

CAPTIVES AND SLEEPWALKERS:
THE IDEOLOGICAL REVOLUTIONS OF POST-REVOLUTIONARY DISCOURSE

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When the shooting is over, power is passed to the pen. To be sure, after the Revolutionary War America's intelligentsia was facing an enormous task: to realign history with the requirements of the new political and ideological order. A new nation was to be defined, and we might assume that the question of what was to be remembered from the time before the war and what was better forgotten posed itself in a number of ways and exerted its impact on all cultural realms.

While most participants of our symposium seem to be concerned with historical change per se, I would like to discuss at some length two fictional comments on the emergence of the new nation. As suggested in our outline, I will pay special attention to what is remembered and how, and what is not remembered, speculating on why this might be so. My approach will be both textual and historical (in other words contextual): I will give a short reading of a fictional Indian captivity narrative known as the "Panther Captivity", which was first published in *Bickerstaff's Almanack* in 1787/88, and I will then pass on to one of the better known early American gothic novels by Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly; or Memoirs of a Sleepwalker*, which appeared in 1799.¹ My analysis will differ from most previous ones in that it will concentrate on the textual "margins", on those passages that remain fragmentary, that make a short appearance but then disappear - which is why they haven't received much attention from former critics. Contrary to the majority of literary criticism of Edgar Huntly, I want to show the historical significance of this apparently a-historical text, by reading it against its ideological grain. This will eventually bring us back to the problem of post-revolutionary discursive change.

The year 1787 will emerge from the following discussion as a central date: it not only saw the publication of the "Panther Captivity" (more than 25 reprints were to follow until 1814, which means that it was extremely popular) but also the constitutional convention and the elaboration of the North West Ordinance that would organize the settlement of the Ohio Valley and was to provide the theoretical and practical framework for the future settlement of the West. In a sense, then, 1787 may be regarded as a political watershed, marking the turn of America's gaze away from Europe and the seaboard toward the future task of Westward expansion. Charles Brockden Brown's choice of 1787 as the time of the setting in *Edgar Huntly* rounds things up for me - I guess history is seldom that symmetrical.

The "Surprising account of the Discovery of a Lady who was taken by the Indians in the year 1777, and after making her escape, she retired to a lonely Cave, where she lived nine years" starts off with an account of a recent hunting trip of the author,

1. Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly; or Memoirs of a Sleepwalker*, New College and University Press, New Haven, 1973.

writing under the pseudonym Abraham Panther, and his friend Isaac Camber. Abraham and Isaac, "determining to penetrate the Western wilderness as far as prudence and safety would permit", enjoy the "rich and fertile" land and the game that starts up before their muskets and which "contributed not a little to our amusement and support".² After fourteen days in the wilderness, while contemplating an "agreeable picturesque prospect, which presented itself on all sides",³ they hear a strange and beautiful voice which turns out to be that of a "beautiful young Lady ... sitting near the mouth of a cave!". When she notices the hunters the lady screams and swoons, and after having revived she tells the men how she came to the cave. Adopting the part of first person narrator, which was previously Abraham Panther's, she informs them that she was born near Albany in 1760 as the daughter of a wealthy man "excessively eager in pursuit of riches".⁴ At the age of fifteen she fell in love with her father's clerk, an improper match for her, and finally eloped with him, being forced by their persecutors to retreat far into the wilderness. Having escaped her father's men they are taken captive by a group of Indians who torture the young man to death, "cutting and mangling him in the most inhuman manner".⁵ While the Indians are celebrating their victory the girl runs away and wanders aimlessly through the wilderness, supplied with food by "the spontaneous produce of the earth" and provided with shelter by "the canopy of heaven".⁶ After fourteen days she encounters a man of a "gigantic figure" who "accosted me in a language I did not understand" and leads her to his cave where he offers her nuts and Indian cake to eat and then orders her to share his bed. The girl, however, "declined his offer". The giant threatens to kill her, finally ties her and falls asleep. The girl, having every reason for expecting him to "use violence when he waked, to make me partake of his bed", liberates herself, takes up the giant's hatchet and,

summoning resolution. I, with three blows, effectually put an end to his existence.

I then cut off his head, and next day, having cut him in quarters, drew him out of the cave, about half a mile distance; when, after covering him with leaves and bushes returned to this place. I here found a kind of Indian corn, which I planted, and have yearly raised a small quantity.⁷

She adds that she stayed in the cave for nine years, a dog being her only companion. Having finished her narration she sheds "a plentiful shower of tears".⁸ Abraham and Isaac, after some resistance on her part, convince her to return to civilization with them, where she meets her repentant father who dies in her arms, leaving her "a handsome fortune".⁹

Obviously the narrative consists of a patchwork of different modes and genres:

2. Abraham Panther, *A Very Surprising Narrative of a Young Woman, Discovered in a Rocky Cave...* (1794, 2a ed.); reprint, *The Garland Library of Narratives of North American Indian Captivities*, ed. Wilcomb Washburn, vol. 17, Garland, N.Y., 1978, p. 2.

3. Panther, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

sentimental romance is displaced by a captivity account which gives way to what seems to be a cross-cultural fertility myth. The text concludes with a return to the sentimental or domestic mode, the reconciliation of daughter and father. The giant, whose skin colour is not given, may have sprung from Greek or Nordic mythology (Dionysos, Ymir), but he also resembles the Algonchin corn god who is killed by a hero and whose body fertilizes the ground.¹⁰ Except that the "hero" in our story is a heroine. The "masculine" act of slaying the fertility god is preceded by an episode reminiscent of the female fertility myth of Persephone or Proserpine who is abducted by Hades/Pluto to dwell in the underworld with him and to reappear in spring in order to renew the seasonal cycle. Male and female fertility myth merge at the point at which the girl's chastity is threatened, a very delicate moment at which the sentimental frame narrative flashes up and immediately disappears again. The girl's rather unfeminine defence of her chastity not only ties together the male and female fertility strings but also functions to explain her bloody act within the overall discourse of sentimental romance. By an ingenious twist the anonymous author thus manages to smooth over the cracks between the sentimental plot of disobedience and reconciliation and the violent and archaic middle part. In contrast to many heroines of Indian captivity narratives, the lady in this account does not turn savage; she preserves her chastity and "feminine" (i.e. civilized) demeanor (screaming, swooning, shedding tears) at the same time as she imitates the famous act of Hannah Dustan who was taken captive by Indians in the late seventeenth century and slew her captors with a tomahawk, later receiving a bounty for the scalps she took.¹¹

As we can see, the story presents an interesting interrogation of the borderline between civilization and savagery; it comments on one of the most hotly debated issues of the time (expressed by Crèvecoeur and others) of whether and how civilized values could be preserved in the backwoods and on the frontier or whether the American settlers would inevitably degenerate to a primitive stage of human development. By choosing a female protagonist, the "Panther Captivity" succeeds in playing out the full implications of this conflict.

Most interpretations of the "Panther Captivity" regard it as a post-revolutionary myth of national origin representing the ideological struggle between the ideal of America as a hunter's paradise (gendered as male) and that of the Jeffersonians, who would like to turn it into an agrarian nation (gendered as female).¹² The myth clearly favours the former notion: while the agrarian vision of the American future is given a voice in form of the lady's narrative, it is silenced when the hunters take her back home and restore the wilderness to the original state in which they had formerly enjoyed it (Annette Kolodny notes the erotic language of the description of the land, which is of course an old *topos* leading back to the Renaissance).¹³

Jay Fliegelman has correctly pointed out the story's preoccupation with the theme

10. Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence. The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*, Wesleyan, Middletown, 1973, p. 258.

11. Cfr. Cotton Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum* (1699), reprint, *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699*, ed. Charles H. Lincoln, N.Y., N.Y., 1913.

12. Cfr. Slotkin, *op. cit.*, and Anette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860*, North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1984.

13. Kolodny, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

of parental violence and filial disobedience and inheritance: the lady inherits from both the giant and her father after having revolted against them.¹⁴ This confounding of a "civilized" and a "savage" father figure is significant in light of the historical context: in the years following the Revolution, America indeed considered itself the heir of both European and native American traditions, and the special generic blend which the "Panther Captivity" employs seems to be quite successful in uniting these two traditions. But the ending represents an imaginative reconciliation with Europe and a reinstatement of the old dualism between civilization and savagery. As a myth of origin, the "Panther Captivity" ultimately supports a conservative view; the lady, symbolizing the American Revolution (which, like the French one, was often pictured as a woman), is allowed to cope with the wilderness and to establish a sort of agrarian utopia, but ultimately chooses (or is persuaded) to return to the city and inherits the father's wealth.

Annette Kolodny has alerted us to the significance of the dates given in the story (which is actually loaded with references to time) and has drawn important conclusions about its historical meaning. The lady was born at Albany in 1760, falls in love in 1775, leaves her father's house in 1777 and returns in 1786. Similar to Rip van Winkle, she is absent during the major part of the Revolutionary War and returns home, apparently to pick up her life where she had left it. But in addition to bypassing recent political changes, the story's ending would seem to be in conflict with the revolutionary ideal: as Kolodny convincingly argues, the father's wealth most certainly derived from the British fur trade (of which Albany was the center in 1760):

The counting houses at Albany made fortunes for the merchants who traded with the Iroquois, even as they harnessed English dreams of empire in the Northwest Territory to an economy based on hunting and allied to mercantile interests.¹⁵

Although the revolutionary and Jeffersonian rhetoric of an agrarian nation decisively avoided addressing the topic of commercialism (by which the United States were still tied to England), the story implies that the envisioned republic of yeoman farmers may not succeed without a secure footing in mercantilism. While the "Panther Captivity" at first view merely appears to deal with the conflict between a vision of an American future based on hunting and one based on agriculture, its underlying issue seems to be the problematic of commercialism, an escape from which it implicitly denies. The popular success of the "Panther Captivity", I would argue, rested on its marginalization of this crucial topic of post-revolutionary political debate, exchanging for it an archetypal story of death and rebirth, intelligently interwoven with the popular plot of sentimental romance and motives from adventure and captivity narratives (Boone, Hannah Dustan). By this generic pastiche a real political problem is translated into a myth of origin, into an archetypal struggle between "male" and "female" principles. The unspecified ethnic status of the giant is important in this context - it underlines the general direction of the text to essentialize and universalize historical conflict in act by blending European and American cultural traditions: the

14. Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims. The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982, p. 140, *passim*.

15. Kolodny, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

corn giant is at the same time the classic villain of sentimental fiction. (In light of this, it is quite interesting that the giant is described as an Indian and a black man in two later editions of the "Panther Captivity").¹⁶

Besides its reluctance to mention the precise nature of the greedy father's wealth, the story also avoids any reference to the historical reality of the dispossession of the natives which the text wonderfully inverts, first by capitalizing on popular accounts of Indian captivity and then by translating the appropriation of the land into a sort of drawing room drama: the giant is rightfully destroyed after having dared to threaten the girl's virginity. And that the savages who so brutally killed her lover without any reason would deserve no mercy goes without question. What the story conceals is the complex relationship between the wealthy father's trade and the Indians' beastly behaviour. More often than not, Indian warfare was triggered by sudden changes in the European demand for furs which the native Americans couldn't possibly understand and which endangered their physical survival. (The Indians, who quickly became involved in the European economic network, exchanged their furs for guns, munitions and agricultural and household tools to provide for their families - and, alas, for whiskey). The "Panther Captivity" presents what the native Americans experienced as the Europeans' economic violence and the Europeans as the Indians' unmotivated bloodshed and sexual lust. It clearly derives its ideological power from turning history into a myth which preserved sufficient traces of historical reality to allow its readers to adopt the story as a more satisfying surrogate.

In the remainder of this essay, I would like to follow a trace laid out by Richard Slotkin twenty years ago but which has so far never been pursued, at least not to my knowledge. He mentions that the "Panther Captivity" was "almost certainly" one of the sources of Charles Brockden Brown's gothic novel *Edgar Huntly*.¹⁷ I must confess that my first reading of *Edgar Huntly* has not revealed any striking similarity between the two texts. While the "Panther Captivity" was quite obviously designed as an allegory of the Revolution and birth of a nation, *Edgar Huntly* does not in any obvious way engage in allegorizing or mythologizing political reality. Contrary to the "Panther Captivity"'s obsession with dates, there is only one reference to a particular time in the novel. This is the year 1784, mentioned in Weymouth's account of his adventures, which took place three years prior to the action of the main plot.¹⁸ The main action of the novel thus takes place in the year 1787.

Slotkin's claim that there is a similarity between the two texts seems to have been inspired by an episode in the novel where Edgar Huntly, its first person narrator, awakes in a cave, slays a panther, liberates a white girl from Indian captivity and then wanders through the Pennsylvania wilderness. This episode has in fact often been regarded as the central event of the novel. While it does indeed stand at the center of the text, I will nevertheless concentrate on other aspects of the novel which will eventually lead us to the recognition of additional parallels between the two texts besides this rather obvious one.

Brown, in his address "To the Public", is quite explicit about his intention not to write a historical novel. He rather wanted

16. Cfr. Fliegelman, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

17. Slotkin, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

18. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

to exhibit a series of adventures, growing out of the condition of our country and connected with one of the most common and most wonderful diseases or affections of the human frame.¹⁹

By referring to himself as a "moral painter", he stresses the pedagogical aspect of his novel. The crucial term here is doubtless the word "connected". Although most of Brown's critics have regarded his descriptions of the "conditions of the country" as mere historical background, or indispensable context of the action, Brown himself does not seem to conceive of the relationship between history and the moral problem he illustrates in a hierarchical way. On the contrary, the story's Americanness derives from the specific nature of the historical references: Brown writes in his preface that he has consciously exchanged the castles and "chimeras" of the European gothic tradition for the "incidents of Indian hostility and the perils of the Western wilderness".²⁰ Thus, the historical particularities, although more or less irrelevant to the needs of the moral painter, become quite essential to the American patriot (which Brown certainly was). In spite of this tension, however, *Edgar Huntly* has seldom been read as an attempt to negotiate between these two demands, but is usually read as a psychological or mythical narrative.

Like the "Panther Captivity", *Edgar Huntly* may be seen as an effort to remove the European past and replace it with a genuine American history. The action clusters around two sleepwalkers, Edgar Huntly and Clithero Edny, whose actions show a striking number of parallels. Clithero, a recent immigrant from Ireland and servant to Huntly's neighbor near the Forks of the Delaware in Eastern Pennsylvania, deems himself guilty of having murdered his wealthy benefactress Mrs. Lorimer, in Dublin. Edgar's best friend Waldegrave has likewise recently been murdered by an unknown assassin, and when Edgar meets Clithero sleepwalking and sobbing on the spot of Waldegrave's death, he suspects him of having committed the deed. He forces him to confess, with the result of tearing open Clithero's own wound. Clithero tells him that he had in fact killed Mrs. Lorimer's villainous brother, Wiatte, in self-defence and then attempted to kill her, too, because she had repeatedly mentioned that, in spite of her brother's evil character, she would never survive his death. When Clithero disappears into the wilderness in a suicidal mood after having ended his tale, Huntly follows him for a while, but is then distracted by suddenly remembering his promise to copy Waldegrave's letters for the recipient of his epistolary narrative, Waldegrave's sister Mary, who is also Edgar's fiancé. By and by it turns out that Huntly's preoccupation with Clithero's fate functions as a surrogate for dealing with his own past and his own "guilt", represented by the letters, which testify to Waldegrave's former philosophical materialism and radical revolutionary creed which also infects Huntly. Beginning to sleepwalk himself without noticing it, Huntly misplaces the letters (probably the novel's most "uncanny" moment). But his attempt to forget is again disturbed by the appearance of Weymouth, a former friend of Waldegrave's who claims he entrusted Waldegrave with 7,500 dollars before departing on a ruinous commercial enterprise to Portugal three years earlier. It becomes clear that Huntly, himself parentless, poor, and incapable or unwilling to pursue an ordinary occupation

19. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

20. *Ibid.*

(unlike Waldegrave who had taught at a school for Blacks), relies for his own future on Weymouth's money, now in Mary's possession. The novel in fact breaks into two halves at this nodal point where Edgar learns that his economic future is in pieces. The next scene shows us Huntly in total darkness and unable to remember where he is and how he got unconsciously there. He finds out that he has returned to one of the caves in the wilderness of Norwalk to which he had previously followed his alter ego Clithero (who is still missing). This second part of the novel at first glance seems to bear no relation at all to the first part, which was mainly dedicated to Clithero's own narrative about his peasant birth and social ascent to become Mrs. Lorimer's secretary, and which also contained the narrative of his tutor Sarsefield, Mrs. Lorimer's lover, about his travels in India, Turkey, Italy and America, as well as the longish account of Weymouth about his shipwreck in Portugal and his encounter with degenerate Portuguese fishermen and even more degenerate Catholic monks.

This more or less "European" part is now displaced by Huntly's "American" story. Risen from primeval darkness, he slays a panther, feeds on its carcass and then kills five Indians in single combat before and after redeeming a captive girl. He is left for dead by a rescue team which includes Huntly's friend Sarsefield, Clithero's tutor who has just returned from Ireland (this is only one of the many impossibilities in the plot). Edgar then wanders through the American wilderness and almost kills Sarsefield in the dark and he, in turn, barely misses Huntly, without recognizing him. Arriving at home, Edgar learns that the Indians have killed the uncle who had thus far taken care of him, but he has left his estate to a son unwilling to provide for him. Edgar finally meets Sarsefield, who has retrieved Waldegrave's letters for him, and tells him that Mrs. Lorimer is alive, has become his wife, and would be happy to see Edgar marry her adopted daughter Clarice (who had been promised to Clithero before the attempted murder but never seems to mind Mrs. Lorimer's decisions). Sarsefield also tries to convince Edgar that Clithero, whose actions Huntly had thus far ascribed to a misguided sense of "benevolence", is truly a madman. At the end Clithero is redeemed from Indian captivity more dead than alive and rather unconvincingly thanks Edgar for showing so much interest in his person (after all it was Edgar's curiosity that had caused his retreat to the wilderness in the first place).

Here Edgar's long letter to Mary ends. The remainder of the novel consists in a short exchange of letters between Huntly and Sarsefield. Edgar informs his new benefactor that Waldegrave has been murdered by one of the Indians who recently scoured the settlement and that the warriors had been instigated to their bloody deeds by an old Indian woman, Queen Mab, who had remained behind when her tribe had moved Westward, but was occasionally visited by her relatives. We also learn that Clithero is nurtured back to life by old settler women with native herbs and potions. While Sarsefield prepares for Huntly's arrival in New York, where he stays with his wife, Edgar - instead of perhaps explaining the presumed change of his plans to marry Mary - cannot stop meddling with Clithero's affairs. Now knowing of his innocence and filled with pity and benevolence toward him, he visits him in his new abode, the hut formerly inhabited by Queen Mab, and tells him that Mrs. Lorimer is alive and staying in New York. Clithero, now apparently really mad, hastens to carry out the "crime" his "evil destiny" had reserved for him.²¹ Huntly sends his

21. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

letter to Sarsefield to inform him of Clithero's departure for New York "with mysterious intentions".²² (There is only an implicit indication that he means to murder Mrs. Lorimer.) The novel ends with a letter from Sarsefield making Huntly responsible for Mrs. Lorimer's miscarriage upon having mistakenly learned of Clithero's approach by reading Huntly's letter, as well as informing him about the arrest of Clithero and his death by drowning after an attempted escape on the boat passage to the insane asylum.

This summary must appear confusing, but *Edgar Huntly* is a confusing book. It obviously contains a critique of several human weaknesses, condemning the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, as well as irrational belief in benevolence and the general rationalist hubris of much Enlightenment thought. Both Edgar and Clithero are prisoners of these dubious tenets, and both displace responsibility for the disastrous effects of their "benevolent" behaviour on to some "malignant" or "mysterious" destiny and "diabolical instigations".²³ But the real source of misguided benevolence is Mrs. Lorimer, who has apparently infected Clithero with it:

Exempt as this lady was from almost every defect, - Huntly comments on Clithero's story - she was indebted for her ruin to absurd opinions of the sacredness of consanguinity The spirit of Clithero was enlightened and erect, but he weakly suffered the dictates of eternal justice to be swallowed up by gratitude.²⁴

In other words, Clithero's natural power of judgement was dimmed by his dependance on Mrs. Lorimer's generosity. He would have acted differently if he had been independent of her. At the end, in his last letter to Sarsefield, however, Huntly has changed his mind:

I had imagined that Clithero was merely a victim of erroneous gratitude, a slave of the error of his education and the prejudices of his rank; that his understanding was deluded by phantoms in the mask of virtue and duty, and not, as you have strenuously maintained, utterly subverted.²⁵

Now this very much looks like a shift from an enlightened belief in the importance of social influences on the development of human character to a conservative notion of the natural depravity or "utter subversion" of those that are considered insane. The opinion of Sarsefield, tutor to both Clithero and Edgar, is reinforced in the end. As he tells Edgar in his letter:

Clithero is a madman, whose liberty is dangerous, and who requires to be fettered and imprisoned as the most atrocious criminal.²⁶

The rebel displaying a pre-enlightened view of the adequate treatment of insanity.

As the 'father' of both, Sarsefield also binds together the two halves of the plot and would thus deserve closer scrutiny. He is in fact the typical "polytropic man" of

22. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 93, 116, 258.

24. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

colonial Europe who manages to escape from all dangers thanks to his unlimited flexibility and practical skill. Fleeing from Ireland after having aroused Wiatte's scorn for courting his sister, Sarsefield, a professional surgeon, takes a post with the East India Company procured for him by Mrs. Lorimer (who, like Charlie Marlow's aunt, seems to be altogether out of politics, but here demonstrates close contact with political power). He gains his military reputation in a number of colonial battles in Bengal, England's colonial treasure chamber in the 1760s (which is the time Sarsefield is there), escapes from prison in Hyderabad and wanders through Hindustan, sometimes a scholar of Benares, and sometimes a disciple of the Mosque. According to the exigencies of the times, he was a pilgrim to Mecca or to Juggernaut".²⁷

After a few years of successful religious camouflage, he comes to Turkey and later to Italy where he is taken captive by bandits:

In consequence of his harmless deportment, and a seasonable display of his chirurgical skill, they granted him his liberty, and compelled him to endure their society. The time was not misemployed which he spent immured in caverns and carousing with robbers.²⁸

Sarsefield's intellectual resourcefulness in dealing with the natives of India and Italy identifies him as a deserving heir of earlier colonists such as the English mathematician Thomas Hariot who claimed he had duped the Virginia natives with his show of mathematical instruments in 1585.²⁹ The archetype of these characters is of course Odysseus, that ever-resourceful and cunning traveller.³⁰

Whether at liberty or compelled to stay, Sarsefield proves himself able to partake in, and benefit from any kind of human society, changing his identity like a weathercock its direction. Unlike Huntly, who emerges from his cave like primordial man, slaying every Indian that crosses his path, Sarsefield chooses to assimilate to the Italian "savages", just as he had earlier assimilated his creed to Hinduism and Islam, as necessity required. In other words, Sarsefield is a political chameleon, he adjusts to any situation, untroubled, it seems, by any kind of moral conscience, and he always tries to achieve the highest possible results for himself. His marriage to the wealthy Mrs. Lorimer is of course the apex of his adventurous career. He is the very opposite of Clithero, whose overcharged moral sensibility drives him into despair and madness. Huntly himself seems to stand somewhere between the two, his actions are guided by an inexplicable curiosity for other people's private affairs, with a barely concealed violence slumbering underneath the naive surface and waiting to be set free against panthers and Indians. Huntly himself, of course, explains his curiosity, and occasionally his violence, with his own humanitarian feelings - he even stabs an Indian to death, after having first severely wounded him, out of "compassion and

27. *Ibid.*, p. 76; cfr. W. David McIntyre, *Colonies Into Commonwealth*, Blandford, London, rev. ed., 1974, p. 162 and foll.

28. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

29. Thomas Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* [1588], in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, Glasgow, 1905, 12 vols., vol. VIII, pp. 348-386, p. 378.

30. Peter Hulme, "Polytropic Man: Tropes of Sexuality and Mobility in Early Colonial Discourse", in Francis Barker et al. (eds.), *Europe and Its Others*, Colchester, 1985, 2 vols., vol. II, pp. 17-32, p. 20 and foll.

duty" - but then, "prompted by some freak of fancy", sticks his musket into the ground and leaves it "standing upright in the middle of the road".³¹

It is becoming clear from these observations, I think, that Edgar Huntly is not a reliable narrator and that Brown may not have expected the reader to view the events from his perspective alone. Although both Clithero and Huntly tell their stories in rational way, their actions often violate the limits of "normal" human behaviour. And unlike the protagonists of most other gothic tales, told from the point of view of the helpless victims, Edgar and Clithero are not only the victims of terror but also its perpetrators.

The criticism of *Edgar Huntly* may be very broadly grouped into two camps: the representatives of the first assume, like Richard Slotkin, that the novel is only "tangentially" related "to social conditions and issues",³² often in order to ignore these issues altogether. The members of this school usually read the novel from the viewpoint of ego-psychology or myth criticism. In any case, they endow *Edgar Huntly* with ideological closure by concentrating on the relationship between Clithero and Edgar and on the "American" theme of Edgar's march through the wilderness. Most of them entirely disregard the Sarsefield and the Weymouth passages and pay insufficient attention to the passage on Queen Mab. As I shall try to show, assumptions about the text's unity of meaning are actually made possible by the disregard of these interspersed narratives.

A second and more recent interpretive tradition draws attention to the open ending and the unresolved issues of the novel and emphasizes its ruptures and gaps.³³ With the second group I wish to show to what extent the fissures and contradictions in the text may be meaningful in a political or historical sense. Despite the occasional similarity between my critical language and that of a certain deconstructionist fashion, my approach is less guided by a notion of Barthean *jouissance* or de Manean "indeterminacy of meaning" than inspired by the work of the French marxist critic Pierre Macherey who emphasizes that the literary text is not unified or independent "but bears in its material substance the imprint of a determinate absence which is also the principle of its identity".³⁴ Macherey declares that there is a

splitting within the work; this division is its unconscious ... the unconscious which is history, the play of history beyond its edges, encroaching on those edges.³⁵

In contrast to the psychological readings of scholars like Fiedler and Slotkin, I will try to provide a psychoanalytical reading (the method Macherey develops in many ways resembles Freud's method for the interpretation of dreams). Just as the psychoanalyst is struggling against the patient's unwillingness to reveal the secrets

31. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 189 and foll.

32. Slotkin, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

33. Norman S. Grabo, *The Coincidental Art of Charles Brockden Brown*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1981; see also, Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word. The Rise of the Novel in America*, Oxford, N.Y., 1986, and Cynthia Jordan, *Second Stories. The Politics of Language, Form, and Gender in Early American Fictions*, North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1989.

34. Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, Routledge, London, 1978, p. 80.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

of his psyche - Freud's term for this unwillingness is *Unlust*³⁶ - textual criticism a la Macherey encounters obstacles in the text, places where it simultaneously shows and conceals that which it cannot, or does not want, to say. The historical relevance of *Edgar Huntly*, I assume, is hidden in those passages which appear useless, misplaced, superfluous, and symptomatic of what many critics have regarded as the text's general malady, its "maddingly disorganized" state.³⁷ But as we know (and as the novel itself demonstrates) a culture's definition of "madness" always depends, at least to a large degree, on what the members of that culture have defined as normal. *Edgar Huntly's* "discordant notes", which disrupt its unity³⁸ may well result from viewing the text from an aesthetic position that differs from the aesthetic standard on which the novel was conceived. I shall therefore attempt to read *Edgar Huntly* as the product of a period of political and ideological change, as a text whose "disorder" pretty much echoes the disorder and the contradictions within the political discourse of the early republic.

Cynthia Jordan has argued that Charles Brockden Brown's novels are remarkably open-ended.³⁹ This especially applies to *Edgar Huntly*. After all, Huntly is at the end despoiled of all personal and financial security. His uncle is dead and "as Edgar knows" the heir of his estate is unwilling to further support him. Sarsefield ends his letter with an ambivalent "Farewell"⁴⁰ and has every reason to withdraw his offer to adopt Edgar after the loss of his unborn baby due to Edgar's "rashness" in sending the letter to his home address and thereby scaring Mrs. Lorimer to death.⁴¹ Edgar's return to Mary, which is still possible, seems impeded by the fact that she has lost her fortune and is in fact already financially indebted to Weymouth. No rosy outlook for poor Edgar with his apparent aversion to any kind of useful labour. By leaving the last word to Sarsefield, Brown avoids solving the riddle. Weymouth's claim, in any case, is never mentioned again after he has left Huntly alone (and literally in the dark). As I noted before, Weymouth's story is aptly "forgotten" by Huntly, but it is apparently also forgotten by Brown himself.

The uncertainty about Huntly's future is accompanied by an uncertainty regarding Clithero's death. Sarsefield concludes that Clithero has drowned from the fact that he "threw himself overboard, with a seeming intention to gain the shore". When others pursue him, Clithero "forced himself beneath the surface, and was seen no more".⁴² Now, the whole novel is of course concerned with the insufficiency of human perception and with the fatal impact on our actions of irrational powers that lurk below the surface of our consciousness. Clithero's reproach to Huntly for suspecting him of being the murderer of Waldegrave, falls in place here: "The inference which you have drawn, with regard to my designs and my conduct, are a tissue of destructive errors".⁴³ Sarsefield had himself given an example of this human fallibility by believing Huntly had drowned after having jumped from a precipice into a river. The novel

36. Sigmund Freud, *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens*, Fisher Frankfurt, ed. 1989, p. 111.

37. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, rev. ed., Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966, p. 157.

38. Donald Ringe, *Charles Brockden Brown*, Twayne, New York, 1966, pp. 105; 139.

39. Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

40. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

repeatedly challenges common assumptions that everything which disappears from view is also dead.⁴⁴

The ambivalent ending of *Edgar Huntly* complies with the formal requirements of gothic tales which mostly end with the horror being temporarily defeated, but seldom completely uprooted. Like classic gothic novels, *Edgar Huntly* "resists ending even as it assumes the cloak of conventional sentimental closure"; it is, to adopt Cathy Davidson's fitting expression, "neither open nor closed - but slightly ajar".⁴⁵ As Davidson's and others have argued, gothic narratives are deliberately fragmentary and inconsistent, thereby challenging the neat order of the Age of Reason, together with its assumptions about the rationality of human nature.⁴⁶ The emergence of the novel, and in particular of the gothic novel, has often been associated with the emergence of the bourgeois middle class: its formal flexibility is seen as an instrument for imaginatively subverting traditional social structures (most importantly aristocracy and the Catholic Church). Part of this critical edge is certainly missing from the American gothic novel which, in a period of awakening nationalism and celebrations of the newly gained independence, had to look for new ghosts slumbering in America's unopened closets. What can in any case be said, I think, is that the American novel, like its European counterpart, "happened at those places in its society where issues were unresolved, at the interstices between public rhetoric and private expression".⁴⁷

Settling in one of those interstices, *Edgar Huntly* at the same time reproduces the conflict between the private and the political, and between political ideal and actuality. Edgar's unresolved future is symptomatic here: while America's official rhetoric expounded the ideal of a republic of hard-working yeoman farmers, Edgar seeks his well-being by inheriting the wealth of others which was acquired on rather un-Jeffersonian principles, either through trade and commerce (Weymouth) or through feudalistic rule (Mrs. Lorimer). Huntly's symbolic inheritance of the American wilderness (his 'death and rebirth' in the cave, etc.) does not really lead anywhere, it does not provide him with the practical means of existence (the American wilderness seems to be altogether incapable of offering him subsistence and the kind of leisurely life he has enjoyed so far).

Huntly's Doppelgänger Clithero, by contrast, is much better at accommodating to America: he does not shy away from working as a servant, survives alone in the wilderness for several days, is nursed back to life with the help of native medicine and finally inherits the hut of the "treacherous" Indian woman, Queen Mab. The politics of the novel would seem to gain enormously from this move. It should be clear that the Indians' unexpected and unexplained assault on the settlement is not only the novel's historical "background" - Brown's "condition of the country" - but also its principal driving force.

The news that Waldegrave was murdered by one of Mab's relatives really comes as an anti-climax at the end of the novel when nobody had probably still bothered to speculate on Waldegrave's death.⁴⁸ As a matter of fact, the immediate reason leading

44. *Ibid.*, p. 234; Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

45. Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

48. Leslie Fiedler thinks that the information about Waldegrave's actual murderer is "irrelevant to

himself (probably one of his "freaks of fancy": "Queen Mab" is the name of an old English fairy). The woman had remained behind when "thirty years ago, in consequence of perpetual encroachments of the English colonists", her people "abandoned their ancient seats" to move West.⁵⁴ As a master of fact, the village formerly inhabited by Mab's clan

was built upon ground which now constitutes my uncle's barnyard and orchard. On the departure of her countrymen, this female burnt the empty wigwams and retired into the fastness of Norwalk.⁵⁵

There she lived with three wolf-like dogs, fed them and herself with corn from the little field she cultivated, and hardly had any intercourse with the settlers, talking only to her dogs: "Her voice was sharp and shrill, and her gesticulations were vehement and grotesque".⁵⁶ Occasionally she went begging among the settlers for food or clothing:

She conceived that by remaining behind her countrymen she succeeded to the government and retained the possession of all this region. The English were aliens and sojourners, who occupied the land merely by her connivance and permission, and whom she allowed to remain on no terms but those of supplying her wants.⁵⁷

Queen Mab is presented as a comic character, a half-witted person of a "shrivelled and diminutive form" whose age probably "exceeded a hundred years".⁵⁸ However, in spite of the comic language in which she is presented (which begins with the act of naming), her peoples title to the land is explicitly confirmed - in fact her clan has been dispossessed by old Mr. Huntly himself whose death at the hands of Mab's relatives may seem less outrageous in light of this information (but the novel never proposes such a view of things). The description of Queen Mab is thus quite ambivalent. It testifies to a certain sympathy with her tribe's tragic history, as well as a recognition of their ancient land claims. But at the same time the narrative strategy renders these claims utterly absurd by individualizing them, by ridiculing the fact that they are made by a single shrivelled old woman. This disavowal of Mab's tragedy and her title to the land, effected by their translation into a comic narrative prepares the scene for denying them altogether by presenting Queen Mab as treacherous. At the end of the book she is identified as the instigator of the recent Indian attack.⁵⁹

54. Brown, op. cit., p. 193.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

59. Having recently re-read Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, one of Europe imperialist master texts, it strikes me that in both Conrad's novel and *Edgar Huntly* male violence and mobility are the result of female planning - Mrs. Lorimer in her unlimited beauty and goodness resembles Mr. Kurtz's intended, but she also bears similarities with Marlow's aunt (both procure colonial positions for their men). Queen Mab, who is said to have had a leading position among her people, in some way resembles the formidable African woman chief who supervises Kurtz's departure. Of course I do not want to insinuate that Conrad took his ideas from Brown (which is not very likely). Rather, the analogy would seem to point at a specific ideological structure, a recurring constellation of colonial and gender discourses in the fictional narratives of the West, which may possibly be found in other colonialist novels as well.

When arrested, she explains her action "by enumerating the injuries" she had received from the settlers. "These injuries", Huntly adds, "consisted in contemptuous or neglectful treatment, and in the rejection of groundless and absurd claims" - meaning that the old witch was simply out of her wits.⁶⁰ Mab's "groundless claims", it should be remembered, were nevertheless claims for her people's own ground - but as we have seen, it is not Huntly's strength to remember other people's rightful claims. This textual strategy of voicing and at the same time silencing native American land claims by way of embedding them in discourses of otherness (of comedy and of madness) is one of the oldest and most successful tactics of European colonial discourse. The description of Queen Mab is in many ways reminiscent of that of Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, one of the colonial master texts of early modern Europe. Both Mab and Caliban are the sole native inhabitants of their land, and are endowed with grotesque figures and a witch-like behaviour (Caliban's mother was the witch Sycorax); both are hardly able to speak but obstinately claim the right of original ownership of the land; both are cast in a comic mode, and both conspire against their colonizers. But with Queen Mab as with Caliban, to speak of "treachery" is already to submit to the logic of the colonizing power.⁶¹ Mab's "conspiracy" is of course a response to that process of dispossession - clearly illustrated by the displacement of her village by the Huntly farm - which at the end of *Edgar Huntly* appears to be the natural state of affairs, leaving her repeated claims "groundless" (was Brown aware of the pun?).

By making Clithero move into the abode of Queen Mab, the book makes a very strong point about the topic of dispossession and inheritance and in this regard indeed resembles, but also differs from, the "Panther Captivity". Clithero, we may remember, is also a member of a dispossessed group, the Irish peasants and debtors of Mrs. Lorimer, from whom Clithero almost inherited by marrying Clarice. However, although I agree with Norman Grabo that both Clithero and Mab are "dispossessed", I perceive a profound difference between the two processes of dispossession. Both are "cheated out of place", but for different reasons and on a different legal foundation. Clithero is cheated out of a position to which he had merely aspired while Queen Mab's people are actually deprived of their ancestral grounds. In other words, Clithero is disinherited but the Indians are appropriated.⁶²

Fleeing from the constraints which his class faced in Europe, Clithero comes to America and symbolically adopts the place of its native inhabitants. He is symbolically initiated into native culture by his captivity and subsequent cure on native herbs. No wonder that such a dangerous cultural bastard must be done away with at the end! When he appears to Huntly during one of Edgar's strolls through the wilderness in pursuit of his alter ego and the natural scenery's aesthetic pleasure, Clithero even seems to trave mingled with the wilderness itself at remarkable speed: "His arms, bosom, and cheeks were overgrown and half concealed by hair", Huntly observes.⁶³ After only a few days in the woods, the Irishman seems to have turned into a wild

60. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

61. Cfr. Francis Barker and Peter Hulme, *Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish: the Discursive Con-text of 'The Tempest'*, in John Drakakis, ed., *Alternative Shakespeares*, London, 1985, p. 200.

62. Cfr. Grabo, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

63. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

man or even a werewolf (or perhaps only returned to the primitive state of an Irish peasant?). Clithero's remarkable adaptability to the environment indeed reminds one of Sarsefield's improvisational skill. But unlike Sarsefield's colonial camouflage, Clithero's cultural hybridity causes suspicion. His incapacity of maintaining a stable sense of self (no problem for Sarsefield who never questions his colonial identity) seems to be one of the factors leading to Clithero's "madness".

But given Edgar's own feeble mental state and his tendency to forget (nicely glossed by the book's subtitle: "Memoirs of a Sleepwalker"), we may perhaps distrust his testimony with regard to his last interview with Clithero. Edgar is the only person who ascertains that Clithero has returned to madness. When Sarsefield arrests him, Clithero appears to be in full possession of his rational faculties:

His strong but perverted reason exclaimed loudly against the injustice of his treatment. It was easy for him to out-reason his antagonist, and nothing but force could subdue his opposition".⁶⁴

Nothing but force - surely an easy thing to do for someone who had previously "caroused" with Italian highway robbers. I think it is an ingenious move on Brown's part to present the ending of the novel from Sarsefield's point of view. For Sarsefield, to whom scruples are apparently unknown and who does not burden himself with any belief but the belief in himself, Clithero, no matter how reasonable his arguments, is a "lunatic"⁶⁵ to be shut away. It is Sarsefield himself, of course, who decides whose reason is "perverted" and whose isn't, just as it is Huntly and the settlers who decide that Mab's claims are "groundless and absurd". Once we realize the extent to which what counts as "truth" in this story actually depends on the position and the interests of the speaker, *Edgar Huntly* may be read not only as a historical parable but as an ingenious piece of social criticism. The problem is of course that it contains this critique, that it tames it with the help of a number of narrative techniques (plot, point of view, discursive displacement). Despite repeated assertions to the contrary by a long tradition of literary criticism, the book itself never makes explicit that Clithero is really mad and that he really did die. On the contrary, it provides sufficient hints suggesting the opposite. Above all, the novel repeatedly implies that what we consider as "truth" is always the result of a socially authorized discursive process, it always depends on the social position of the speaker. In more Nietzschean terms, the novel reveals, but at the same time conceals, that truth is always a function of power.⁶⁶

I think Cynthia Jordan is right when she claims that the plot of *Edgar Huntly* has a "second story". While obviously concerned with the psychic and moral development of *Edgar Huntly* and Clithero Edny, their overidentification with various paternal figures, and their initiation into the American frontier culture, the novel contains a second story of historical dispossession, guilt and violence. The two stories are incompatible with one another, which is why the first one is relatively chronological

64. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

65. *Ibid.*

66. It would certainly be worthwhile to inquire into the manifold ways in which Brown has imaginatively anticipated Nietzschean thinking. Cfr. his novel *Orod* and also his fragmentary utopian romances with their display of nihilistic and at times proto-fascist social theories (cf. Marchand 1962: XXIX; XLIII).

and consistent and the second one, by settling in the fissures and gaps that necessarily arise from any attempt to endow events with ideological closure, remains itself fragmentary, is partly "forgotten" and adopts various discursive disguises. In Macherey's terms, *Edgar Huntly* contains a "conflict of meaning" that cannot be resolved and that is at the same time the "principle of its identity".⁶⁷ As a text divided against itself, the novel reproduces the conflicting ideologies of a liminal historical period. It is the second story of disappointed class emancipation and of colonial dispossession that provides the ideological grounds of *Edgar Huntly's* narrative of personal initiation in the first piece (which means that it is more than just its "background"). Had it not been for the Indians, Edgar might have had to murder Waldegrave himself in order to get at his money.⁶⁸

What does all of this have to do with the American Revolution? Not all too much it seems. But like the "Panther Captivity", *Edgar Huntly* is, along other things' a parable of political change, of dispossession and inheritance, and like the chapbook it seeks to deny America's continuing economic dependence on commercialism. While the lady inherits the giant, Clithero inherits Queen Mab' and both attempts of transgressing cultural borders are frustrated. Both stories try, in different ways, to get out of history by translating historical continuity into a myth of historical origin and filial disobedience, but neither of them succeeds completely. The past continues to haunt the margins of the texts. While attempting to mythologize colonial history both texts preserve the traces of its counter-memory.⁶⁹

Obviously the gothic genre offered Brown more possibilities of aestheticizing politics than were available to the author of the "Panther Captivity". What is perhaps most remarkable about *Edgar Huntly* is that it functionalizes an anti-bourgeois and highly subversive literary mode to achieve ultimately patriotic ends. Brown replaces the degenerate monks and ghosts of European gothic fiction with American Indians who therefore do not bear the least resemblance to the European Noble Savage stereotype so much cherished by Rousseau, Voltaire and Chateaubriand. While filling in the place of Europe's demons, the native Americans in *Edgar Huntly* may as well have directly sprung from the pathological anti-Indian tracts of Cotton Mather. The process of reoccupation by which the European representatives of feudalist exploitation are replaced with America's native inhabitants is at the same time a process of ideological inversion: while the gothic structure remains the same, the position of the former oppressors is now inherited by the victims of colonial expansion.⁷⁰ Thus the gothic mode, which emerged in Europe basically as a critique of society, mutates into an assertion of expansionist doctrine. The on-going process of native expropriation is thus rendered morally digestible, which was a necessary prerequisite of the United States' emerging national identity. *Edgar Huntly*, contrary to its European models, is less a critique of society, expressed in the politicization of fiction, but just like the "Panther Captivity" rather works in favour of suppressing

67. Macherey, op. cit., p. 79 foll.

68. I am very sympathetic to Norman Grabo's suggestion that he did indeed murder him, but such speculations carry us outside the "material substance" of the story (cf. Grabo 1981: 78; Macherey 1978: 80).

69. Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn, drawing on a concept of Michel Foucault, define "counter-memory" as "the residual or resistant strains that withstand official versions of historical continuity" (Davis/Starn 1989: p. 2).

70. Fiedler, op. cit., p. 160 passim

history by aestheticizing and mythologizing colonial politics. The last word, however great Brown's distance from its speaker may seem, is given to Sarsefield, the personification of the European colonist who transplants the imperial tradition from the Old World to the new. In this respect, the new order does not essentially differ from the old one; England's imperialist memory, the novel implies, is preserved by the American renegade.

The memory of the colonized, however, was preferably forgotten or falsified. In 1737 already, the Lenni Lenape signed away most of their land in Eastern Pennsylvania, including the Delaware Forks area, in the so-called "Walking Purchase Deed". The English had, after long debate, convinced the native delegates that the Indians had "forgotten" the words of an earlier treaty in which they had already sold most of Eastern Pennsylvania to the settlers. In fact, such an agreement had never been made and the English delegates presented a forged "copy" of the non-existing original.⁷¹ It was finally agreed that the extent of the area to be ceded by the Lenape was to be determined by the distance a man could walk from a fixed point in one and a half days. On the appointed day, the Europeans began to "walk" - with three specially trained runners, followed by horses carrying provisions. Two of the athletes collapsed on the way but the third "walked in" an area of sixty miles, not twenty-five or thirty as an ordinary walk would have brought. One of the Indians is recorded to have said in disgust, "You Run, that's not fair, you was to Walk".⁷² To be sure, these were no sleepwalkers!

The Lenni Lenape had in fact their own historical record (until they passed it over to European ethnologists in the nineteenth century), called the *Walam Olum* or Red Score. It consisted of a series of pictograms and ideograms which were accompanied by an oral narrative. The score itself ends with the arrival of the Dutch in the 1640s, but there is a manuscript containing a "Fragment on the History of the Linapis since abt 1600 when the *Wallamotum* closes", which is a transcription of a later oral narrative. This appendix, however, is excluded from the only edition of the *Walam Olum* accessible to me because its transcriber is unknown and because in the editor's opinion "the document itself, even if reasonably authentic, has no historic value".⁷³ While the Indians' "pre-history" is deemed safe for consumption, it was apparently safer to prevent their version of later events from interfering with accepted historiography.

As all historical and other writing, the fictional discourse of post-revolutionary America is determined by a dialectics of remembering and forgetting, of selecting some data for preservation while excluding other. Only four years after the publication of *Edgar Huntly*, Charles Brockden Brown seems to have recognized the dangers inherent in the novel form whose subversive potential, as is demonstrated by my own reading, could not altogether be suppressed. In 1803 Brown not only renounced novel writing but also his earlier Godwinianism, and in the same year he wrote a burning appeal to enter into war with France in order to acquire Louisiana and extend the American empire to the whole continent.⁷⁴ Is Sarsefield the authorial voice after all?

71. Weslager, *op. cit.*, p. 187 passim.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

73. Daniel Brinton, *The Lenape and Their Legends. With the Complete Text and Symbols of the Walam Olum*, 1884, reprint, AMS, N.Y., 1969, p. 163; emphasis added.

74. Cfr. Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 236; Ernest Marchand, "Introduction" to C. Brochton Brown, *Ormond*, Hafner, N.Y., 1962, pp. IX-XLIV; p. XLIII.

In both the "Panther Captivity" and *Edgar Huntly*, the dialectics of remembering and forgetting ultimately work in favour of an American expansionism that tries to deny its intellectual and economic indebtedness to England while retaining England's imperial vision, as is epitomized by such texts as the Walking Purchase Deed of 1737, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, and Brown's Louisiana pamphlet of 1803. The novel itself offers its readers the possibility of interpreting this historical development, including its destructive effects on the physical and cultural survival of the original inhabitants, as a manifestation of an unknowable (and to some malignant) "destiny" deeply rooted in the collective human psyche. "Shall we impute guilt where there is no design?", Huntly asks.⁷⁵ We may wish to share such a view. Or we may wish to resist it.

75. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 101.