its vitality from the perpetual outward motion of its constitutive particles, the novel accordingly punishes any force that attempts to constrict that vibration by entrapping people, in the manner of the Enlightenment individual, within a body, house, or social function. Outwardly reputable citizens, Chillingworth and Dimmesdale represent those self-governing, autonomous individuals comprising a civil society. In his depiction of their relationship, however, Hawthorne takes the social contract to task for its power to “contract” – that is, to reduce humanity to the smaller and more restrictive compass of the “citizen.” To negate what he has, from the very beginning, depicted as a negative model of social relations, Hawthorne turns to the conventions of the gothic.

The spectacular nature of Hester’s punishment effectively suppresses another violation of the contract for which baby Pearl is living proof: an unnamed and absent culprit exists who has likewise broken the social contract by encroaching on another man’s household. Dimmesdale has stolen from Chillingworth, and in refusing to name Pearl’s father, Hester leaves that conflict over property outstanding. In justifying his plan for vengeance for the theft of property he regards as rightfully his, Chillingworth uses the rhetoric of sick and broken contracts to make his case:

I betrayed thy [Hester's] budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with my decay. Therefore, as a man who has not thought and philosophized in vain, I seek no vengeance, plot no evil against thee. Between thee and me, the scale hangs fairly balanced. But, Hester, the man lives who has wronged us both! . . . I find here a woman, a man, a child, amongst whom and myself exist the closest lineaments. No matter whether of love or hate; no matter whether of right or wrong! Thou and thine, Hester Prynne, belong to me (69-70).

As we saw in Chapter One, the social contract depends on the fantasy that the individual loses nothing by entering the contractual state; his freedoms and rights are more fully guaranteed by his submission to the authority of the group, because that group is formed only as the individual acquires the same authority to which he submits. The contract, in other words, depends on consent – a perfectly balanced power relation in which each of the participating parties is enhanced. Next to civil society, the family – which Wendy Brown aptly calls one of the “origin myths of liberalism” – emerges from Enlightenment discourse as the contract’s most natural expression, “a field of natural power and natural social relations.”^{xix} Here Chillingworth admits his own violation of that “natural” institution when he “betrayed” Hester at a young age into an “unnatural” union with a decrepit old man. This puts him in the same tradition of gothic villains as Walpole’s Manfred, Radcliffe’s Montoni, and Eliot’s Edward Casaubon, all equally bad forms of masculinity that entrap vulnerable females in order to appropriate their mental and physical property. Chillingworth annuls the marriage contract by weighing his imposition of an unequal match against Hester’s violation of the household and finds the scale “fairly balanced.”

But there nevertheless remains an unresolved power differential created by Dimmesdale, who “wronged” Chillingworth by encroaching on his household. Whereas the marriage contract has a woman acquire social position and domestic authority in

return for the economic and political protection of the citizen husband, the social contract constitutes a relationship between men, which for Chillingworth is of greater importance than the “unnatural” marriage he dismantles. He retains the role of the gothic villain when he turns his sights on the feminized Dimmesdale, whose “sympathies” (100), overly acute “sensibility of nerve” (114), and “sensitive” nature (168) put him in the position of the entrapped female. Having annulled Hester as a contracting party, hence as someone with a stake in this power differential, Chillingworth reduces the constitutive parties of the unequal social contract from “a woman, a man, a child” to simply “a man” and “a child.” Simply put, the broken contract between the two men is a dispute over a “child,” or one regulating reproduction – Dimmesdale as good as stole “a child” from Chillingworth. This creates a debt at the level of property, which Chillingworth sees himself as entitled to redress by claiming ownership over Hester and everything that relates to her (“thou and thine, Hester Prynne, belong to me”).

In reclaiming what he regards as rightfully his, however, Chillingworth inverts the logic of the social contract; no longer a mechanism by which each party gains something through an exchange with the other, the exchange Hawthorne stages between men subtracts something vital from each. Dimmesdale loses his self to the physician’s intrusiveness and Chillingworth loses his self, formerly characterized by a “peaceful and innocent” (150) life, to an obsession that transforms him into a “fiend” (151). The contract, in other words, turns each into something other than himself. This is a recognizably gothic scenario:

[Chillingworth] now dug into the poor clergyman’s heart, like a miner searching for gold; or, rather, like a sexton delving into a grave, possibly in quest of a jewel that had been buried on the dead man’s bosom, but likely to find nothing save mortality and corruption (113).

Presented in wholly gothic terms, Chillingworth is likened to a grave-robber violating a dead body when he preys on Dimmesdale's emotional property. In the name of redressing the contractual wrongs done to him, Chillingworth becomes guilty of the same crime he sought to expose in Dimmesdale; namely, the violation of another's autonomy. When Hester asks Chillingworth "'Hast thou not tortured [Dimmesdale] enough? . . . Has he not paid thee all?'," he vehemently rejects her suggestion that the contractual imbalance has been settled on the grounds that the ghastly transformations mutually wrought at the level of self "ha[ve] but increased the debt!" (150). This is, in short, a broken contract that Hawthorne never intended to mend, only abrade further by increasing the power differential and thus locking the two men in a paralytic contractual grip.

Chillingworth's compulsive need to uncover another's emotional life comes to us as a violently invasive version of sympathy:

I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy. There is a sympathy that will make me conscious of him. I shall see him tremble. I shall feel myself shudder, suddenly and unawares. Sooner or later, he must needs be mine! (69).

A staple of sentimental fiction, quivering bodies united through the secret operations of sympathy conventionally describe the reunion between two long-separated lovers. It is an icon, as one critic puts it, "of perfect harmony, in which each lover knows what the other is feeling."^{xx} I want to consider the homoerotic undertow to their relationship as a result of the fact that each man becomes so absorbed in the other that the boundaries between them evaporate. They become, for all practical purposes, one and the same. As we saw in *Arthur Mervyn*, the consequences of a sympathy that does not respect

individual boundaries necessarily wrecks havoc in a domain where the logic of individualism prevails. To see how their “bad sympathies” (123) combine both men into a single entity, Eve Sedgwick’s “erotic triangle” is a useful starting point.^{xxi}

According to Sedgwick, the exchange between men can be homosocial without endangering heterosexuality because libidinal energy is directed to a woman who acts as a third party in the homosocial scenario. Men can be said to engage in a highly displaced form of fellow feeling. Once the woman is removed from that triangulated equation, however, the boundaries separating men open to that desire, making their relationship at once gothic and queer. Hawthorne cloisters Chillingworth and Dimmesdale under the same roof and turns the domestic sphere, from which Hester is conspicuously absent, into a gothic castle in which Chillingworth is free to prey on his feminized captive. In a sentimental register, a woman’s presence preserves the coherence of the home and keeps its constituent bodies individuated, hence capable of sympathetic distance.^{xxii} Instead, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, forced into “a forbidden proximity” (114), are more like Roderick and Madeline Usher, whose stifling intimacy likewise collapses the boundaries separating them. Under the pressure of such a confined environment, Dimmesdale’s secret becomes his personal life to the point that there is nothing else personal about him. When Chillingworth intrudes into the minister’s personal life, it stands to reason that the cuckold should acquire features of Dimmesdale’s private devil. He is, the novel tells us, the “secret poison” that keeps “the sufferer’s conscience . . . in an irritated state” (168).

Thus collapsed into one being, Chillingworth can assume control of the Dimmesdale’s interior life:

the very inmost soul of the latter seemed to be brought out before his eyes, so that he could see and comprehend each movement. He became, thenceforth, not a

spectator only, but a chief actor, in the poor minister's interior world. He could play upon him as he chose. Would he arouse him with a throb of agony? The victim was for ever on the rack (122).

One cannot ignore the echo to Smith's opening to *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, where he insists that sympathy preserve the separation between individuals: "[t]hough our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers" (*Theory* 11). Contravening Smith's cardinal rule – that one must keep one's mental distance from the object of sympathy – Chillingworth "burrow[s] into the clergyman's intimacy" (112), puts him on the "rack," and dictates rather than imagines the terms on which he suffers. In so doing, he takes on some of the qualities of the vampire in the British tradition – Hawthorne calls him "the Leech"^{xxiii} – insofar as he takes over the pastor's body through his medical ministrations and controls his volition by implanting alien emotions. In Mrs. Lorimer's "extraordinary co-partnership" with her brother in *Edgar Huntly*, we encountered the phenomenon where two people exist as a relationship rather than as individuated bodies and the death of one spells the death of the entire organism. This logic plays out to its (always) fatal conclusion in the scaffold in the final scene.

By stealing the priest's emotional property and figuratively assuming the characteristics of his private guilt, Chillingworth as good as becomes Dimmesdale's self. As Dimmesdale evidently knows, the only way to rid himself of their parasitic attachment is to confess his secret publicly. "I shall escape thee," he promises Chillingworth, a phrase that comes to represent their severed attachment:

[Dimmesdale] sank down upon the scaffold! . . . Old Roger Chillingworth knelt down beside him, with a blank, dull countenance, out of which the life seemed to have departed.

“Thou hast escaped me!” He repeated more than once. “Thou hast escaped me!” (221)

The collapse of this corporate being turns Chillingworth into an abandoned husk, endlessly repeating the moment of the relationship’s demise like an automaton. With Dimmesdale dead, the life likewise goes out of Chillingworth: “he positively withered up,” the narrator tells us, “shrivelled [sic] away, and almost vanished from mortal sight” (224). This is the final, fatal contraction of the social contract; rather than grant life and liberty, it shackles each man to the other as a single entity.

IV. Cosmopolitan Rehabilitation

Given that Dimmesdale makes his public confession in a chapter entitled “The Revelation of the Scarlet Letter,” it is striking that no revelation actually occurs:

With a convulsive motion he tore away the ministerial band from before his breast. It was revealed! But it were irreverent to describe that revelation. For an instant the gaze of the horror-stricken multitude was concentrated on the ghastly miracle; while the minister stood with a flush of triumph on his face, as one who, in the crisis of acutest pain, had won a victory (221)

In what may seem a profound anticlimax, the narrator refuses to relate to his readers the spectacle of Dimmesdale’s scarring. When he averts his eyes, however, the narrator exhibits the same reticence about revealing the priest’s private life that he showed toward Hester’s feelings in the opening scene. By refusing to “make manifest” (115) the priest’s secret, in other words, the narrator formally distances himself from the kind of invasive sympathy that Chillingworth practices. Respecting Dimmesdale’s interior life, he redirects the reader’s eyes to “the gaze of the horror-stricken multitude,” whose “great heart” we are told, “was thoroughly appalled, yet overflowing with tearful sympathy” (220). As an object of both “horror” and “sympathy,” Dimmesdale is the same kind of

indeterminate spectacle we encountered in the opening scene, where Hester refused to open her heart. Lest we miss the point, Hawthorne's narrator enumerates the many different accounts that circulate in the days following of "what had been witnessed on the scaffold" – was there a mark in the priest's chest or not? – before inviting the reader to "choose among these [many] theories" (223). It is consequently no easier to enter into sympathetic identification with Dimmesdale or abject him as despicable than it was to side for or against Hester in the novel's opening scene. As I shall explain momentarily, this formal ploy serves to authorize the population as the dominant model of social relations at the novel's end.

Quite obviously alluding to the mechanisms of nation-making, the final scene is occasioned by the inauguration of a new Governor and the procession of "magistrates," "citizens" and "men of civil eminence" (205-6). The ending unfolds from a catalogue of those civic members – soldiers, politicians, religious emissaries – who exemplify the norms of a community. To all outward appearances, it would seem that the same disciplinary power that consolidated the Puritan community in the opening scene exerts its influence in the closing chapters. Unlike the strictly homogenous community of citizen-subjects present at Hester's disgrace, however, a vastly more heterogeneous social body observes the civic ceremony:

The picture of human life in the market-place, though its general tint was the sad gray, brown, or black of the English emigrants, was yet enlivened by some diversity of hue. A party of Indians . . . stood apart, with countenances of inflexible gravity, beyond even what the Puritan aspect could attain. Nor, wild as were these painted barbarians, were they the wildest feature of the scene. This distinction could more justly be claimed by some mariners, – a part of a crew from the vessel of the Spanish Main, – who . . . had a kind of animal ferocity [and] transgressed, without fear or scruple, the rules of behavior that were binding on all others (202).

The itinerant, cosmopolitan community that mingles in the “marketplace” displays many of Pearl’s qualities. Characterized by its “diversity” and “wild” nature, it is at once impenetrable (Indians have “inflexible gravity”) and lawless (sailors transgress the “rules of behavior”). Indeed, it is a social body with the potential to overwhelm Puritan norms; the Indians are grave “beyond even what the Puritan aspect could attain,” and the sailors break laws that are otherwise “binding on all others.” The contractual state, represented by the procession of its dignitaries, is consequently encircled by a population that is included in the civic celebration as those whose are outside and at odds with Puritan orthodoxy. The population of the marketplace is, in other words, in a similar position of inclusive exclusion as Hester.

To turn these disparate peoples into a single political body, Hawthorne makes Hester the catalyst around which that body takes shape:

There were many people present, from the country roundabout, who had often heard of the scarlet letter . . . but who had never beheld it with their own bodily eyes. These . . . now thronged around Hester Prynne with rude and boorish intrusiveness. Unscrupulous as it was, however, it could not bring them nearer than a circuit of several yards. At that distance they accordingly stood, fixed there by the centrifugal force of the repugnance which the mystic symbol inspired. The whole gang of sailors, likewise, *observing the press of spectators*, and learning the purport of the scarlet letter, came and thrust their sunburnt and desperado-looking faces into the ring. Even the Indians were *affected by a sort of cold shadow of the white man’s curiosity*, and, gliding through the crowd, fastened their snake-like eyes on Hester’s bosom, conceiving, perhaps, that the wearer of this brilliantly embroidered badge must needs be a personage of high dignity among her people. Lastly, the inhabitants of the town (their own interest in this worn-out subject languidly reviving itself, by *sympathy with what they saw others feel*) lounged idly to the same quarter, and tormented Hester Prynne, perhaps more than all the rest, with their cool, well-acquainted gaze (213-14, my emphasis).

As in the first scaffold scene, the politics of negative affiliation assume control of the narrative: Hester is the “fixed” point at the center of a “magic circle of infamy” (214),

arresting the gaze of the townspeople through the “centrifugal force of . . . repugnance.” By the novel’s end, however, the antipathy that held the Puritan community together in the opening chapters has become “worn-out” through time, familiarity, and the changing public perception of Hester herself. What draws them into this circle, then, is not the same feeling of repugnance, but “sympathy with what they saw others feel.” Indeed, each group that joins the “magic circle” around Hester is largely drawn by the sight of others looking (“observing the press of spectators”; drawn by “the white man’s curiosity”).

This describes something like the kind of group feeling Hawthorne imagines sweeping through the townspeople as “contagion” in *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* (1832), the same term Smith uses to describe the direct transmission of emotion between individuals.^{xxiv} In that short story, Hawthorne invests mass emotion with the phobic qualities of the gothic; here, by contrast, it is neutrally rendered as simply curiosity, boorishness, or “languid” interest. To my mind, these are altogether human emotions that replace the starkly antagonistic quality of feeling characteristic of the opening scene. Busy looking at each other, the different groups represented here are organized by the same dynamic of spectatorship the narrator enforced when he made us look away from Dimmesdale’s revelation to focus on the gaze of the multitude. In both cases, the spectators’ felt responses (horror, repugnance, sympathy, curiosity, boorishness and so forth) are ultimately unimportant in themselves. What matters is that these responses are profoundly different – Hester is at once a kind of local tourist stop, a high dignitary, a mystic symbol, and a “worn-out” topic. A spectacle that produces such varied responses cannot be assimilated or abjected because to do so requires a universal set of cultural

norms that dictate the terms of inclusion versus exclusion. That binary logic dictated the responses of the three female spectators in the opening scene, but orbiting around Hester here is a diverse community that does not think in such terms. This common humanity, as the culturally heterogeneous nature of the onlookers suggests, is the population.

Having reconstituted the Puritans as part of a population, Hawthorne leaves us with a more mobile and inclusive community, drawn together on the grounds of shared human experience and over which Hester exerts a positive, protective social influence:

The scarlet letter ceased to be a stigma which attracted the world's scorn and bitterness, and became a type of something to be sorrowed over, and looked upon with awe, yet with reverence too. And, as Hester Prynne had no selfish ends . . . people brought all their sorrows and perplexities, and besought her counsel, as one who had herself gone through a mighty trouble. Women, more especially, – in the continually recurring trials of wounded, wasted, wronged, misplaced, or erring and sinful passion . . . came to Hester's cottage, demanding why they were so wretched, and what the remedy. Hester comforted and counselled [sic] them, as best she might (227).

“Sinful passion,” we should recall, is the same crime for which Hester was accused at the novel's start (she was “the general symbol . . . of women's frailty and sinful passion” [71]). Here it has become the common ground on which women experience their status as outcasts or politically disenfranchised life. These women are conspicuously outside the liberal fantasy of comfort and regeneration in a household haven with a paternal figure at its head. Indeed, the novel went to considerable lengths to render such an institution phobic in the domestic entrapment of Chillingworth and Dimmesdale. The very fact that these women are not trapped within a household but are free to visit Hester's cottage at the edge of the wilderness stages a degree of mobility unimaginable at the novel's start.

V. Conclusion

Literary evidence taken from novels such as *The Scarlet Letter* or *Uncle Tom's Cabin* suggests that, by the middle of the nineteenth century Americans had come to think of national community in terms of mass life, a model of humanity hostile to the restrictive categories of individual, household, or state. As the "bare life" excluded by civil society, this measure of the human conventionally finds expression as slaves (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852), children (*The Wide Wide World*, 1850), women (*The Scarlet Letter*, 1850), or captives (*Israel Potter*, 1855). These characters represent just those forms of life that the paternal household was supposed to protect, or so Locke would have it:

Let us therefore consider a master of a family with all these subordinate relations of wife, children, servants, and slaves, united under the domestic rule of a family; which [resembles] a little common-wealth (126).

Brown's legacy to American letters is arguably an enduring skepticism about the British household as a tenable paradigm for the American nation. The limitations of Locke's "little common-wealth," Brown argues, are all too clear for a country that is not made up of land-owning, elite, autonomous, and self-governing individuals organized hierarchically. In the years leading up to the Civil War, authors continued to critique the family as a model for the nation in the face of vast groups of people ostensibly lacking property-in-themselves. Since mass life is not an aggregate of individuals, life thus constituted is disqualified from membership in both civil state and the domestic haven of the British tradition. As I see it, novelists like Stowe, Hawthorne, Melville, and Warner all address the question of the population – namely, its logical relationship to the contractual model of political relationships underwriting the U.S. Constitution.

Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a case in point. Stowe takes up the category of bare life to articulate the problem of slavery, showing how the family fails

catastrophically to protect slaves who, like Hester, exist in relation to civil society only as social non-beings. The fantasy of the plantation family safely united under a paternal head disintegrates with St. Clare's negligence. With Tom's death, Stowe exposes the home as a fragile construct that disintegrates into gothic nightmare when it fails to safeguard the rights and interests of its inhabitants. In the ghastly version of domesticity we encounter in Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, the "forbidden proximity" that comes with one's confinement to a home erodes the autonomy of both men and collapses them into a single entity. In *The House of Usher*, by way of contrast, entrapment is the price Usher pays for maintaining his autonomy; here the house is a gothic construct because it goes too far toward individuating its constituents, locking them in a single place and time. Poe's tale arguably looks ahead to a novel like Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), in which the paternal household becomes an inherently gothic construct when it sets out to individuate (or "sivilize") that which cannot be individuated. It is, in short, a convention of the American gothic to render the home in phobic terms, and we are indebted to Brown's reconfiguration of Enlightenment thought for inaugurating this tradition.

American gothic literature is also indebted to the counter-tradition Brown instigated when he first expressed reservations about British domesticity. Opposed to the static model of the Enlightenment self, American identity in the tradition of Brown is fluid, mobile, and always contingent on other people, circumstances, and environment. Hawthorne's version of the population, as we have seen, uses many of the same tropes that Brown used to formulate his model of transatlantic circulation: Pearl is multiple, mobile, extends herself into other people and objects, and is an entirely different

character depending on circumstance. Stowe's solution for the Harrises and Topsy is likewise indebted to this mobile model of American identity, but has more in common with the model of becoming we encountered in *Sheppard Lee*. As the Harrises migrate to Canada, and later to Liberia along with Topsy, Stowe imagines one's ability to travel outside the confinement of a household as a positive state of potentiality. Even a mawkish sentimental novel like *The Wide Wide World* reveals its debt to this distinctly American model of identity when it sends its heroine Ellen Montgomery through several different households and countries, often as a direct substitute for a lost or dead family member, before she is granted a family of her own. Much like Clara Wieland, or even Huck Finn, in other words, Ellen's capacity to remain mobile distinguishes her as American.

The first chapter of this dissertation accepted Leslie Fiedler's claim that the American novel is "most essentially a gothic one" but revised the historiographic-psychoanalytic grounds on which he came to such a conclusion. In conclusion, I want to revise another claim in Fiedler's seminal study of the gothic. *Love and Death* identifies the tendency in American literature to gothicize the household, from which Fiedler concludes that American literature kills off the heterosexual sentimental plot to allow white American masculinity to define itself in relation to men of other races. As I see it, American gothic fiction has always been skeptical about trapping both men and women in households, as to do so restricts their ability to circulate, multiply, and extend themselves where ever they make contact. It is this alternative and largely unacknowledged model of nationhood, I argue, that has put an indelible stamp on American fiction.

Notes

Introduction

ⁱ As over half a century of American political historiography testifies, the centrality of Locke thought to America's intellectual founding has been a subject of considerable contention. Until the early 1990s, criticism was largely divided along the dichotomized lines of liberal consensus theory versus civic republicanism, the former "exemplify[ing] a unified, national political culture bereft of any ideological impetus other than a half-conscious, consensual faith in individual property rights derived virtually exclusively from Locke," and the latter asserting the communitarian merits of civic republicanism. Philip Gould, "Virtue, Ideology, and the American Revolution: The Legacy of the Republican Synthesis," *American Literary History* 5 (1993), 564. The "drift of contemporary American historiography," in Gould's assessment, has been to challenge this dichotomy and bring "a fresh recognition of both the entanglement of ideologies and their adaptations" (567). I discuss the political scholarship on Locke in America at greater length on page 172, note xi.

ⁱⁱ On the importance of Scottish educational practices in early America, see Douglas Sloan's *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal* (New York: Teachers' College Press, 1971) and Franklin E. Court, *The Scottish Connection: The Rise of English Literary Studies in Early America* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001). David Lundberg and Henry F. May's "The Enlightened Reader in America," *American Quarterly* 28 (1976):262-93 is a bibliographic survey of library catalogues that testifies to the extraordinary variety, prevalence, and sheer quantity of Enlightenment works in early American libraries.

ⁱⁱⁱ Richard B. Sher and Jeffrey R. Smitten, *Scotland and America in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 7. The genesis of serious study in Scottish-American cultural relations can be traced to the 1954 special issue of *William and Mary Quarterly* on Scotland and America. Subsequent criticism owes a debt to John Clive and Bernard Bailyn's "England's Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America," published in that issue, which first brought America and Scotland into the same critical sphere by considering both in the context of a larger British empire. In the decade following the *William and Mary Quarterly* special issue, the focus shifted to immigration and trade (see, for example, Ian C. C. Graham's *Colonists from Scotland: Emigration to North America, 1701-1783* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956]), while the 1970s saw an increased interest in the Scottish influence on higher education here, such as Sloan's *College Ideal* and D. H. Meyer's *The Instructed Conscience: The Shaping of an American National Ethic* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1972). Since the 1970's, scholarship on Scottish-American cultural and political relations responded to the revision of the liberalism-republicanism dichotomy by diversifying the intellectual heritage of the American founding. See, for example, J.G.A. Pocock, "Hume and the American Revolution: The dying thoughts of a North Briton," *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. 125-43; Daniel Walker Howe, "Why the Scottish Enlightenment was Useful to the Framers of the American Constitution," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31 (1989), 572 – 87; Winifred Bryan Horner, *Nineteenth Century Scottish Rhetoric: The American Connection* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993); Daniel Walker Howe, "The American Founders and the Scottish Enlightenment," *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 48-77; Samuel Fleischacker, "Adam Smith's Reception among the American Founders, 1776-1790," *William and Mary Quarterly* 59 (October 2002): 897-924.

^{iv} Samuel Fleischacker, "The Impact on America: Scottish Philosophy and the American Founding," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Alexander Broadie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 316. Sher and Smitten make the same omission in their comprehensive survey of

Scottish-American cultural studies, whose relevance as a conceptual framework is extended only to the disciplinary perspectives of “sociology,” “political economy,” and “cultural psychology” (*Scotland and American* 4).

^v The body of criticism produced in the 1990’s on American sentimental fiction is, I think, a case in point. We owe an enormous debt to the work of Jane Tompkins, Julia Stern, and Elizabeth Barnes, to name just a few, for recuperating sentimental literature and undoing the long-held critical belief that American literature was an exceptionally masculine endeavor. There is, however, a tendency among critics of sentimental fiction to make Smithian sympathy a monolithic and static structure that remains unchanged regardless of context. By this logic, sentimental fiction reproduced Smith’s model of sympathy in order to teach virtue to a republican readership (for example, Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980]). Much the same logic plays out in Jay Fliegelman’s influential study of anti-patriarchalism, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), where Locke’s theory of mind is instrumental in transforming the character of American politics. These are, in other words, influence studies that assume a largely unproblematic one-to-one relationship between author and his or her Enlightenment source.

^{vi} The presence of Enlightenment language and ideas in the early American novel has never, to my mind, been adequately explored. I find it particularly telling that Terence Martin’s *The Instructed Vision: Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Origins of American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961) remains largely forgotten as one of the first book-length pieces of scholarship that connects Scottish Common Sense philosophy and American fiction. This neglect suggests that few scholars have seen the potential inherent in Martin’s seminal work. That said, there are some important works of scholarship to which I am deeply indebted for the literary arguments they make about the prevalence of Lockean thought in American letters. Gillian Brown’s *The Consent of the Governed: The Lockean Legacy in Early American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) remains one of the most thorough and receptive studies of Lockean epistemology for the way it makes Locke central to early American culture. Brown’s complex taxonomy of consent foregrounds education in the social development of consensual individuals, thus making consent the organizing principle of civil society. New work on Adam Smith’s influence over American literature is beginning to recognize that the very structure of sympathy was a highly unsettled matter in the antebellum period: Cindy Weinstein recently asked the important question: “is it possible that the identificatory structure of sympathy that underlies so many recent critiques of sympathy (the “I sympathize with you only to the extent that you are like me” rule-of-thumb) is an insufficient description of how sympathy was generated and deployed?” *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3. I agree with Weinstein’s implicit answer to this question that we have, until now, had an entirely “insufficient” understanding of the complexities of sympathy. Frank Shuffelton is likewise resistant to an homogenized definition of “civic virtue,” the instruction in which has long been regarded as the ideological stakes of American fiction. In “Juries of the Common Reader: Crime and Judgment in the Novels of Charles Brockden Brown,” in *Revising Charles Brockden Brown: Culture, Politics, and Sexuality in the Early Republic*, ed. Philip Barnard, Mark L. Kamrath, and Stephen Shapiro (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), Shuffelton shows that the Enlightenment category of “judgment” underwent considerable change in the late eighteenth century with the advent of public trial by jury, making “reason” a collective exercise. Leonard Tennenhouse’s *The Importance of Feeling English: American Literature and the British Diaspora 1750-1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) is particularly notable for its attentiveness to the ways in which British Enlightenment thought was reformulated in the American colonial setting.

vii Martin, *The Instructed Vision*, 53.

viii T. H. Breen, "Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the Revolution: Revisions *Once More* in Need of Revising," *Journal of American History* 13 (1997), 37. See also note iv on page 170, in which I discuss Brown's familiarity with Lockean thought.

ix Brown, *Consent of the Governed*, 4.

x Kames's *Elements of Criticism*, for example, over which Locke exerted an "undeniable influence" (*Instructed Vision* 7), was reprinted in New York as late as 1868.

xi Verhoeven, W.M. "'This blissful period of intellectual liberty': Transatlantic Radicalism and Enlightened Conservatism in Brown's Early Writings," in *Revising Charles Brockden Brown*, 19.

xii Quoted in Martin, *The Instructed Vision*, 28.

xiii I discuss Locke's epistemology of mind and perception at greater length on pages 20-22 and 27-31.

xiv Martin, *The Instructed Vision*, 28, my emphasis.

xv Leonard Tennenhouse makes a similar case for the influence of Hutcheson's moral sense philosophy over the study of oratory in American colleges. A moral sense, Tennenhouse shows, allowed listeners access to the truth of the words they hear: "Hutcheson rethinks Locke's argument that words are untrustworthy when they do not serve the end of accurate communication. 'They only move the Hearers,' [Hutcheson] writes, 'by giving a lively Representations of the Passions of the Speaker.' Words excite the same idea in the mind of the orator, but only if the orator speaks a moral truth; the orator must produce sensations that strike the moral sense" (*Importance* 33).

xvi The subtitle to Jay Fliegelman's *Prodigals and Pilgrims* aptly calls the early revolutionary era "a culture of performance," while W.M. Verhoeven has identified the prevailing atmosphere of Whig conspiracy in the late-eighteenth century as "a climate of ontological uncertainty" ("This blissful period of intellectual liberty," 40). See also Christopher Looby, *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

xvii Tennenhouse, *Importance*, 24

xviii I agree with Breen's assertion that "we should situate the American experience firmly within a broad comparative framework, within an Atlantic empire that included Scotland" ("Ideology and Nationalism," 23).

xix To my mind, Tennenhouse's model of literary production offers one of the more compelling accounts for the popularity of Scottish Enlightenment thought in America, as the Scots "had designed a means by which one could acquire English culture without living in England. In doing so, they had developed a model of English identity that was completely transportable" (36).

xx Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 3.

^{xxi} The post-revolutionary appetite for gothic fiction in particular has been extensively documented by David Punter in *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1996); and Donald Ringe, *American Gothic: Imagination and Reason in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982).

^{xxii} Philip Gould, *Barbaric Traffic: Commerce and Antislavery in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

^{xxiii} As Michael Warner has cautioned, “the nationalist impulse” in America literary criticism constitutes “an almost preinterpretive commitment to the discipline,” suggesting that as an ordering perspective, “nation” has all the gravitational pull of a default setting. “What’s Colonial About Colonial America?” in *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America*, ed. Robert Blair (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 50.

^{xxiv} Charles Brockden Brown, *Arthur Mervyn; or Memoirs of the Year 1793*, ed. Warner Berthoff (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 122-23.

^{xxv} As I discussed at greater length in Chapter one, Brown rehabilitates Adam Smith’s notion of “contagion” in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) to make the case for a circulatory model of social relations. See page 42.

^{xxvi} Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey, eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2003), 242.

^{xxvii} Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (Normal, IL.: Dalkey Archive Press, 1966), 145.

^{xxviii} This body of criticism, running from Leslie Fiedler to Toni Morrison to the more recent work by Teresa Goddu, reads the American gothic as the psychological expression of ruptures in America’s liberal history, where a little digging through the works of authors like Charles Brockden Brown will unearth the ugly truths of America’s political, social, and territorial experiments – independence, democracy, expansion, slavery – that American gothic writers sought to channel and sublimate in the tropes of horror or fantasy. This approach still tends to read gothic literature as the return of America’s repressed, or the expression of a tortured nation coming to terms with its own violent past. It must be noted, however, that the multiculturalist and historicist revisions of scholars like Morrison, Goddu, Philip Fisher, or Jared Gardner have contributed significantly to the recovery of unarticulated histories of the disenfranchised in American literature – a welcome counter to the essentialism and continualism of the cold war era of American literary studies. See Fiedler, *Love and Death*; Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Jared Gardner, *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787-1845* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Teresa Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

^{xxix} David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (New York: Longman, 1980).

Chapter One

ⁱ See, for example, Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims*, 237; Cathy Davidson, *The Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) 224; Steven Watts, *The*

Romance of Real Life: Charles Brockden Brown and the Origins of American Culture (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 106; Christopher Looby, *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996) 188-92; Douglass H. Thomson, "Charles Brockden Brown" in *Gothic Writers: A Critical and Bibliographical Guide* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001) 77, 79. In a related study, Roland Hagenbüchle makes a case for Brown's engagement with Humean skepticism in Wieland ("American Literature and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis in Epistemology: The Example of Charles Brockden Brown," *Early American Literature* 23 [1988]: 121-51). There is, indeed, a strain of Brown criticism that might be termed "epistemological," beginning with Larzer Ziff's "A Reading of Wieland," *PMLA* 77 (1962):51-57, in which he reads the conflict between "enlightened psychology" and the Calvinistic conviction in human depravity and deceived senses. At the height of the New Americanist movement, this strain of thought came under fire for the way it "exaggerated Brown's preoccupation of Locke" while overlooking "the fluid material, social, and political environment of late eighteenth-century America" (Watts 230). But historicist readings favored by New Americanists such as Watts also get into trouble when they reduce literature to historical allegory while ignoring issues of literary form. The epistemological approach, I would argue, offers rich possibilities at the level of philosophical, literary, and aesthetic critique.

ii Like much criticism on the American gothic in general, criticism on Charles Brockden Brown tends to either anachronistically psychologize his novels (see, for example, Douglass Thomson's claim that Brown's "plot devices such as ventriloquism and sleepwalking become powerful metaphors for exploring the id," "Charles Brockden Brown," in *Gothic Writers: A Critical and Bibliographical Guide*), or read them as historical allegories (in Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985], for example, Jane Tompkins views Wieland as a plea for order and civil authority in the aftermath of revolutionary chaos). Sometimes this criticism even does both when it reads the gothic qualities of Brown's novels as the dark manifestations of a guilty national conscience tortured by its racial crimes (Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death*; Teresa Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1997]; Allan Lloyd-Smith, *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction* [New York: Continuum, 2004]). Ultimately, I agree with the claim that "allegorical interpretation[s]" devalue Brown's "psychological, epistemological, and rhetorical innovations" (Hagenbüchle 126). To put it another way, Brown criticism has tended to value content over form, as Jared Gardner has rightly noted: "dazzled by the spectacular content of [Brown's] novels, critics have underestimated the importance of their form, of their rhetorical strategies, developed in the context of Brown's particular historical moment" (110) in "The Literary Museum and the Unsettling of the Early American Novel," *ELH* 67 (2000).

iii Beverley Voloshin reads Edgar Huntly in relation to Enlightenment epistemologies of the individual for the way the novel "calls into question the coherence of the external world and, more pointedly, the coherence of the perceiving self" (262) as it was articulated in Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding ("Edgar Huntly and the Coherence of the Self," *Early American Literature* 23 (1988): 262-280). Voloshin argues convincingly that Brown exposes the tenuousness of Locke's model, but draws the more doubtful conclusion that this exposure was an act of "subversion" against social order, reflective of the political anxieties that gripped the early Federalist era. In reading Brown's epistemological engagements as subversive (that is, undermining established authorities), Voloshin takes for granted that Locke's model is the fixed standard by which the eighteenth-century individual should be measured, and that any deviation from this model is an insurrection. Locke's individual, as Brown shows, is just one of many potential models of the self that could be adapted to American life. See also Voloshin's "Wieland: 'Accounting for Appearances,'" *New England Quarterly* 59 (1986): 341-57, where she draws similar a connection between how Brown

“turns the Lockean paradigm upon itself” in order to express “some of the uncertainties of his own post-Revolutionary society” (341).

iv Brown’s familiarity with the works of Enlightenment thinkers is evident not only at the level of his novelistic treatment of their philosophies, but in biographical evidence as well. His essays in *The Rhapsodist* (for example, the “Man at Home” series or “The Difference Between History and Romance”) show a sustained engagement with theories of the self and consciousness. He was also a member of the New York Friendly Club (an intellectual circle that roughly spanned the years 1793 to 1798), which was known to circulate the political and philosophical works of Locke and Hume, in addition to Wollstonecraft, Godwin, and Volney. One of his closest friends was Elihu Hubbard Smith, a Lockean devotee from Yale. Beverley Voloshin argues that *Alcuin* provides “conclusive evidence of [Brown’s] mastery of Locke’s epistemology” (“Wieland: ‘Accounting for Appearances,’” 343). See Charles Brockden Brown, *Literary Reviews and Essays* (Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main, 1992); Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976; Hagenbüchle, “American Literature” 124; and Voloshin, “Edgar Huntley and the Coherence of the Self” 264-65. See also Brown’s biographies by Paul Allen, *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown* (1814 MS; reprint Delmar: NY.: Scholars’ Facsimiles and Reprints, 1975), and William Dunlap, *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown* (Philadelphia: James P. Parke, 1815).

v As far as I can tell, this definition of the gothic is different from other attempts to codify the genre across American scholarship. The term “gothic” has traditionally been deployed as an extraordinarily elastic concept, stretched to capture every point on the metaphysical, political, and psychological spectrums of American literary history. It can uncover the historical crimes and failed experiments by which the nation’s literature is haunted, unveil psychobiographical accounts of authors’ intentions, or reveal universal truths about the human psyche as it engages in struggles of Manichean proportions. See, for example, Leslie Fiedler, 1966; David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (New York: Longman, 1980); David Mogan, Scott P. Sanders, and Joanne B. Karpinski, Introduction to *Frontier Gothic: Terror and Wonder at the Frontier in American Literature* (London: Associated University Presses, 1993); Stephen Mainville, “Language and the Void: Gothic Landscapes in the Frontiers of Edgar Allan Poe,” in *Frontier Gothic*, 187-203; Jared Gardner, “Alien Nation: Edgar Huntly’s Savage Awakening,” *American Literature* 66 (1994): 429-461; Goddu, 1997; and Caleb Crain, *American Sympathy, Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2001). The commodious status of the gothic in American literary criticism largely stems from its status as a set of textual conventions or practices rather than a definable genre (see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* [New York: Routledge, 1986]; Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995]; and Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750-1820: A Genealogy*, 2nd ed. [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002]). A variety of explanations have consequently been generated to explain this resistance to generic classification, most of which settle on the idea that the gothic is a “fragmentary” form, where the fantasy of a cohesive narrative – of history, the nation, the subject – is interrupted by the emergence of traumatic counternarratives (see William Patrick Day, *In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985]; Mogan et al, 1993; Goddu, 1997; and Eric Savoy, “The Face of the Tenant: A Theory of American Gothic,” in *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*, ed. Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998], 3-19). Yet by reducing the Gothic to trauma and anxiety, this kind of criticism, itself governed by Gothic assumptions, winds up performing – and hence impoverishing – the work of gothic literature.

vi This definition of the gothic offers us a new way to read a work such as Washington Irving’s *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1819), for example. I believe Irving’s tale constitutes an exemplary piece of

American gothic fiction for the way the ontological status of objects alters according to the stories that circulate through the village of Sleepy Hollow. The gothic pulls apart the semiotics that govern realism by infusing this space with fictions that exceed the boundaries of their referents. With this excess of meaning, the distinction between subjects and objects collapse, and objects – like pumpkins and dead Hessians – become animated as if they were subjects. Thus Crane can be chased by both a headless horseman and a man wielding a pumpkin, depending on whose version of the story you listen to. When stories literally alter the landscape surrounding Sleepy Hollow, we can see that Irving's story exposes the rhetorical power of language to create its referents. This semiotic inversion, I argue, is the organizing principle of Brown's gothic.

vii Take, for example, Bill Christopherson's claim that "Arthur's singular presence and the moralizing tone he brings to the novel unifies it" (*The Apparition in the Glass: Charles Brockden Brown's American Gothic* [Athens, GA: University of Athens Press, 1993], 88). Rather, I would argue that Arthur Mervyn – as both character and book – is anything but singular, and Mervyn himself is characterized by his ability to disrupt rather than unify. The so-called moral ambiguities in Mervyn's character lent themselves well to the mythopoetic school of thinking in the 50s and 60s, where Mervyn emerged as both an exemplary "American Adam" (F. R. B. Lewis R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* [Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1955]), and an amoral deceiver, or a "chameleon of convenient truth" (Warner Berthoff, Introduction to *Arthur Mervyn; or Memoirs of the Year 1793*, ed. Warner Berthoff [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962]), and in the tensions and contradictions between these two versions of Mervyn could be found the essence of the American experience. More recent criticism has reproduced this divided moral reading in historico-political terms, without necessarily interrogating its assumptions. In one camp, critics read the novel as a parable of American exceptionalism, a roadmap to success in the shifting economic, social, and political terrain of the early republic (see, for example, Christopherson, *The Apparition in the Glass*; and Watts, *The Romance of Real Life*). In the other camp, Mervyn's ambiguities and inconsistencies are symptomatic of deep post-revolutionary ambiguities toward the country's political experiment. Representative of this line of thought are Emory Elliot, "Narrative Unity and Moral Resolution in Arthur Mervyn," in *Critical Essays on Charles Brockden Brown*, ed. Bernard Rosenthal (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1981), 142-63; Daniel E. Cohen, "Arthur Mervyn and His Elders: The Ambivalence of Youth in the Early Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (1986): 362-80; Edward Watts, *Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998).

viii This claim echoes Cathy Davidson's when she argued that "the Gothic challenges the primacy of the individual mind and the claims of reason. The very postulation of that challenge demarcates the inherent limitations of the tabula rasa as a model of mind and calls into question the Enlightenment's persistent concern to define itself, to count itself into unquestionable existence" (*Revolution* 224). But Davidson interprets Arthur Mervyn's challenge to received notions of the individual as an example of early America's ambiguity toward republicanism. To put it another way, she reads the novel, as she reads the American gothic as a whole, for what it fails to do – namely articulate republican ideology. Davidson's reading of the gothic is appealing, however, for the way it refuses to psychologize the genre even as it recognizes that it deals with individual and social psychologies. Departing from Davidson, I wish to examine the epistemological grounds upon which Brown issues a challenge to the limits of the ideal self, and the viable, positive forms of consciousness that emerge as a result.

ix John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), II.i.2. All further citations are to this edition.

x John Locke, "The Second Treatise of Government," in *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 111-12. All further citations are to this edition.

xi In his writings on jurisprudence, for example, James Wilson openly acknowledges his debt to Locke's empiricism (see "On the Nature and Philosophy of Evidence," in *The Works of James Wilson*, ed. Robert Green McCloskey, Vol. 1 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967], 371 ff). At a critical level, America's political – as opposed to cultural – debt to Locke and his successors has long been both acknowledged and contested. During the Cold War, the liberal consensus thesis accorded Locke a significant role in the formation of the United States as historians wrote celebratory accounts of America's transhistorical commitment to liberal individualism, as espoused by Locke. See, for example, Arthur Schlesinger, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949); and Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955). This political history gave way to the more communitarian vision of civic republicanism. Leading the "republican synthesis" charge was Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1967); Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); and J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), and *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, M.A.: Cambridge University Press, 1985). The relative merits of these two positions continued to be tested and synthesized in the later part of the century; see for example Lance Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited: Liberal and Classical Ideas in the American Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (1986): 3-19; Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1992; and Philip Gould, "Virtue, Ideology, and the American Revolution: The Legacy of the Republican Synthesis," *American Literary History* 5 (Autumn 1993): 564-577. Gillian Brown's study, *The Consent of the Governed: The Lockean Legacy in Early American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) is an important work for literary historians for the way Brown extends Locke's political importance into the cultural domain by foregrounding his consensual and pedagogical theories in the organization of civil society. Other important scholarship relating to the traffic in philosophical ideas between Scotland, England, and America include Terence Martin, *The Instructed Vision: Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Origins of American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961); Richard B. Sher and Jeffrey Smitten, eds., *Scotland and America in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Robert A. Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment 1750-1820* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1994); Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1997); and Franklin E. Court, "The early impact of Scottish literary teaching in North America," in *The Scottish Invention of English Literature*, ed. Robert Crawford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1998), 134-63.

xii Take, for example, Locke's anecdote about the talking parrot who can apparently discourse intelligently on any topic. The talking parrot exposes the possibility that something other than a person can possess the qualities of rationality and hence individualism – a possibility rife with gothic potential – and thereby destabilize Locke's claim that citizenship is strictly reserved for those who meet his limited criteria. To preserve the integrity of his argument, Locke must ensure that the talking parrot be relegated to the domain of the "incredible" and the "ridiculous," and that the characteristics of humanity be even more rigidly defined: "I presume it is not the idea of a thinking or rational being alone that makes the idea of a man in most people's sense: but of a body, so and so shaped, joined to it: and if that be the idea of a man, the same successive body not shifted all at once, must, as well as the same immaterial spirit, go to the making of the same man" (*Essay* II.xxvii.8). The

fact that Locke must prove that a parrot is not a man – indeed, his refutation rests on the Aristotelian argument that the individual has to be man-shaped – shows how hard he must work to keep the contradictions in his model at bay.

xiii Consider, for example, the strictly Lockean terms in which Brown accounts for Mervyn's incomprehension in the face of a conversation he can't follow: "Much conversation passed between [Clemenza] and Welbeck, but I could comprehend no part of it. I was at liberty to animadvert on the visible part of their intercourse. I diverted some part of my attention from my own embarrassments, and fixed it on their looks. In this art, as in most others, I was an unpractised simpleton. In the countenance of Welbeck, there was somewhat else than sympathy with the astonishment and distress of the lady; but I could not interpret these additional tokens" (Charles Brockden Brown, *Arthur Mervyn; Or, Memoirs of the Year 1793* [Austin: Rinehart Library Classics, 1965], 50). Mervyn can receive surface information from the "visible" elements of this conversation, but his inexperience (he is "an unpractised simpleton") prevents him from turning over these sensations in a way that produces ideas about the world he has entered. Brown's insistence on Mervyn's "inexperience" shows in the sheer number of references available: see, for example, pp. 7, 8, 11, 31, 40, 66, 67, 80, 208, 258, 279, 293, 410, 418.

xiv Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957).

xv To augment this point, Brown adds a bizarre twist to the closet scene. Overheard by Mervyn, Thetford furtively lays a foundling child – presumably his own secret bastard – in his bed, with the intention that his bereaved wife, having recently lost her own infant, will adopt it as her own upon discovering it there. It is never made explicit where this baby has actually come from; indeed, this is the point. Just as a child can be reassigned an identity independent of birth, so psychological information has no point of reference – it is merely reconstituted.

xvi Considerable scholarship on Arthur Mervyn is devoted to the question of Mervyn's sincerity versus his mendacity, a trend that lead one critic to claim that "the central problem of Arthur Mervyn [is] the integrity of the protagonist and the truth of his tale" (Watts, *The Romance of Real Life* 106). See also James Russo, "The Chameleon of Convenient Vice: A Study of the Narrative of Arthur Mervyn," *Studies in the Novel* 11 (1979): 381-405; and James Justus, "Arthur Mervyn, American," *American Literature* 42 (1970): 304-24. The novel certainly invites us to locate Mervyn's moral compass, but it just as resolutely refuses to provide stable coordinates. In withholding this kind of closure, I would argue, the novel demands a different interpretative paradigm than realism, which presupposes that these ambiguities can be somehow anchored and made legible. The gothic, which withholds its referents, offers such a paradigm.

xvii John Locke, "Some Thoughts Concerning Education," in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education and The Conduct of the Understanding*, eds. Ruth Weissbourd Grant and Nathan Tarcov (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1996), 62. All further citations are to this edition.

xviii Having witnessed Welbeck perform the gentleman at a Philadelphia party, for example, Mervyn is so struck by the disparity between this Welbeck and the more lachrymose, reserved Welbeck that he is used to, he admits, "I could hardly persuade myself that it was the same person" (68). Here, it appears that Welbeck's superior linguistic performance has trumped Mervyn's ability to see the world truthfully (he can't make out which Welbeck is the real one). But this presupposes that there is a "real" Welbeck behind all the representations. Ultimately, we only have Welbeck's word as to who he "really" is – and this itself is reinterpreted for us by Mervyn, whose narrative is in turn

documented by Dr Stevens at the request of Mrs. Wentworth. Where, under all of these different versions, is the “real” Welbeck?

xix It is worth noting that Mervyn describes this change as possessing the qualities of a “dream.” Locke describes dreams as the “frivolous and irrational” compilations of our waking ideas, “oddly put together” by the soul during sleep. They consequently resemble the confused ideas of “inconsistent parts” generated by linguistic misrepresentation. In describing his visions as dream-like, Mervyn shows that his ideas are combining in incoherent ways. Dreams indicated that reason’s sovereignty may be undermined by the soul, a residual premodern entity that is thus capable of eroding the self-enclosure of the subject. Locke finds dreams particularly hard to reconcile with his model of Enlightenment consciousness because they indicate that the mind’s sovereignty can be undermined by the “soul,” a residual premodern entity that is thus capable of eroding the self-enclosure of the subject (see Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labor, and the Origins of Personal Life* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992] 182-84).

xx Locke had America in mind when he imagined new forms of parental substitution: “in those parts of America . . . when the Husband and Wife part, which happens frequently, the Children are all left to the Mother, follow her, and are wholly under her Care and Provision” (*Essay* II.vi.65).

xxi In this respect, Mervyn is much like the subject of an imagined anthropological experiment that Locke proposes in *The Essay*: “He that attentively considers the state of a Child, at his first coming into the World, will have little reason to think him stored with plenty of Ideas, that are to be the matter of his future Knowledge. ‘Tis by degrees that he comes to be furnished with them . . . if a Child were kept in a place, where he never saw any other by Black and White, till he were a Man, he would have no more Ideas of Scarlet or Green, than he that from his Childhood never tasted an Oyster, or a Pine-Apple, has of those particular relishes” (II.I.6). With no paternal model to pass on the laws of citizenship, Mervyn has figuratively been “kept in a place” where he cannot gain ideas of the outside world.

xxii Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11-12. All further citations are to this edition.

xxiii See, for example, Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*; Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Shirley Samuels, *Romances of the Republic: Women, the Family, and Violence in the Early American Nation* (New York: Oxford, 1996); Elizabeth Barnes, *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Julia Stern, *The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

xxiv The same Wallace who lured Mervyn into the closet at the beginning of the novel.

xxv Written only a few years before the publication of *The First Part of Arthur Mervyn*, Immanuel Kant’s essay “Perpetual Peace” (1795) makes a similar claim for tolerating difference in a cosmopolitan context. All humans, according to Kant, are fundamentally the same by nature but potentially different by culture. Kant imagines a cosmopolitan, transnational system of “communication” that will bring different people into contact with one another. Since all men have “common right to the face of the earth,” they are equally entitled to tolerance. “Stranger[s],” as he

puts it, “[have] a right to associate . . . by virtue of their common possession of the surface of the earth, where, as a globe, they cannot infinitely disperse and hence must tolerate the presence of each other.” See Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” in *Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1983). All further citations are to this edition.

xxvi In *Romances of the Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), Shirley Samuels claims that Mervyn’s marriage is a disciplinary measure against “threats of revolution, contagion, and political and sexual infidelity” insofar as the novel “documents the rise of institutions of social order – and particularly the institution of the family” (30). This argument for the socializing function of the sentimental family cannot account for why Mervyn’s marriage comes to us in such insistently gothic terms.

xxvii See “Of Political or Civil Society,” in Locke’s *Second Treatise*.

xxviii “Of Paternal Power,” *ibid.*

xxix The rhetorical power of the contract is explained by Louis Althusser in *Montesquieu, Rousseau, Marx: Politics and History*, trans., Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1982). See also Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 30-42; and Gillian Brown, *The Consent of the Governed* 17-24.

xxx As an example of such a union, we might consider the marriage between Worthy and Myra in William Hill Brown’s *The Power of Sympathy* (1789). A man of well-regulated feeling, Worthy is characterized by his capacity to recognize in Myra the qualities of taste that match his own.

xxxi According to Leslie Fiedler, Mervyn’s rejection of Eliza “infuriated” Percy Shelley. This anecdote leads into his conclusion on Brown’s symbolic choice of a marriage partner for Mervyn: “as surely as the death of Ormond had signified Brown’s rejection of the demonic, his abandonment of Eliza represented his turning away from a Romantic commitment to art to an acceptance of the responsibilities of bourgeois life” (*Love and Death* 152).

xxxii The name “Asha” is of Sanskrit origin. The oddly hybrid name “Achsa Fielding” therefore evokes an uncertain genealogy of Oriental and Anglo-Saxon elements that point to her creole status.

xxxiii Fiedler, *Love and Death* 142.

xxxiv In his study on antislavery narratives, Philip Gould replaces the static model of the nation-state with the fluid, mobile circulations and exchanges of a transatlantic capitalism grounded in the slave trade. In Gould’s model, commerce dissolves nations into nodes on an international network of exchange, and the inhabitants of the early republic likewise think of themselves in commercial, transatlantic terms. See *Barbaric Traffic: Commerce and Antislavery in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

xxxv See Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English*, 100.

Chapter Two

i Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 8.

i James Everett Seaver, "A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison," in *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, ed. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 143-44.

ii This narrative has been widely reproduced in the critical discourse surrounding the wilderness as a uniquely American literary trope. As "a place beyond language and history," in one's critic's words, the wilderness "offers a return if not to innocence, then to an imagined presocial origin of mankind." Liliane Weissberg, "Black, White, and Gold" in *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race*, eds. J. Gerald Kennedy and Liliane Weissberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 136. It has proven a particularly attractive paradigm for gothic scholarship on account of the gothic's alleged preoccupation with cultural regression, as we can see in the following comment by Patrick Brantlinger in *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988): "Imperial Gothic expresses anxieties about the waning of religious orthodoxy, but even more clearly about the ease with which civilization can revert to barbarism or savagery . . . [where] the atavistic descent into the primitive experienced by fictional characters seem often to be allegories of the larger regressive movement of civilization, British progress transformed into British backsliding" (229).

iii See, for example, Bill Christopherson's request that, on this basis of this preface, we accept Edgar Huntly as "an American tale" (*Apparition* 153). This explanation does not differ significantly from the claims of an earlier generation of critics. Although Richard Chase's *The American Novel and its Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1957) turns to Brown for the more specific purpose of defining "melodrama" and its relation to romance, Chase nonetheless offers some lukewarm praise the "naturalized" gothic qualities of Huntly (36).

iv This version of the household clearly differs radically from the reproductive model naturalized by sentimental fiction. The degree to which criticism has also worked in the service of naturalizing a nation organized according to reproductive principles can be seen in Philip Fisher's comments that "family life . . . miniaturize[s] the ideal relations of the nation itself, [as] the center of any political representation must include continuity, and therefore reproduction," in *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 88.

v In making this observation, I have in mind Giorgio Agamben's short essay "Tick" in *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 45-47, where Agamben argues that the tick exists not as a unity in itself, in relationship to its environment, but only as a relationship with its environment. It is only a tick, in other words, when it makes an ecological connection with its life source, or disinhibitor.

vi From Edmund Spenser's insistence on the absolute difference between the English and the Irish to Friedrich Engels description of the "unnatural" living conditions in which the Irish dwell, Irish barbarity has a long literary history as a dangerously porous geopolitical, cultural, and social boundary against which English notions of civility are measured. See Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, eds. Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, ed. David McLellan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 103; and Michael Neill's "Broken English and Broken Irish: Nation, Language, and the Optic of Power in Shakespeare's Histories," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45 (1994), 3.

vii *Second Treatise* 121. Espousing the benefits of cultivated land, Locke says this about the American wilderness: "I ask, whether in the wild woods and uncultivated waste of America, left to nature, without any improvement, tillage, or husbandry, a thousand acres yield the needy and wretched

inhabitants as many conveniences of life as ten acres equally fertile land do in Devonshire, where they are well cultivated?" (116).

viii This dilemma, historically speaking, is a familiar one – the refusal to cultivate the earth on the part of the indigenous population was a common imperial justification for colonization, where native inhabitants were perceived as roaming but not possessing their territories. See Eric Wertheimer, "Commencement Ceremonies: History and Identity in "The Rising Glory of America," 1771 and 1786," *Early American Literature* 29 (1994): 34.

ix Deleuze and Guattari make a similar observation: in American literature, "there is the rhizomatic West, with its Indians without ancestry, its ever-receding limit, its shifting and displaced frontiers" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 19).

x Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse of the Origin and Foundation of Inequality Among Men," in *Rousseau's Political Writings*, eds. Alan Ritter and Julia Conaway Bondanella, trans. Julia Conway Bondanella (New York: Norton, 1988), 28. Rousseau adapts this metaphor from Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1714).

xi Several captivity narratives from this period testify to the practice of blood-drinking among many tribes. Reporting on the massacre at Fort William Henry, Jonathan Carver (1778) notes that "many of the savages drank the blood of their victims, as it flowed warm from the fatal wound" (quoted in *Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives 1642-1836*, ed. Richard VanDerBeets (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 256n12. In the 1795 *A True Narrative of the Sufferings of Mary Kinnan, who was Taken Prisoner by the Shawawnee Nation of Indians on the Thirteenth Day of May, 1791, and Remained with them till the Sixteenth of August, 1794*, reprinted in *Held Captive by Indians* 319-332, Kinnan reports that female Delaware Indians "quaff with extatic pleasure the blood of the innocent prisoner" (326).

xii See Charles Evans, *American Bibliography* (Chicago: Blakely Press, 1903-1959).

xiii Benilde Montgomery, "Recapturing John Marrant," in *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote: African-Native American Fiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 159. Such a reading ultimately condemns nineteenth-century versions of the genre as debased fictional renditions. This interpretation, besides doing a disservice to sentimental conventions, largely reduces the debate over captivity narratives to one of authenticity – in short, did the events in these narratives "really happen"? See, for example, Lorraine Carroll, "'Affecting History': Impersonating Women in the Early Republic," *Early American Literature* 39 (2004): 511-52; or Lisa M. Logan, "'Cross-Cultural Conversations': The Captivity Narrative," in *A Companion to Literatures of Colonial America*, eds. Susan Castillo and Ivy Schweitzer (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 464-479.

xiv Since first appearing in 1684, Mary Rowlandson's narrative was republished fifteen times before 1811. Twelve of those were in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. John Williams' narrative, first published in 1707, reappears eleven times before 1811. Nine of these editions appeared after 1770. See Evans' *American Bibliography*. Some critics account for this late eighteenth-century bulge in popularity as evidence of a political atmosphere of "collective captivity," where an American readership imagined itself subject to and then freed from the tyrannical power of monarchy (Greg Sieminski, "The Puritan Captivity Narrative and the Politics of the American Revolution," *American Quarterly* 42 (1990), 36). It is easy to see Native American, Muslim, or French as allegorical extensions of the British, but this explanation cannot account for those narratives that take aim at the British directly. Why read Indian captivity narratives as political allegory when captives like Mary Kinnan or Ethan Allen were critiquing the British outright? Nor were the British

the only objects of critique. William Ray took advantage of his imprisonment in Algiers to openly accuse the American military itself of self-interest and “petty despotism” (Quoted in Paul Baepler, ed., *White Slaves and African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999], 19).

xv Royal Tyler, *The Algerine Captive; Or, The Life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill: Six Years a Prisoner Among the Algerines*, ed. Caleb Crain (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 62.

xvi Under conditions of universal hospitality, Kant argues in “Perpetual Peace,” different cultural groups will not assimilate but will retain their unique practices and identities as they come into contact.

xvii Henry Louis Gates Jr. rescued Marrant from nearly two hundred years of critical neglect when he cited the Narrative of the Lord’s Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant as inaugurating the tradition of African American literature. See *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 145. Subsequent criticism has likewise focused on the issue of Marrant’s race, even though Marrant himself rarely refers to it. See for example Benilde Montgomery, “Recapturing John Marrant,” in *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote* 158-167. On the other hand, I agree with Karen Weyler’s claim that that narrative conventions of conversion are more important in black spiritual narratives of captivity than markings of racial difference. See “Race, Redemption, and Captivity in the Narratives of Briton Hammon and John Marrant,” in *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic*, eds. Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 2001), 39-53.

xviii John Marrant, “A Narrative of the Lord’s wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black, (Now gone to Preach the Gospel in Nova-Scotia) Born in New-York, in North-American, Taken down from his own Relation, arranges, corrected and published, By the Rev. Mr. Aldridge,” in *Held Captive by Indians* 181, 193.

xix According to Lockean thought, male captives would be considered less than human because they own neither their bodies nor their labor, much like women, children, or slaves. This logic only works, however, if we think of community as a contractual state made of autonomous individuals. If, in Marrant’s narrative, the measure of the man is cultural mobility rather than the captive’s undisputed ownership of himself, then Marrant successfully imagines an inclusionary, mobile version of American identity precisely because he questions property as the basis of humanity. Coming from a free black family of considerable means, Marrant is anything but a slave and, as such, quite obviously not to be regarded as an object. His status as a free black therefore makes him ideally suited to claim that, in a circulatory model of the nation, captivity is not so much an assault on property as on the individual’s ability to move.

xx The fact that Mary Jemison cannot imagine returning to the home she has left behind suggests that this logic was waning in the U.S. imagination by the 1820s. Jemison, like Marrant, regards cultural identity as a function of mobility; her narrative is a series of successive movements further west with her family. When her adopted brother declares that he would rather kill Jemison himself than see her forcibly returned to her culture of origins, the narrative literally imagines a return home as social death.

xxi Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland and Memoirs of Carvin the Biloquist*, ed. Jay Fliegelman (New York: Penguin, 1991), 215, 263.

xxii In the captivity narrative, moreover, conversion or apostasy repeatedly serves as a trope for going native, equivalent to sexual assault or death. See, for example, Williams' account of the "French priests" who confiscated the Protestant captives' bibles (John Williams, *The Redeemed Captive*, ed. Edward W. Clark [Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1976], 55), or the attempt by Abenaki Indians in Dustan's narrative to force her conversion from Protestantism to Catholicism.

xxiii Indeed, Mettingen is repeatedly described as a blend of the two: "In this delightful region the luxuriations of natures had been chastened by judicious art" (227).

xxiv Charles Brockden Brown, *Ormond; Or, The Secret Witness*, ed. Mary Chapman (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1999), 210.

xxv Richardson obviously exerted a literary influence on Brown, even beyond the rape scene that ends *Ormond*. In a letter to Joseph Bringham, a childhood friend, Brown confesses his admiration for Richardson: "who is there that can stand in competition with the writer of *Clarissa*?" (May 5, 1792). Quoted by Herbert R. Brown, "Charles Brockden Brown's 'The Story of Julius': Rousseau and Richardson 'Improved'," in *Essays Mostly on Periodical Publishing in America*, ed. James L. Woodress (Durham: Duke University Press, 1973), 37. For this reading of *Clarissa*, I am indebted to Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse's *The Imaginary Puritan*.

Chapter Three

i Brockden Brown's late eighteenth-century fungible model of subjectivity arguably shares some affinities with the natural science theories of Linnaeus or Buffon, for example, which held environmental factors such as climate, social environment, and food as responsible for human difference. In accounting for that difference in terms of "degeneration," however, natural science reinforced the Lockean narrative of development and the enduring division between nature and culture, while Brown made the body subject to environmental conditions in order to explore the potential of an alternative form of political sovereignty.

i I am indebted to Christopher Looby's insightful and provocative introduction to the recent 2008 republication of Bird's novel. See Robert Montgomery Bird, *Sheppard Lee, Written by Himself* (New York: New York Review Books, 2008), xv-xliii.

ii Edgar Allan Poe, "Robert M. Bird," in *Essays and Reviews* (New York: Library of America), 401.

iii Looby, Introduction to *Sheppard Lee*, xvi

iv For my discussion of the appeal of common sense thought to American intellectuals in the early republic, see pages 3-4.

v *The Purloined Letter*, in *Edgar Allan Poe: Poetry and Tales*, ed. Patrick F. Quinn (New York: Library of America, 1984), 692. All further citations to Poe's tales are to this edition, unless otherwise specified.

vi The OED defines this mathematical sense of the word "relation" as "an expression which defines the general member of a series in terms of the preceding members." See "recurrence, n.⁶" The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press. 7 May 2008. <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50199809>>.

vii Gillian Brown describes this particular aspect of Locke's model in the following terms: "As persons live, they regularly refer their experience to known standards. They relate their actions or the phenomena that they encounter to familiar rules of order, such as time, space, causality, and proportion. By reference to these rules, people identify and name objects and experiences" (*The Consent of the Governed* 5).

viii Poe makes a similar claim at the beginning of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* when discussing the "higher powers of the reflective intellect" (397) that are called into play in the game of draughts: "Deprived of ordinary resources, the analyst throws himself into the spirit of his opponent, identifies himself therewith, and not unfrequently [sic] sees thus, at a glance, the sole methods (sometimes indeed absurdly simple ones) by which he may seduce into error or hurry into miscalculation" (398).

ix Jacques Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, in *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading*, ed. John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 40.

x "I have before observed that it is by prominences above the plane of the ordinary, that reason feels her way, if at all, in her search for the true, and that the proper question in cases such as this is not so much 'what has occurred?' as 'what has occurred that has never occurred before?'" (520)

xi It is more conventional to read the detective and the gothic stories as two distinct, if not wholly separate, narrative genres. See for example, J. Gerald Kennedy, "The Limits of Reason: Poe's Deluded Detectives," in *On Poe*, ed. Louis J. Budd and Edwin H. Cady (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 172-84. To my mind, these two formally different genres share similar preoccupations at the level of the rational self.

xii As I pointed out in the first chapter, the state of being alive yet unconscious troubled Locke as a potential stumbling block to his model of rationality. He tries to put the problem to rest, so to speak, with his example of the sleeping man who thinks while asleep (*Essay* II.i.11). What he sees as an affront to common sense lives on in the gothic as two minds inhabiting the same body.

xiii Looby, introduction to *Sheppard Lee*, xvii-xix.

xiv Lee acquires knowledge of financial speculation and its dangers while embodied as the moneylender Abram Skinner. In his next incarnation as the Quaker Abel Snipe, this knowledge does not transfer in a way that informs the actions of the philanthropist: "this proposal [to engage in financial speculation], strange as it may seem to the reader, after the experience Abram Skinner had given me in such matters, I did, after sundry doubts and hesitations, finally agree to" (291).

xv See Ezra Tawil, *The Making of Racial Sentiment: Slavery and the Birth of the Frontier Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40 ff.

xvi Tawil helpfully explains this problem in terms of the shift from monogenesis to polygenesis. In the nineteenth century, Tawil states, "a bold line would be drawn between differences resulting from 'the immutable laws of Nature' and the relatively insignificant 'external causes' of variety" (*Making* 44). While in the eighteenth century "human variety had the ontological status of a condition rather than an essence" (46), the nineteenth century saw the rise of a "racial discourse in the modern sense – a discourse, that is, grounded not in the history of Anglo-Saxon institutions but in a new metaphysics of blood and morphology" (48).

xvii David Hume, *A Treatise Concerning Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 164-5.

xviii “To suppose the Soul to think, and the Man not to perceive it, is . . . to make Two Persons in one Man” (*Essay* II.i.18).

xix Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson’s *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982) continues to be one of the most comprehensive attempts to theorize the institution of slavery, and from which I draw my concept of “social death,” a term that describes the theoretical rather than actual condition of slavery. Natal alienation and social degradation strips slaves of all rights, any prior claim to kinship, and any social connection except through their masters. The complete desocialization and depersonalization of the slave is social death. See also John Edwin Mason, *Social Death and Reurrection: Slavery and Emancipation in South Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 7-9.

xx Here I am drawing on Judith Butler’s notion of “becoming” in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), esp. 151-54.

xxi There is some similarity here between Bird’s model of identity and another variation of the rhizome that Deleuze and Guattari describe in the chapter of *One Thousand Plateaus* entitled “1914: One or Several Wolves?” (26-38). Bird’s logic is that of the pack, in which “you can’t be one wolf, you’re always eight or nine, six or seven. Not six or seven wolves all by yourself all at once, but one wolf among others, with five and six others” (29). Each member of the pack, in other words, is alone and connected to every other. These multiplicities are “composed of particles that do not divide without changing in nature, and distances that do not vary without entering another multiplicity and that constantly construct and dismantle themselves in the course of their communications, as they cross over into each other at, beyond, or before a certain threshold.” (33).

Chapter Four

i Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 53, 47. All further citations are to this edition. See pages 41-44 for a more extensive discussion of Smith’s model of sympathy.

ii Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse of the Origin and Foundation of Inequality Among Men,” in *Rousseau’s Political Writings*, eds. Alan Ritter and Julia Conaway Bondanella, trans. Julia Conway Bondanella (New York: Norton, 1988), 28. For a more complete explanation of Rousseau’s model of sympathy, see my explanation on pages 78-79.

iii Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 58. In *Cultures of Letters*, Richard Brodhead reads *The Scarlet Letter* in fairly straightforward Foucauldian terms, where an older model of public discipline is replaced its interiorization: “Hawthorne’s whole project in *The Scarlet Letter* could be thought of as an attempt to weight the methods and powers of a newer against an older disciplinary order, by juxtaposing a world of corporeal correction (embodied in the Puritans’ punishment of Hester) and a world of correction by interiority (embodied in Chillingworth and Dimmesdale)” (28-29).

iv Elizabeth E. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). See especially the chapter entitled “Martyrdom and the Spectacle of Suffering.”

v Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). Hester resembles *homo sacer* insofar as she stands for all those who are part of a community by virtue of their exclusion from it.

vi Amanda Emerson, "From Equivalence to Equity: The Management of an American Myth," *differences* 14 (2003): 78-105. I am indebted to Emerson's discussion of the socializing potential of conflict.

vii George Simmel, "The Sociological Nature of Conflict," in *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations*, trans. Kurt H. Wolff and Reinhard Bendix (New York: The Free Press, 1955), 28. It is striking that Simmel uses the term "lively" to describe sympathy, as it is one of Smith's favorite terms to describe the sensation of sympathy.

viii Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, 20

ix "From Equivalence to Equity," 81.

x Foucault provides a neat thumbnail sketch of the contract's negative logic in *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey, eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2003): "When we enter into a contract, what are individuals doing at the level of the social contract, when they come together to constitute a sovereign? They do so because they are forced to by some threat or by need" (240). See my discussion of the social contract on pages 54-56.

xi Wendy Brown explains this logic more fully in the chapter entitled "Liberalism's Family Values," in *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

xii James Madison, "Federalist No. 10," in Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist: A Commentary on the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Modern Library Classics), 54

xiii This is how Locke originally imagined the domestic household, as organized by the cultural logic of paternalism: "Let us therefore consider a master of a family with all these subordinate relations of wife, children, servants, and slaves, united under the domestic rule of a family; which, what resemblance soever it may have in its order, offices, and number too, with a little common-wealth" (*Second Treatise* 126). I discuss this passage more fully on page 162.

xiv Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, ed. Philip Appleman (New York: Norton, 1976), 19.

xv Giorgio Agamben builds on Foucault's discussion of the population by first challenging Foucault's insistence that the eighteenth century marked an epistemic shift toward biopolitics. Agamben traces an idea of biopolitics back to classical political theory, making the notion of sovereignty over "naked life" a long-held political assumption.

xvi For my discussion of "social death" as a category of non-being, see endnote xix on page 181.

xvii I have borrowed these phrases from Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, 2, 8

xviii I would also include Herman Melville's *Israel Potter: His Fifty Years of Exile* (1855) in this list as a novel that turns a citizen into a member of a transatlantic American population, and then denies him rights, a home, and an identity.

xix Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 182, 145.

xx Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English*, 116.

xxi Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

xxii As Carolyn Vellenga Berman neatly it up, "the enshrinement of a nuclear family, with a "domestic" woman at its center, [was] a national norm" by this point in America's literary history. *Creole Crossings: Domestic Fiction and the Reform of Colonial Slavery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 2. As my discussion of the sexual contract in Chapter One demonstrated, domestic life in liberal discourse differentiates individuals at the level of the household, preserving their autonomy and hence the separation necessary for sympathy.

xxiii At the end of the nineteenth century, Bram Stoker would describe Dracula as a "filthy leech." Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 60.

xxiv Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Tales and Sketches, including Twice-Told Tales, Mosses from an Old Manse, and The Snow-Image*, notes by Roy Harvey Pearce (New York: Library of America, 1996), 86; Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 180.