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Murder with a Penknife: Individual Identity Formation in Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond*

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American Individual Identity Formation in Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond*

Patrick Richard Prominski

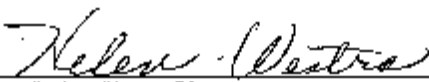
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Murder with a Penknife:
Individual Identity Formation in Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond*

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2011

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ABSTRACT

MURDER WITH A PENKNIFE:

INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY FORMATION IN CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN'S *ORMOND*

Patrick Prominski, M.A.

Grand Valley State University, 2011

Charles Brockden Brown's novel *Ormond* (1799) is in many ways a typical Gothic novel. However, stripping away its Gothic trappings reveals a more complex tale than Brown's European Gothic inspirations. Brown seems to have been keenly aware of the struggle to form a distinctly American identity in the wake of the Revolution. Reading *Ormond* as an attempt by Brown to outline a potential American identity reveals a complexity far beyond *Ormond's* Gothic kin. Furthermore, examining Brown's works *Alcuin* (1798) and "Walstein's School of History" (1799) alongside *Ormond* exposes the basis for Brown's position on women in the new Republic and the potential power of an author to guide a nation. Using the work of critics such as Leslie Fiedler, Patrick Marietta, and Julia Stern, I examine the characters Constantia Dudley, Stephen Dudley, and Ormond as representative of the struggle for American identity formation.

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Introduction

In the 1799 sketch “Walstein’s School of History,” Charles Brockden Brown writes that “Human society is powerfully modified by individual members” (*Rhapsodist* 147). Brown, an American born essayist and novelist, was deeply interested in the contribution that the emerging American literature could make to the formation of the new Republic; regarded as one of America’s first professional writers, Brown had a lasting impact on authors who followed in his footsteps. In the essay, Brown is referring to the formative and lasting impact that a single thinker can have on a culture as a whole. This notion of leaving an indelible impression was attractive to Brown throughout his brief professional writing career, which spanned roughly from the mid 1790s to about 1805. In the surviving fragment of his lost first novel *Sky-Walk*, possibly published in 1798, Brown asserts that he intends to assume the mantle of a “storytelling moralist” while claiming that “he, therefore, who paints, not from books, but from nature, who introduces those lines and hues in which we differ, rather than those in which we resemble our kindred nations beyond the ocean, may lay some claim to the patronage of his countrymen” (*Rhapsodist* 136). Implicit in this statement is Brown’s understanding of the ways in which both an author and a character can interact with a readership. That is, the author – in this case Brown – of a work which contributes to the national good may hope for proper recognition from the young nation, when the characters he depicts effectively delineate and exemplify the critical differences between being European and being American at the end of the eighteenth century.

While Brown addresses this question of difference and identity in all of his Gothic novels,¹ it is the work that stands at the mid-point of his Gothic output, *Ormond*, first published in early 1799, that fully utilizes the main characters and situations to analyze what an American

1 *Sky-Walk* (1798), *Wieland* (1798), *Ormond* (1799), and *Edgar Huntly* (1799).

might be in the wake of the Revolution. Brown uses *Ormond* to explore the ways in which these first-generation Americans can develop individual identities based either upon acceptance of the traditions and history of Europe or creation of a citizen that is independent of European ideals and owes no allegiance to the continent and history that gave rise to him. Brown conducts this examination by illustrating the dangers of adherence to established social roles or being seduced by Europe – either physically, as with the very continental Ormond’s offer to Constantia to either marry him or be killed by him, or by history, as with Stephen Dudley’s attachment to the civilization of Europe in the face of economic ruin. Finally, the novel’s unsatisfying conclusion with Constantia apparently retreating to England with Sophia suggests a potential new American individual in the form of Constantia. This new identity embodies for Brown’s readers the rejection of an individual imposed upon by traditional, historic, culturally transmitted gender roles who is in the position to spread revolution, in the form of expanded women’s rights and status, from America into Europe.

Within *Ormond*, it is the individual characters themselves, who struggle to control the direction of the national character, demonstrating Brown’s concept of the modifying power of the individual. The characters swing to extremes in their respective adherence to a role or philosophy. Each character in the novel comes to represent a point on a continuum of social expectation that extends from strict interpretation of established norms to severe deviation from those norms. Three characters in particular illustrate this range: Stephen Dudley, Constantia Dudley, and Ormond. Separately, they each offer a different possibility for early American citizenry. Taken together, they show the range of possibility and suggest a solution toward integrating the influences of Europe when forming a model for the individual American identity.

The events of *Ormond* are related to the reader primarily through a letter from S.C. – who

is later revealed to be Constantia's friend, Sophia Courtland – to an unnamed addressee who is “anxious to obtain some of the knowledge of the history of Constantia Dudley” (37). Though the letter's recipient remains a mystery, Courtland agrees to provide as much of Constantia's history as she is able, since she is “well acquainted” with the recipient's motives and finds that they “justify” curiosity (37). However, Courtland is careful to point out in her introductory paragraphs that the following epistolary narrative will “have little of that merit which flows from unity of design” (37). Thus, she implies that the story regarding Constantia's history is simply biographical and will therefore not contain the usual exaggerations typically expressed in forms such as the sentimental fiction of authors such as Lawrence Sterne, Samuel Richardson, Susanna Rowson, and Hannah Webster Foster. Yet after this brief preamble, Brown, via Courtland, does not begin the tale of Constantia Dudley with her childhood; in fact, Constantia is not mentioned by name for some twenty pages. Instead, the narrative begins with the swindling of her father Stephen at the hands of the young Thomas Craig, who fully integrates himself into Dudley's business and household, becoming a kind of surrogate son to Dudley. After the destitution brought on by Craig, Dudley sinks deeper into his European past until he is immobilized by its grasp. Rather than subscribe to the ideals of meritocracy inherent in the American Dream, he succumbs to the pull of European history and continental connections. The confidence game that Craig initiates – which strips the elder Dudley initially of his wealth and property and then of his sight, health, and happiness – sets the stage for Constantia to assume her father's place as head of the household and contest Ormond for her literal survival and the nation's figurative identity.

The character of Ormond is described by Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* as “the dream of reason turned monstrous” (102). Indeed, Courtland asserts in her description of Ormond that, in his staunch adherence to the ideals of Reason, “no one could

entertain loftier conceptions of humanity” (127). Ormond applies this in his ability to “carefully [distinguish] between men in the abstract, and men as they are” (127). However, he readily twists those ideals into a philosophy in which the ends justify the means. While he claims that he “did not wish to be regarded in any light but the true one” and possessed an “aversion to duplicity” (129), he makes no consistent effort to uphold these beliefs. In addition, Ormond also has an uncanny ability to mimic others in both speech and appearance to gain access to those areas where he does not belong. In one such instance, he uses his ability to disguise himself as a chimney sweep to enter the Dudley household and spy on Constantia. It is this sort of unfettered access, combined with immense wealth, possible connection to the Illuminati, and absence of any social morality, that makes Ormond one of Brown’s most dangerous villains. When he meets Constantia, Ormond immediately sees in her someone who can challenge him intellectually, and he decides that he will pursue her no matter the cost.

Constantia’s persistent resistance to Ormond’s advances only leads him to further depravity as he kills her father and follows her out of the city and into her family’s old home for a final confrontation. To this point in the novel, she displays a certain tenacity of character in her ability to carry on that is missing from the tragic heroines in Brown’s contemporaries such as Rowson’s *Charlotte Temple* (1791) and Hannah Webster Foster’s *The Coquette* (1797). Rather than being completely derailed by seduction, Constantia turns the final confrontation with Ormond on its head. In this encounter, Constantia manages to stab Ormond fatally with a penknife, thus ending the physical struggle for her identity and rejecting the figurative dictation of her selfhood by European power that is represented in Ormond’s twisted courtship.

Were Brown to conclude the novel there – with Constantia living happily ever after in the arms of a fledgling America – it might seem a satisfying and fitting end to an imagined American

struggle with European history and attempted seduction by the British Empire. Constantia would be an obvious example of a potential new American and reading Brown's own position on the emerging citizen would be a far easier task. Had Brown written a triumphant ending, Constantia's ultimate dominance of Ormond and her rejection of her father's example to retreat into European memories during hardship would signal the emergence of a particularly powerful American identity. This new identity would be one that could easily prevail against the challenge posed by European encroachment of culture and history. Rather, Brown pairs Constantia with Sophia, who had lived for years as a surrogate daughter in the Dudley household. Sophia faces her own challenge in the form of her troubled history and the return of her dying mother, who is attempting to repent for leaving Sophia to be raised by Stephen Dudley while she traveled Europe and married for money. Sophia travels with Constantia to England, where Constantia is presumably recovering with "little variation" (276) in her daily life and does not appear at the novel's end to be the shining example of Americanness that one would expect. Brown's suggestion that Constantia's trip to Europe "would more eminently qualify her for the enjoyment of retirement and safety in her native country" (255) problematizes the notion that everything an individual of the Republic requires can be found on the shores of America, since any return to Europe contradicts that idea. If Brown's answer to the temptation posed by Europe is not as plain as saying "reject European influence and America will succeed," then what he may be suggesting about nationalism – that it cannot be easily defined and articulated – challenges the popular mythology of a monolithic "American" identity.

It is tempting to look to Brown's biography for answers to what Brown may have envisioned the quintessential new American would be. However, the picture of Brown the man remains somewhat incomplete, and his identity within American literature continues to be

contested and constructed, in critical and general works. William Dunlap, Brown's friend and his first biographer, notes in the introduction to his 1822 work on Brown that most subjects of biography "should be men, who, having attracted the world's gaze by their deeds, their inventions, or their writings, leave at their death a strong curiosity, to be satisfied by a detail of their private lives" (1); however, Dunlap readily acknowledges that Brown does not fit that description and that his fame did not extend "even among his countrymen generally" (1). Regardless, Dunlap goes on to detail Brown as one of the individuals who "saw the necessity of establishing a literature for their own country [and] who saw the advantages of publications suited to a new state of manners and political economy" (2). In Dunlap's version, Brown would be that rare, pioneering author who could write fiction that would "not only produce original instruction, but point out and sever the good from the bad, in the literature and institutions of Europe" (3). Dunlap, then, offers the first imagining of Brown as a kind of Renaissance Man of American Literature – a man of vision who could see beyond the confines of European influence to a new kind of literature, one that was specifically suited to the challenges of being an American.

Dunlap's view stood as the standard Brown biography until 1952, when Brown biographer David Lee Clark revised the narrative of Brown's life with the aid of documents provided by Brown's grandson. Despite these additional sources, Clark writes a preface that sounds remarkably similar to Sophia Courtland's fictional introduction to *Ormond*. Just as Courtland claims that her narrative will be based on facts, Clark writes, "Into the colorful field of fictionalized biography, though tempted, I have not strayed. Facts, tyrannous though they may be, have ever been before me in my portrayal of the author's life" (vii). Within Brown's own life there were many of same the events and issues that he depicts in his fiction – Yellow Fever,

financial struggles, politics, and a strong sense of duty to his country. These details add to the temptation to make Brown into a man greater than he may have been. However, among the Dunlap and Clark biographies – as well as a number of others² – certain facts of Brown the man are not disputed.

Charles Brockden Brown was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to a Quaker family on January 17, 1771. Brown's father, Elijah Brown, was a pacifist liberal who read, among other texts, William Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793), Mary Wollstonecraft's *View of the French Revolution* (1794), and *Man as He Is* (1792) by Robert Bage (Clark 16). Although Elijah Brown would not have exposed his son Charles to these texts while the two were living under the same roof, since the earliest publication on the list was not produced until Charles was twenty-one years old, the elder Brown may have held some of the ideals posited within these liberal-minded books. It is very likely that Elijah would have guided his son in the liberal direction that these books would eventually point.

Books in general did, indeed, have a heavy influence on Brown's childhood. Clark recounts that as a child, Brown's parents would "leave him at home pouring over some book with the gravity of a scholar" or find him "gazing with wild surmise upon a map suspended on the wall" (18). This attention to the written word and the depictions of territory would later serve him well when he used Gothic tropes, such as doubles, madness, and decay as an overlay for his tales of the Republic as he would have a large stock of stories and images to draw from. This is perhaps best observed in his work *Edgar Huntly*. In this novel, Brown uses the route of the 1737 Walking Purchase as a template for Huntly's sleepwalking through Native American territory. Chad Luck, in his 2009 essay "Re-Walking the Purchase," asserts that Brown used this episode

2 Other biographies include *Charles Brockden Brown* by David Ringe (1966), *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown* by Paul Allen (1975), and *Charles Brockden Brown: An American Tale* by Alan Axelrod (1983).

from American history “because it raised questions, specifically philosophical questions, about the nature of private property, about the process of boundary formation, and about the organization of lived space” (273). Further evidence of Brown’s implementation of history can be found in Scott Slawinski’s examination of Brown’s short story “The Trials of Arden” (1800). In his study, Slawinski makes a convincing case for the trial and publicity surrounding the March 1800 murder case against Levi Weeks as the background for Brown’s short story. The sensational trial, which pitted attorneys and political rivals Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr against each other, drew hundreds of spectators and occupied a prominent place in New York City gossip circles during that spring. Weeks’ testimony, as well as some of the drama surrounding the trial found its way into Brown’s short story, which Slawinski asserts, “presents [Brown’s] readers with a story line calculated to instruct them in the dangers of harboring preconceived notions of guilt and innocence and in the necessity of subduing mob violence and maintaining an orderly society governed by a sound justice system” (366). For Brown, then, history was not a static list of past events, but a repository of events to be reappropriated and explored within the context of emerging challenges.

Thanks to his studies in his father’s library as well as his childhood years at the Friends’ Latin School in Philadelphia, Brown was already well-versed in both literature and philosophy by the time he visited New York in 1794 and began work on his Gothic fiction. However, his association with the Friendly Club would give him both the technical support and peer guidance he needed to become an author. The Friendly Club, a group of intellectuals who gathered regularly to debate the issues of the day, encouraged Brown to pursue fiction. In addition to moral support, the group provided him with an outlet for his work in the form of publishing

contacts³. Within the group, he met Elihu Hubbard Smith, who was a great supporter of Brown's writing and a close friend until Smith's death from Yellow Fever in 1798. The aftermath of Smith's death, along with Brown's own encounter with Yellow Fever that same year, may have spurred the fast-paced literary output of four Gothic novels between the year of Smith's death and 1800.

Brown wrote *Ormond* in an apparently brief and frenzied period of composition in 1799. While he does not directly utilize a specific past historic event as a template as he does with the Walking Purchase in *Edgar Huntly*, Brown employs the fear and paranoia brought on by repeated outbreaks of the Yellow Fever, as well as increased American wariness of European immigrants, as a backdrop for the events in *Ormond*. In addition, Brown makes use of both the psychological and Gothic elements present in his earlier novels to build a narrative centered around the development of a potential national American identity as represented by Constantia's journey through the pages of *Ormond*. Furthermore, *Ormond* allowed Brown to refine his style of American Gothic – a style that differed from its European sources in that he substitutes the castles and ghosts of the European Gothic tradition for America's darkened cities and disease while retaining the isolation of a country estate at the novel's end. Brown creates the psychological terror of encountering a threat that infiltrates a previously acknowledged personal space, such as the bedroom bedroom confrontations of Clara in *Wieland* and Constantia in *Ormond*, as a way to challenge the character of the individual. *Ormond*, while not a great critical success for Brown, brought many of the elements that he had been working with in *Wieland* and *Huntly* into the contested space of a city threatened by the dual invasion of Europe and Yellow Fever.

3 For a more complete account of the Friendly Club and its activities, see Bryan Waterman's *Republic of Intellect: The Friendly Club of New York City and the Making of American Literature* (2007).

Following the 1800 publication of *Arthur Mervyn*, Brown's last work in the Gothic style, Brown moved from New York back to Philadelphia. After this relocation, he drew away from the supernatural altogether and wrote a series of sentimental novels, short magazine pieces, and a few political pamphlets. While this work, combined with a newly established association with the family mercantile business, offered Brown a more stable living than he had been able to make as a novelist in New York, it also separated him from the legacy he attempted to create with his Gothic fiction. Much of the work he composed in these later years serves as a footnote to his work with the Gothic and is typically offered only as a baffling counterpoint to his earlier writings. Indeed, the reader of *Jane Talbot*, with its typical narrative of sentimentality and proper conduct, wonders why Brown made the transition from psychologically disturbing narratives such as *Wieland* to the realm of clichéd sentimentality, though it is likely that money had something to do with this shift. Nevertheless, the debate about precisely what Brown imagined the character of the American to be is fueled by an intriguing array of ideas about that character contained within his Gothic fiction.

Despite information regarding Brown's education, liberal ideals, and connection to the Friendly Club, critics have struggled with precisely what *Ormond* says about being American at the end of the eighteenth century and what Brown's own political leanings might have been. Colin Jeffery Morris asserts that because he seemed so indecisive in his work, Brown "cannot be said to have any genuine political 'allegiances'" (611) in the 1790s, while Julia Stern writes in *Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel* that Brown displays "inconsistent attitudes of which scholarship has yet to make full sense" (231).

Brown does not appear to have directly addressed issues of American identity, at least not in the extant correspondence or essays; however, he does refer to nationalism and ideas of a

national identity in a broad sense when he outlines the job of the writer in society, which he believes to be integral to shaping the national character. Brown writes in an undated letter to John Bernard, who had asked him about his dark writing style that, “in my literary moods I am aiming at making the world something better than I find it” (qtd. in Warfel 11). The explanation of making “the world something better than I find it” seems like an odd reply given Bernard’s original question regarding the somber images in Brown’s prose. However, when combined with the sentiments Brown expresses elsewhere in his writing, the response suggests that Brown was indeed using his adapted Gothic images of cities in the grip of disease, personal madness, malevolent personalities, and potential occult influences for a definite purpose, not simply to entertain or call to mind the Gothic fictions of Europe. Furthermore, Brown seems to believe in a kind of pre-existing national identity that he is in dialogue with as he composes *Ormond* and his other Gothic novels. In a letter to Congress regarding the future of Louisiana, Brown invokes what he sees as a budding national identity: “[i]t was evident [following the Revolution] that the ploughman and mechanic at either end of the continent could recognize a common interest with each other” (qtd. in Clark 266). Though Brown does not elaborate on this idea, the common interest that Brown appears to be working with here is the sense of community that is fostered when an individual citizen feels that he has a temporal, political, and national connection to another citizen hundreds of miles away. This belief in a national character, or at least, a proto-national character, suggests the platform for his fiction. It gave him a perceived audience that he believed was eager to receive a message regarding national identity. To convey this message, Brown then shifts away from Thomas Paine’s pamphlet style and for a time moves beyond his own political essay form⁴ in the *Philadelphia Weekly* to which he contributes in 1798. Instead,

4 Brown wrote a number of essays early in his career, including *Alcuin* (1798), a fictionalized debate on the rights of women. Brown’s abandonment of the essay style was not complete, as he would return to it throughout his

Brown seizes the novel as his chosen medium for exploration of identity with the publication of *Wieland* that same year.

Brown's characters in *Ormond* seem to be, as Warfel writes, somewhat "static" and "little changed in the end by their experiences" (129). However, given the number of articles and book chapters devoted to exposing the psyche of the novel's characters – particularly those of Ormond and Constantia⁵ – Warfel's simple explanation is dismissed by critics in preference of a more complex interpretation. This thesis will build on the work of some of these critics to expose a fresh perspective from which to examine *Ormond*. It is the quest for a deeper understanding of the possibilities for an emerging American identity in *Ormond* that yields results and exposes Brown's possible hopes for future Americans.

The chapters that follow in this thesis will delve deeper into the psychology and significance of the novel's three major characters. Chapter One details one of the least directly discussed characters, Stephen Dudley. Though he appears to be a background character throughout much of the novel, his unshakable love of Europe exposes him to danger and models for Constantia – and Brown's readership – the perils of clinging sentimentally to a past that has little currency in the new American Republic. The second chapter focuses on Constantia herself. Building on the psychological portrait presented by Patrick Marietta in his essay "Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond*: A Psychological Portrait of Constantia Dudley," as well as Brown's own writings on the rights and education of women in America, especially *Alcuin*, I examine the ways in which she both embodies her father's love of Europe and rejects the traditional role of wife and mother as laid out for her by American society. Instead, she goes beyond being a

writing career.

5 In addition to the critical works discussed here, examples of essays that reflect in some manner upon Brown's characters include Sydney Krause's "Ormond: Seduction in a New Key" (1973), G. St. John Stott's "Second Thoughts About Ormond" (1990), and Paul Lewis's "Attaining Masculinity: Charles Brockden Brown and Women Warriors of the 1790s" (2005).

sympathetic character in an American city to confronting a European threat, represented by Ormond. The character of Ormond, the subject of Chapter Three, is the embodiment of European culture, philosophy, and influence. Through Ormond's interaction with Constantia, Brown reveals the risks of joining an alliance with Europe. These risks include the loss of emerging American national culture and subservience to European ideals of gender roles, education, and monarchy. In addition, there were growing fears of infiltration by secret societies, specifically, the possibility of the continued influence of the Illuminati. Finally, in the conclusion, I address the problematic ending of *Ormond* in light of the reading and interpretations proposed in the preceding chapters. Indeed, while the characteristics of the struggle between Europe and the new Republic are present in *Ormond*, the novel's conclusion, which depicts both Constantia and Sophia retreating to Europe, seems to negate any hopeful finale of a definite victory for an emergent American identity. Since any move back to Europe implies a deficiency in what the new Republic can offer, this ending thus complicates a straightforward reading of the text as Brown's philosophy of an ideal American. However, within this conclusion, there is, at the very least, an open-ended question of the future and a possibility of the exportation of American ideals into Europe. It is that possibility of eastward expansion of the American mind that I will draw attention to, since it is keeping well within Brown's framework of creating American archetypes.

Stephen Dudley's European Seduction

In his analysis of *Ormond*, Harry Warfel writes that of all the characters in Brown's novel, "Stephen Dudley, Constantia's father, is one of the most interesting" (134). Yet Warfel's observation seems to have been ignored by critics. Among the characters of *Ormond*, Dudley is the least examined major character within the critical literature, with not a single published essay focused solely on him. John Cleman, in his 1975 study of the heroes and villains in Brown's major novels, omits Dudley entirely from the discussion. Likewise, Julia Stern, in her essay, "The State of 'Women' in *Ormond*; or, Patricide in the New Nation," touches only briefly on Dudley and treats him simply as an object to be acted upon, stating that the "killing of the father of a woman who symbolizes the innocence of the young Republic is a powerful symptom of social disorder" (193). True as that may be, Stern glosses over, and Cleman fails to recognize, Dudley's importance to the story as more than a corpse. In fact, for a man who had the greatest impact on Constantia, both through parental authority and education, he is often relegated, as with Stern, to the role of trigger for the events that follow his financial ruin. However, in a significant way, Dudley actually serves as an example for Brown's readers of a citizen who is too easily beguiled and obsessed by European ties.

Warfel rightly asserts that Dudley "typifies all that practical America disliked in the artistic temperament" (135). His reading of Dudley scratches at the surface of what makes Dudley relevant to Brown's readers and serves as a starting point for the analysis that follows. What makes Stephen Dudley more than simply a plot point is his love for all things European. It is this love, so consuming that he appears to have been seduced by it, that he is unable to let go of in his quest to obtain an American identity – a quest that ultimately fails. The wake of Dudley's failure provides Brown's readers with a warning against remaining too connected to the

genealogical and geographic history of Europe.

The word *seduced* is used intentionally here when referring to Dudley and his relationship with Europe in order to draw parallels between his role in the novel and the sentimental fiction prevalent in the years surrounding *Ormond*'s publication. Novels such as *The Coquette* (1797) by Hannah Webster Foster and *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) by William Hill Brown with their themes of moral and social perils for women at the hands of unscrupulous men were extremely popular with American readers. Brown's later novels – such as *Clara Howard* (1801) and *Jane Talbot* (1801) – echo the themes of Foster and William Hill Brown, Dudley's position in *Ormond*, in which he is possessed by European ideas of history and ties to the Continent, illustrated by his need to verify Craig's story with a friend in England “who could examine with his own eyes” (45) Craig's claims. This urge mirrors what Cathy Davidson in *Revolution and the Word* calls “the dangers of unsuitable relationships” (113) depicted in early sentimental work. This attraction materializes in the form of Thomas Craig when Dudley, completely taken with the young man who appears to be the model employee, apprentice, and even surrogate son, falls for Craig's scheme that takes all of Dudley's material wealth, status, and pride, as well as his physical health from him. In his physical and economic fall, Dudley is playing the part that had been previously reserved for the women of sentimental novels. In fact, taking Davidson's assertion that “female education was, then, in a number of the first sentimental novels, an education in the value of playing the proper sexual roles available to women” (110) and applying it to Dudley, it becomes apparent that he steps outside his gender role as patriarch by trusting too willingly in Craig for his livelihood. In a sense, Dudley forfeits not only his economic status, but also his status as male. Elizabeth Hinds writes that the men in Brown's Gothic fiction often “gain power beyond the capability of virtue to sustain” (45) their position.

Thus, Dudley erroneously imagines that he both “knows” Craig and can control his young apprentice. Instead, he is manipulated and deceived by the swindler and loses his socially accepted place at the head of the household, and, ultimately, his life.

By the conclusion of Craig’s scheme, Dudley’s identity becomes so intertwined with European connections that there exists no possibility for disentanglement in a way that would model for Brown’s readers an American identity free from European influence. Every aspect of Dudley’s interaction with Craig – from Craig’s immigrant status, to Dudley’s reliance on English sources to confirm Craig’s story, to Dudley’s desire to return to his own European lifestyle – is bound by his obsession with Europe. Of course, Dudley’s connection to Europe begins with his own education – one he later uses as a model for Constantia’s education. Prior to the events of the novel, Stephen Dudley as a young man traveled throughout Italy during his apprenticeship as a painter. Of the places he visited, the narrator notes that his time “had been divided between residence at Rome, and excursions to Calabria and Tuscany” (59). These travels left such a distinct impression upon Dudley that upon his return to America he is able to recount the details of these places so “these were now rendered, by his eloquence, nearly as conspicuous to his companion [Constantia] as to himself” (59). Each of these places, while picturesque and worthy of an artist’s attention, also holds a special meaning to the new Republic. Rome, the home of Cicero, is the perceived cradle of democratic society. Rule, might, and reason are all part of its reputation, and establishing a connection to Rome implies historic legitimacy. Tuscany is the artistic capital, the birthplace of the Renaissance, and home to many religious sites – it is faith and art. Calabria seems to be an odd insertion on first glance. True, its location on the southern coast fits nicely with the art and architecture of Rome and Tuscany, but Calabria holds a special significance as a transitional space. During the Crusades, it was a contested borderland between

the Byzantine Empire and the Arab emirs. From a ninth-century Christian standpoint, it was a division between civilization and savagery, between Europe and the Orient. Dudley, having passed through these spaces, encountered and claimed a decidedly European lineage as his identity. When summoned by his family to return to America to assist with his family's apothecary business, Dudley only does so reluctantly. Upon his return, he has the opportunity to integrate his European self with the new Republic through application of his knowledge. However, rather than submit to integration, he continually pines for the Europe he was forced to leave. Rather than work to make a living in America, Dudley is nostalgic for a European-style class system that appreciates him as an artist – a social structure that the opening letter for *Ormond* points out is “but little known among us” (38). Nevertheless, it is this reverence for the occupation of the artist and the freedom to work as he pleases that Dudley craves.

Brown, in an article published in *Monthly Magazine* in 1800, takes up the issue of artist as special class of citizen in America: “In no country, are the paths of literature and science the direct avenues to wealth and power” (qtd. in Clark 138). While Brown goes on in the essay to include the advice that diligent work is required of any who seek wealth and power, his admonition of the expectation of artists and authors to be part of a special class of citizens is important since it is clear that Dudley, too, expects this honor simply by being an artist. Furthermore, in the *Monthly Magazine* article, Brown portrays the entire idea that artists are due a privileged place in society as a fiction – regardless of the nation in which the artist lives since it is through contribution that a citizen should be recognized, not occupation. Nevertheless, it is a fiction to which Dudley clings to during his days working as an apothecary in the “drudgery of a shop” (*Ormond* 40). Because of his reluctance to accept the American work ethic, Dudley falls prey to the promise of a return to European elitism and privileged lifestyle in the form of the

criminal, Thomas Craig, who proposes that he relieve Dudley's burden by assisting him with the apothecary shop.

Dudley's initial encounter with Craig comes in the midst of one of his many, and perhaps constant, periods of nostalgia for Europe. During much of his time working in the family store, Dudley "could not forbear comparing his present situation with his former, and deriving from the contrast perpetual food for melancholy" (40). Dudley's constant dream of a return to his European self places him in a weakened state that is easily exploited by Craig with a promise of return to his artistic self. Dudley believes that he can fulfill his European artistic desires while maintaining an American identity as a successful businessman. Literary critic Elizabeth Hinds notes that the world of business is the "public arena" in which Brown's male characters achieve success (*Private Property* 44). However, Dudley is not simply searching for someone to help him succeed financially and contribute to the national economy. Dudley's ultimate goal is to return to the life of an artist who, he imagines, contributes to the nation by just being an artist, since he never discusses, nor does the narrator elaborate on, any of the works that he has presumably created in his tenure as an artist in Europe. In fact, it seems that Dudley's father fostered an environment of self-indulgence and pampering that made Dudley unwilling to return as his family requests.

Dudley cares nothing for the little apothecary shop aside from the necessary and adequate living it provides him. The eighteenth-century apothecary shop, which served the community as both a general store and pharmacy, also typically included someone who was capable of diagnosing disease and prescribing medications. This type of work appears not to have been suited to Dudley, who is more interested in artwork and leisure than any sort of professional advancement. Brown never depicts Dudley positively when it comes to his forced occupation,

nor is the reader exposed to any sort of medical expertise on Dudley's part. In contrast, Craig appears to be the model immigrant: hard working, responsible, and confident. Craig approaches Dudley with a certain "fearlessness and frankness" when he asks to "be engaged as an apprentice" (41). For Dudley, this opportunity allows him to fulfill his persistent dream of retirement and to cure his longing for the life of an artist while soothing his altruistic side by allowing Craig his own opportunity to earn fortune and prosperity – a vocation that Dudley himself never found particularly palatable. For while Craig is "manly and blooming," exhibiting a "modest and ingenious aspect" that speaks of youthful excitement for the opportunity that a job provides, whenever Dudley and his forced occupation are mentioned within his own context, the word *duty* (40) often follows. Much like the duty Constantia later pays her father, this kind is not voluntary and comes before all else. However, unlike Constantia who sees additional opportunities within her job, Dudley can only see his vocation as a trap. Furthermore, if Craig initially seems to be Jefferson's ideal immigrant incarnate, an "unhappy fugitive" seeking refuge while offering to contribute to the prosperity of America, then Dudley must follow Thomas Jefferson's lead in a letter Jefferson wrote to Mrs. Church in 1793 that "America is now, I think, the only country of tranquility and should be the asylum of all those who wish to avoid the scenes which have crushed our friends in [other lands]" (*Writings* 1013). Though he is not an overt patriot, Dudley can still contribute to the growing nation by making Craig a surrogate to his own duty.

While welcoming Craig into the country and giving him access to the American Dream, Dudley proceeds to integrate Craig into his family, and Craig assumes the mantle of son to Dudley. Upon conversing with him, Dudley discovers that Craig "was master of his book and pen, and had acquired more than the rudiments of Latin" (41), which is exactly the sort of

education Dudley would have provided him. Thus the youth is quickly given a position in the shop and “established as a member of [Dudley’s] family” (41). In fact, Craig’s initial wages of “food clothing, and lodging” are far more intimate and valuable than the meager payment that a rank apprentice would receive, especially considering that these needs are provided for within the family home and not in quarters separate from Constantia and her father and mother.

Throughout his plan, the wily Craig flawlessly plays the role of the model new citizen and paves the way for its continuance. Over time, he relieves Dudley of “most of the toils of his profession” (42) and further cements himself within the elder’s sphere by allowing an exchange of letters to take place between Dudley and Craig’s fictional mother. These letters lay out a plan for Craig to become a partner in the shop while enabling Dudley to fully retire. Dudley even goes so far as to extend to Craig “the moral superintendence of a parent” (42). By this time, Dudley is so taken with Craig that he arranges to continue the cycle of imagined prosperity by proposing that Craig “send for this brother and have him educated in his own profession” (44). Craig objects to what Dudley believes to be a very generous offer. Now suspicious, Dudley seeks to verify Craig’s story and invokes the power of history and Europe by writing to an old family friend who, appropriately during the Enlightenment, would be in Europe and could “examine with his own eyes” (45) the information provided by Craig regarding his background. When Dudley receives a response via his English acquaintance “confirming, in all respects, Craig’s representations” (45), his mind is made up, and little can be done to change it. Not even a letter from Mary Mansfield, Craig’s true mother, reveals the fraud – at least, not immediately. The letter, which arrives at Dudley’s house while Craig is away, piques Dudley’s curiosity with its handwriting, which its “badness rendered almost illegible” (45). Since the letter does not seem to be addressed to anyone living in the Dudley household, Dudley justifies that opening the letter is

“excusable to discover, by any means, the person to whom it was addressed” (45). Upon unsealing the envelope, Dudley learns that it is from a woman who claims to be Thomas Craig’s real mother – who lives in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, not England, as Craig had claimed. However, rather than be swayed by this proof, the reminder of Dudley’s European ties in Craig’s claimed background blinds Dudley to the truth, and he is unable to see Craig’s suspicious activity for what it truly is.

When the letter from Mary Mansfield arrives at Dudley’s residence, he judges it to be “a curious specimen of illiterateness” (45) and “that the mistake was singular” (46). Faced with this new information, Dudley has the opportunity to expose Craig and, in doing so, defeat his European past, which would allow him to establish an identity that integrates his European past with his American present by recognizing that he has been duped by his reliance on Europe. However, the fact that this new epistle is posted from New Hampshire and not someplace in Europe serves to calm Dudley’s suspicion, since no State, save perhaps Pennsylvania, the capital and cultural center of the nation, could carry the weight of influence that Europe can provide. In Dudley’s mind, European history and European connections trump evidence of betrayal from America. In the end, even though it is Craig who exposes his own charade through the unmeasured and observed reaction “damn it” (46), Dudley only has his faith in humanity challenged, but not in an identity-forming way. With the crime revealed, Craig flees, his plans incomplete, and in his wake he leaves an old steamer trunk. The trunk reminds Dudley of the falseness of Craig’s European pretenses (Craig is from New Hampshire) as well as the emptiness of Dudley’s own self-serving dreams.

There are hints of patricide in Craig’s betrayal and later murder of Dudley, since Craig was treated as a member of the family. Julia Stern recognizes this trend as an incomplete parallel

to the Revolution, but she notes that the comparison falls apart when the reader considers that Dudley “is far from a tyrant” and that Craig’s rebellion “unfolds in isolation” (“State” 193). Though Stern points out that her reading of the relationship between Craig and Dudley is problematic as a parable of the Revolution, her analysis points toward another potential reading of the relationship as not a total replay of the Revolution, but a renewed aggression toward America by Europe. Craig’s approach, while turning violent in the end, plays on Dudley’s desires for wealth while reinforcing his dream of returning to a life of art and leisure. Craig accomplishes his task by exploiting Dudley’s connection to Europe via Craig’s fabricated past and Dudley’s attempt to verify that past using acquaintances in England.

Craig’s escape solidifies the identity that Dudley carries with him through the novel until his murder. When Craig slips away from the Dudley house, leaving behind him a trunk that contained a register of Craig’s embezzlement from Dudley’s shop, as well as forged and intercepted letters that Craig had either diverted or forged anew to support his scheme (48-9), Dudley’s fate is sealed. In Craig’s wake, Dudley is turned over to his creditors, who “squared their actions by no other standard than law” (49). They did not listen to the circumstances of Dudley’s debt; instead they “despoiled him of every remnant of his property” and “deemed themselves entitled to [Dudley’s] gratitude for leaving his person unmolested” (49). In this state of total destitution, Dudley has the opportunity to forge himself anew, but rather than complete the conversion to an American identity, Dudley remains mired in his European past; overtaken with blindness and unemployment, he yearns to return to Europe and the life he was forced to abandon to become an apothecary. If left to himself, Dudley’s depression would drive him to death in Philadelphia by either Yellow Fever or starvation and poverty. Yet, through his daughter, Dudley has provided for his own temporary salvation and given the family a second chance at

joining the nation. Although Dudley's European identity is unable to translate to a stable option for the new Republic, Constantia is able to assume the quest for successful identity conversion.

Brown depicts the birth of America's individual identity using Dudley's financial ruin as an example. He illustrates how those who bring with them a strong connection to Europe will fail and sacrifice everything, including their lives. This danger exists as a very real possibility for Constantia since she too possesses a strong bond to Europe through her father and the education that he has provided her with. But there is hope in Brown's judgment of Dudley because, unlike her father, Constantia has the ability to take the facts of her past, both personal and European, confront them, and form a new national identity. It is her struggle against the threat posed by Ormond while she established a potential individual identity that occupies *Ormond* following the family's exile to Philadelphia.

When Dudley goes blind, he occupies his time by playing a lute which he "had purchased in Italy" (58) and by discussing with Constantia his life abroad. When the Yellow Fever outbreak begins, he maintains his European perspective in his vision of a European-style doom: "The tragedies of Marseilles and Messina will be re-acted on this stage" (65). If he is a citizen of the new world, it is not by choice. It appears that everything he does is based in Europe. His knowledge of a classical education, which he then passes to his daughter, does not suit either of them in America. His blindness is not impotence in the Freudian sense; instead, his blindness is an impotence of citizenship and identity that makes him sterile in the new Republic.

Dudley is blind and powerless in the city, but that does not prevent him from constantly forewarning of impending doom. When the Yellow Fever outbreak begins, he prophesies, "We shall die, but not until we have witnessed and endured horrors that surpass thy powers of conception" (65). Like those who would seek to stall the new Republic's expansion, Dudley

“endeavored, with the utmost diligence, to undermine Constantia’s fortitude and disconcert her schemes” (66) to support the family. His blindness forces him to fall back on his European roots time and again, but each time he seeks solace in European ideas and traditions, he becomes incapable of progressing any further as an American citizen. Disgraced, blind, and unemployed, Dudley hides from the world in the cramped apartment he shares with Constantia. When he is accused of passing the forged currency that Constantia received from Craig, it is discovered that Dudley is living under the assumed name Acworth (221). Even in his alias, Dudley reverts to his European roots by choosing the surname of a famous Englishman, Sir Jacob Acworth⁶.

Dudley’s inability to form an individual identity based in America is his ultimate downfall, and his reluctance to let go of Europe results in his ruin and drives him and Constantia from their mansion in Jersey to an impoverished life in Philadelphia. Nevertheless, the hardships experienced in the city provide Constantia with an unlikely foundation to fashion herself as a model American citizen. Before embarking on that journey, however, she must navigate the complex social expectations of her gender by challenging the traditionally male role as head of the household and assuming all of the duties of that position.

6 Though there is no evidence in Brown’s correspondence or biography that Stephen Dudley’s alias is based upon any actual individual, Sir Jacob Acworth is mentioned in John Spencer Bassett’s introduction to *The Writings of “Colonel William Byrd, of Westover in Virginia, esqr.”* (1901) as a person of “consequence” whom Byrd carried on a correspondence with (xxx). Given Dudley’s penchant for all things European, Jacob Acworth is a plausible source for the assumed identity.

Constantia Dudley's Emerging American Identity

Constantia and Dudley find themselves in Philadelphia during the Yellow Fever outbreak of 1797. With the disease quickly spread among the populace. At the start of the Yellow Fever outbreak, according to *A History of the Yellow Fever* by Richard Folwell published (1798), puts the total number of dead between August and October at 988 (Folwell 64). Folwell details the spread of the disease, which “swept away so many of our relations and acquaintances” (4) from its presumed origin on a trade vessel from the Caribbean to lists of deaths by date and the detailed donations from the community to assist the victims. Constantia had recently moved the two to the city from the suburbs in order to escape her old neighborhood which was “scarcely accessible in winter, for pools and gullies” besides “abounding with indigence and profligacy” (60). The home, located “near the centre of the city” had “an aspect of much greater comfort and neatness . . . in a quiet, cleanly and well-paved alley” (60) which promised better prospects for food and transportation, as it was located near the center of the city. This new home was in stark contrast to their former dwelling, which was “old, crazy, and full of avenues to air” (59).

Constantia is isolated in this new setting and perceives that she “[stands] alone in the world” (60). In addition, she avoids those social situations “which necessity did not prescribe” (61) and keeps to herself as much as possible. Thus, her situation mirrors that of the emerging nation, which is not much older than Constantia is in the novel at the time Brown composes *Ormond*. Both the nation and Constantia are isolated and coming to terms with how to negotiate a new relationship with a temperamental and distant “father” (England). For Constantia, the change of abode presents the promise of relative ease and safety compared to her former lodging in the suburbs. Constantia hopes that the new home will be a place where she can better cope with the role of family caretaker and wage earner that has been thrust upon her by her father.

However, far from being the ideal choice Constantia believed it would be, “circumstances quickly occurred which suggested a very different conclusion” (61), and a Yellow Fever epidemic closes several neighborhoods. During the outbreak, Constantia reflects that diseases “periodically visited and laid waste to the Greek and Egyptian cities. [Disease] constituted no small part of that mass of evil, political and physical, by which that portion of the world had been so long afflicted” (64). At first glance, it appears that Constantia believes that the evils of the world are primarily a force that inflicts damage on civilizations that reside elsewhere, but it is important to note that what she is referring to here is neither Europe nor simply a plague that kills. Her inclusion of the “evils of the world” with the diseases that afflict not modern Europe, but the locations of antiquity such as Greece and Egypt, reveals that for her evil is part of the traditional order of society since it affects the places traditionally viewed as cradles of civilization. However, the thought of this pestilence of civilization visiting the young, newly-formed American republic is shocking to her. Constantia reflects that “a pest equally malignant had assailed the metropolis of her own country – a town famous for the salubrity of its airs and the perfection of its police – had something in it so wild and uncouth, that she could not reconcile herself to the possibility of such an event” (64). Again, on the surface, Constantia is referring to the outbreak of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia. However, disease is not the lone assailant in Brown’s novel; the evils of the corruption, fraud, and conspiracy had arrived already prior to the 1793 “event” of Yellow Fever. While Constantia is in danger from the Yellow Fever, even suffering a bout of the illness from which she recovers, her family had already been laid low by Craig, and now another very real danger will come at the hands of Ormond, who represents the worldly evils that had previously infiltrated the Greek and Egyptian cities and threatened their social order. For Constantia and possibly Brown, Ormond's threat will be to her

individual identity formation as a model American, and ironically this threat will be posed by a character who will appear to embody the civilized best of Europe – rationality, education, wealth, and experience – but whose behavior quickly devolves into violence and chaos.

However, before she faces Ormond, Constantia must navigate the complex social world of Philadelphia and its gender expectations. Once Constantia recognizes that she will be required to provide for her father, “the infirmities of sex and age vanished before the motives to courage and activity flowing from her new situation” (54), and she bends all of her energy to the good of the household. Constantia begins by selling “every superfluous garb and trinket” that she owns, including her musical instruments and books. She curtails her spending habits and assumes “the province of cook, the washing of house and clothes, and the cleansing of furniture” (54). Finally, Constantia reasons that she could put her own skills as a seamstress to use for the good of the household, which she does in order “to enhance in no trivial degree the common fund” (55), becoming the family’s primary bread winner. In the process of managing the house and engaging with a potential suitor, she challenges the stereotypes of Brown’s time and presents a new possibility to his readers: a woman who contributes to the American Republic through the use of a man’s education and who acts outside of social norms.

Critics have struggled with Constantia’s character when attempting to place her comfortably within Brown’s personal philosophy. Many of these approaches focus on Constantia’s apparent preferences for female friendships and acquaintances within the novel; most notably, her relationships with Sophia, Martinette, and Helena are stronger than any other relationship Constantia maintains in the *Ormond*, save, perhaps, that with her father. Harry Warfel contends, as do others, that “there seems to be a homosexual tendency to her conduct” in

her relationship with Sophia Courtland (135).⁷ Julia Stern acknowledges the homosexual characteristics of Constantia's relationship with Sophia, but contends that the "female homoerotic longing becomes a pliant medium for Brown's investigation of republican fraternity's failure" ("State" 185). Kristin Comment argues that the critics who perceive a lesbian relationship in *Ormond* are overlooking the significance of Constantia's role in *Ormond* by focusing on her relationships themselves. Comment asserts that Brown is writing about "the destabilization of gender roles" at the end of the eighteenth century (59) and using this destabilization to illustrate the changing nature of gender and the subsequent cultural attempts to preserve the "heteropatriarchal values" (72) of the post-Revolution society in America. Comment notes that in the wake of the French Revolution, where "both sides – liberal Jacobans and their conservative opponents – used images of female sexuality in their political rhetoric" (59), there was a backlash against women's inclusion in public life in both Britain and France. This attitude crossed the Atlantic Ocean and affected the conversation in America, itself newly emerged from Revolution. Comment writes that perhaps nowhere else in the new Republic was this information received in greater volume than in Philadelphia, since "Philadelphians in particular were inundated with information about the French Revolution from imported newspapers, French refugees, and correspondence with people abroad" (59-60). Brown was perhaps part of this changing conversation and sought to depict the unstable attitudes toward women in *Ormond*.

What is absent from the critical readings of Constantia is her ability to represent a model American identity, one that is free of the influence of Europe and has integrated America's Revolutionary past. Constantia's place in the novel is crucial to Brown's apparent goal of

7 Carl Nelson, in his essay "A Just Reading of Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond*" (1973) advocates most strongly for a homosexual relationship between Sophia and Constantia. Norman Grabo in *The Coincidental Art of Charles Brockden Brown* (1981) and Donald Ringe's *Charles Brockden Brown* (1966) also contend that Constantia's actions could be viewed as homosexual.

defining a potential model for a new American identity. Constantia's homosocial relationship with Sophia serves to accentuate Constantia's break from post-Revolutionary society, but her sexual orientation is secondary to her role as a model for a potential American identity. There is no evidence that Brown was radical enough to depict such a relationship, while he does, indeed, seem interested in the evolution of the American.

Few critics have delved as deeply into Constantia's subconscious as Patrick Marietta. Marietta examines Constantia from a psychological standpoint in an essay published in *The Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*. Although, as the journal's title indicates, Constantia is handled in a primarily clinical manner, Marietta is quite correct in his assertion that the "developing personality of Constantia . . . informs the structure of the novel" (113). It is indeed the emerging of her identity as an example of a national identity that is one of the themes that Brown is examining. Marietta analyzes Constantia as a patient, applying the psychology of Erich Neumann and Carl Jung as templates for a diagnosis. By utilizing a psychological approach, Marietta diagnoses Constantia's "strengthening of the ego" (114) in the first half of the *Ormond*. Marietta's conclusion correlates with the aim of this thesis, to identify Constantia as an emerging American individual – which would include the strengthening of Constantia's ego that Marietta notes – albeit from a completely different trajectory. The increase in Constantia's strong ego translates to her rise of personal identity that separates her from her father and serves as a gateway for further growth as she becomes a template for the ideal American.

Marietta falls short in his final judgment that at the novel's close, Sophia, not Constantia, emerges "as a primary archetype" (125). Further, he contends that Sophia becomes the "dominant or controlling 'voice' in the consciousness of Constantia" (125) since it is Sophia who is writing, and thus controlling, Constantia's story. While there is no doubt that Sophia has a

great deal of influence as Constantia's longest and most devoted friend, labeling Sophia the "controlling voice" is dangerous when considering this power in the light of Brown's other Gothic novels. In Brown's novels, those who are controlled by mysterious voices (e.g. Europe, old religion, biloquists) are generally destined to messy ends. Furthermore, Sophia does not tell her own story except as it relates to Constantia's rise of identity. Sophia's trip to Europe to find and care for her mother, while compelling, merely accounts for her time away from Constantia and supplies a plot-point for Sophia's return to America just in time to save Constantia from Ormond. Sophia rarely interjects her own thoughts, and when she does, as with the chapters detailing Ormond's personal history⁸, it is only to supply an exposition for him. If Sophia wielded as much power as Marietta implies, the women's roles would certainly be reversed. Instead, it is, Constantia who is the archetypal American identity in *Ormond*.

The characters Edgar Huntley and Theodore Wieland are examples of the tragic consequences Brown associates with controlling voices. In *Wieland*, Theodore Wieland hears voices which direct him to murder most of his family before committing suicide. The voices Wieland hears may be similar to those that plague his father before the elder spontaneously combusts in a temple built to worship an unmentioned deity imported to America when the family immigrates from Germany. Edgar Huntley, in Brown's 1799 novel of the same name, suffers from a bout of sleepwalking, during which he murders several Native Americans who are holding a girl captive. Chad Luck, in his essay "Re-walking the Purchase: Edgar Huntley, David Hume, and the Origins of Ownership," reveals that Huntley's journey follows the trail of the 1737 Walking Purchase, which fraudulently claimed 1,200,000 acres of land from the Lenape Indians. Huntley and Wieland are both plagued by voices of the past – Wieland by religion and Huntley by history, which Constantia seems to be in no danger of at the end of *Ormond*. Though

8 Sophia describes Ormond's character and personal history in chapters XII (125-32) and XXVI (242-50).

Constantia does flee to England, there is a sense that she may be able to integrate history, rather than allow it to destroy her.

Brown's apparent choice to use Constantia over the other characters in *Ormond* as a vehicle for demonstrating the potential for American identity is no mistake. Of all the characters in the novel, Constantia is the only one in a position to establish an individual identity that could be used by Brown's readers as a model for what he imagined the new American to be. Unlike her father, she has no direct memory of Europe, and the obsession that he shows with the continent only punctuates for her the danger involved in fixating too heavily upon a place and ideals that are foreign within the new nation. When Constantia and Dudley decide to travel to Europe toward the end of *Ormond* in an effort to escape the "ignominy and pain" (209) that confronted Dudley on his return to America at his father's summons, Constantia first appears to thrill at the prospect of the journey. However, Constantia's excitement for Europe is based upon her father's teachings. Dudley, through Constantia's education, "had conferred a thousand ideal charms on a theatre where Scipio and Caesar had performed their parts," and Constantia desires to view the Alps and the Pyrenees "to vivify and chasten the images collected from books" (210). In fact, the only tangible reason that she wishes to move to Europe is to reunite with Sophia who had departed for Europe four years earlier. It is clear that Constantia's attraction to Europe is not because of the culture which Dudley has idealized for her, but rather because of her relationship with Sophia. Constantia is not readily identifiable as a common American woman of the time period she inhabits. Far from being the stereotypical young and vulnerable girl that Brown's readers found in the sentimental novels of England, Constantia is a product of Brown's own theories that he wrote in his treatise on women's rights, *Alcuin*. Reading *Alcuin* in conversation with *Ormond* illustrates why Brown may have chosen a woman, particularly a woman like

Constantia, to be the model for American identity. Brown's statements on women also expose Constantia as a woman who is breaking from her social role as daughter, nurse, and caretaker, although she does so in a way that Brown may have felt, based on statements in his novel *Alcuin*, was unique but not necessarily subversive.

Alcuin, which Brown originally published in two parts in 1798, with the two remaining parts being published in 1812, well after his death, is a brief dialogue between the narrator Alcuin and Mrs. Carter. Mrs. Carter hosts, along with her brother, regular meetings of local men who discuss and debate the ideas and news of the day in an open environment of respect and camaraderie. The discussion between Mrs. Carter and Alcuin takes place at one of these meetings. Alcuin and Mrs. Carter debate the role of women in society with Mrs. Carter arguing that society treats women unfairly, especially in the realm of marriage. Alcuin, though he views women as the superior sex, contends that the traditional role of women as wife and homemaker does not oppress, but allots women a position suited to their constitutions and habits.

Through an acquaintance, Alcuin is invited to attend a meeting at the Carters', though he initially feels he may not be of the appropriate class. However, among Mrs. Carter's group, class distinctions do not exist, and though Alcuin writes that he is uncomfortable with "my unpowdered locks, my worsted stockings, and my pewter buckles" (10), he is welcomed and soon finds himself in conversation with Mrs. Carter. Since he does not know how to begin a proper conversation, he inquires bluntly, "Are you a Federalist?" (14), to which Mrs. Carter replies that she had never been asked her opinion. This brief exchange leads to a discourse on the rights of women, their place in society, and issues of gender equality. Elizabeth Hinds writes that Brown's dialogue was "a timely synopsis of the woman question" (35) and notes that equality of women was very much a topic of Brown's day with the recent publications of William Godwin's

Political Justice (1793) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Steven Watts asserts that Brown's position is not so easily isolated as representative of the state of the issue in Brown's time. Watts, in his reading of *Alcuin*, views the shifting positions of the protagonists as Brown's exploring a "complex socioeconomic perspective on the whole question of radicalism and women's social position" (62). Although Brown may have had some difficulty forming his own opinion on the role of women in the new Republic, he appears to have used *Alcuin* as a background text for Constantia in *Ormond*, since a number of the characteristics that Mrs. Carter and Alcuin see as beneficial to the equality of women – such as self-determination, partnership in marriage, and education – appear in the character of Constantia Dudley.

In *Alcuin*, Brown makes two suggestions about a woman's perceived social role that speak to his use of a woman as protagonist in *Ormond*: the novelty of a woman in a non-traditional role and the use of a man's education by women in society. During his discussion with Mrs. Carter, Alcuin rebuffs her accusation that women are not allowed to enter "liberal professions," employment which requires the "most vigor of mind, greatest extent of knowledge, and most commerce with books and enlightened society" (34), by asserting that he believes that women certainly may enter the ranks of those male-oriented occupations, but such a sight would make him take notice "merely because it is singular; not because it is disgraceful or criminal" (30)⁹. Mrs. Carter's appearance in a "liberal profession," as well as Constantia's need to assume the head of her household, are certainly acts that would draw Brown's reader's attention as they present women outside of the established role of mother, wife, and homemaker, but that is exactly what Brown appears to be attempting in both *Alcuin* and *Ormond*. While Alcuin's point that it would be singular to see a woman in a liberal profession indicates the rarity of such an

9 Though Mrs. Carter does not define specifically what she means by "liberal professions," Alcuin discusses the inclusion of women in the professions of accountant, merchant, banker, physician, lawyer, and clergy in his rebuttal (*Alcuin* 30-3).

event, his refusal to label it as anything but “singular” (30) leaves open the possibility for women to expand their role outside of patriarchal norms. Furthermore, combining Constantia’s role as head of the household with Alcuin’s assertion that women simply lack education and opportunity reveals a reading of Constantia that illustrates Brown’s belief in the potential of a strong female character as a model of emerging American identity. Alcuin says that without education, “You might as well expect a Laplander to write Greek spontaneously and without instruction, as that anyone should be wise and skillful, without suitable opportunity” (22). Applied to Constantia, this attitude Constantia as a female character to whom Brown has provided social position, education, and opportunity to represent a potential American identity. Brown’s choice, then, to use Constantia as the protagonist of his novel takes advantage of these traits of education and opportunity by placing her in a position that is “singular,” that is, notable and unique for Brown’s readers. In the process, Brown presents Constantia with both the education and the opportunity necessary to take advantage of her situation and to formulate an American identity that operates independent of the patriarchal society of white land-owning men with families and wealth. In doing so, she becomes a social outsider through her gender and assumed role as head of the household, while remaining active within society through her interactions with Ormond and those duties Constantia must perform as her father’s caretaker. Through these interactions, Constantia becomes the woman that Mrs. Carter says is not allowed in society.

Constantia’s position as a social outsider is another key concept in understanding why Brown may have chosen her to model the American identity. Despite the European-style education that Dudley provides her, Constantia does not begin the novel as an outsider. However, following Dudley’s financial ruin and subsequent move to Philadelphia, she utilizes her education by taking over the family’s finances, thus joining the “liberal profession” that Mrs.

Carter describes in *Alcuin*. While her father is relatively healthy and working as a “writer in a public office” (50), Constantia attempts to maintain some of the old routines to her life. Though her new life provides only the barest of subsistence, she acquires through her “fortune and character” (52) a suitor who proposes marriage. Yet even in her young and vulnerable state – Constantia is sixteen when she arrives in Philadelphia – Constantia recognizes that the man is too immature for marriage and that he does not yet display the “permanence of character which can flow only from the progress of time and knowledge” (53), a permanence that she realizes she, too, is lacking in both age and worldly experience. When Dudley’s misfortunes are made public, the suitor acts as Constantia would expect and “the youth forbore his visits” (53). In addition, Constantia is aware of the duty she has to care for her father, who is becoming increasingly melancholic and childlike in his actions. As a result, Constantia decides to devote herself entirely to the management of the household and reflects little on marriage until her chance encounter with Balfour.

Constantia meets Balfour in Philadelphia after she is threatened by a pair of “huge and brawny fellows” in the street one evening on her way home. The two men seize Constantia, and one of them “held her waist” and “threatened to pollute her cheeks with kisses” (100). However, they begin to fight over her, and the commotion draws Balfour to her. Seeing her distress, he “with some difficulty disengage[s] her from the grasp of the ruffians” (100) and accompanies her home. Though Balfour declines to enter the house, he returns the next day and proposes himself as Constantia’s suitor. Although Balfour embodies “the genuine spirit of civility” (100), he is governed by the “principles of mercantile integrity in all his dealings” (101), which apparently extends to matrimony. Evaluating Constantia’s traits as a wife, Balfour notes that she exhibits “admirable economy of time and money and labour, the simplicity of her dress, her evenness of

temper, and her love of seclusion,” determining finally “these were essential requisites of a wife” (102). Though Balfour can promise Constantia and her father financial security, he offers little else, and Sophia admits that “he was no judge of her intellectual character, or the loftiness of her morality” (102).

While Constantia carefully considered this second offer for her hand, and marriage in general, she concludes that the advantage of having money “might be purchased at too dear a rate” (103) and would cost her the one thing she has of value – her liberty. Even in destitution, Constantia recognizes that she is the “mistress of the product of her own labour” (103). She proudly notes that “she administered her little property in what manner she pleased,” and that marriage to Balfour “would annihilate this power” (103). Not only would she lose her meager share of power and freedom that she enjoyed even in poverty, but also if she were to accept Balfour’s proposal, she would forfeit her very identity by becoming “the property of another” (103). In the balance, loss of freedom and identity, as Constantia views marriage, is far too high a price to pay, even for the financial security Balfour offers. In 1799, Brown’s use of Constantia to propose a view of marriage that may have been incongruent with the opinion of his American and English readers, cements her place as an outsider and possibly reflects Brown’s own view of the subject.

Constantia’s view of marriage mirrors that of Mrs. Carter, on the topic of matrimony. Mrs. Carter tells Alcuin that being married strips the woman of power and requires that “the will of her husband is the criterion of all her duties” (41). Furthermore, if a woman disagrees with her husband, typically “she must hope to prevail by blandishments and tears; not by appeals to justice and addresses to reason” (42). It seems that Brown modeled at least a portion of

Constantia's character on Mrs. Carter, specifically, the latter's ability to argue and her views on the impact of marriage. Carter's view, in turn, was based on Brown's own opinions of women and marriage at the end of the eighteenth century. This challenge to the traditional view of marriage in Brown's time would have made Constantia stand out for his readers in a radical way. In fact, Constantia very rationally voices her opinion of marriage in a number of places within *Ormond*. For instance, when debating whether or not to marry her first suitor, Constantia considers that marriage vows symbolize "irrevocable affection" and that the institution itself is "a contract to endure for life" (52). Her business-like treatment of marriage in this section indicates that Constantia does not view it as liberating, but as something to "endure" when the circumstances are right.

Additionally, Constantia's financial position and gender place her outside the patriarchal social strata of America as defined in *Alcuin*. Mrs. Carter, in relating how she is not allowed to vote due to her gender, notes, "I was born in the state, and cannot, therefore, be stigmatized as a foreigner. I pay taxes, for I have no father or husband to pay them for me. Luckily my complexion is white. Surely my vote will be received. But no, I am a woman" (56-7). Mrs. Carter's status as woman overrides all of her other qualifications to participate as a citizen of the United States. Likewise, save for the kindness of the Melbournes, Constantia likely would be excluded from society in Brown's time because of her gender, financial status, and age. Instead, setting her up as an outsider allows Brown to use Constantia's difference to establish her as a potential new American individual by the end of the novel.

Even in the early stages of Brown's text, Constantia is beginning to shape her identity. As their poverty deepens following Dudley's loss of employment, she takes a more active role in the household and "[t]he infirmities of sex and age vanished before the motives to courage and

activity flowing from her new situation” (54). Necessity may have forced Constantia to claim the mantle of head of household, but her education has prepared her for the task and her “infirmities” fall away in the wake of her new role as head of the house. Steven Watts writes that Brown’s intent for Constantia’s success as a result of her education was to highlight that “late-eighteenth century society required for everyone an education geared less to ‘female’ artistic, expressive, and ornamental adornments and more to ‘male’ qualities of worldly knowledge, individual aspiration, and the rational calculation of costs and benefits” (93). Therefore, because Constantia was afforded a more “male” education, she is able to adopt easily a traditionally male position. This assertion by Watts is supported by Brown’s own writing in *Alcuin* that a woman could easily perform roles typically filled by men if given appropriate education and opportunity.

At first glance, it appears that by providing Constantia with a man’s education, Dudley has done his best to ensure her failure as a woman. Constantia’s preparation seems to be more appropriate for a young man of privilege in Europe than a woman in fledgling America. Instead, he has supplied her with the tools for success by teaching her math, logic, and philosophy. When it came to her education, Stephen Dudley was not interested in making his daughter “alluring and voluptuous” (62), as was expected:

He therefore limited her studies to Latin and English. Instead of familiarizing her with the amorous effusions of Petrarch and Racine, he made her thoroughly conversant with Tacitus and Milton. Instead of making her a practical musician or pencilist, he conducted her to the mathematical properties of light and sound, taught her as a metaphysician an anatomist, the structure and power of the senses, and discussed with her the principles and progress of human society. (62)

While Dudley might just as easily have made her into a copy of himself by educating her as an

artist or shaping her to conform to the education typical of a woman during Brown's time, he instead educates her in a way that makes her what he is not – an individual with the benefits of a European education but without the direct ties to that continent since the education is gained in America.

Constantia “lamented her deficiencies” (63) since her education did little to prepare her for the traditional women's roles available: teacher, seamstress, and spouse and attempts to rectify what she perceives to be a lack of education on her part by learning Italian and French. She recalls a bookseller who “had offered her, at a very low price, a second-hand copy of Veroni's grammar” (63), which she decides to purchase. But these efforts are cut short by Yellow Fever and the death of the bookseller who provides Constantia with her instructional texts. Rather than obtain the woman's education that she desires, Constantia's efforts are diverted to mere survival in a city that becomes increasingly closed off by the disease. Brown uses the Yellow Fever outbreak to forestall Constantia's attempt to embody her accepted traditional gender role.

Constantia's preparation for the challenge posed by Ormond consists largely of a final encounter with Dudley's swindler, Craig. While Constantia is walking through the city following a failed attempt to meet with Melbourne about her financial situation, she catches “a glimpse of a person she instantly recognized . . . Thomas Craig, to whose malignity and cunning all her misfortunes were imputable” (108). Constantia is initially unsure how to handle the situation, so instead of confronting Craig immediately, she trails him to a home and then returns to her own house to consider the situation. Constantia contemplates turning Craig over to the authorities on the basis that “all that he had, according to the principles of social equity, was hers” (110). However, “social equity” is at the mercy of the law, and being destitute, Constantia lacks the

means of “bribing it into activity” (110). Faced with this realization, she determines that Craig might be willing to reimburse part of the Dudleys’ loss if he is made aware of their situation. Constantia writes Craig a letter in which she relies on “the efficacy of her pleadings to awaken his justice” (110) in the hope that Craig will provide her with some form of payment that will save her and her father from starvation. She is rewarded in her efforts with yet another deception on the part of Craig. When he receives the letter, Craig reads Constantia’s story of poverty and is almost persuaded to give Constantia what she requested, “but compunction was a guest whose importunities he had acquired a peculiar faculty for avoiding” (114). Rather than pay Constantia for her silence regarding his location, he sends her a counterfeit fifty-dollar bill, which he considers to be too much, but “something must be given” (114). When the letter is delivered to Constantia, she rejoices because “a sum like this was affluence in her present condition” (114), and she hastens to pay the family’s debts. However, the false currency is quickly discovered by her landlord, Mr. M’Crea. and Constantia is brought to the magistrate’s office, who she is delighted to see is “no other than Melbourne” (121). Melbourne, who is acquainted with Dudley and Constantia, takes her immediately to his apartment, where he interviews her. Following Constantia’s testimony, which “was calculated deeply to affect a man of Mr. Melbourne’s humanity” (123), Melbourne himself decides to discharge Dudley’s debt in exchange for Constantia’s labor. The incident with Craig and Melbourne has two negative consequences: first, it confirms Constantia’s opinion of the law that it is more easily accessed with money – since Melbourne is able to easily dismiss the charges; second, Melbourne’s discussion with Ormond about the charges brings her to the attention of Ormond. Melbourne tells Ormond that “if a lofty fellow like you, now, would mix a little common sense with his science, this girl might hope for a husband, and her father a natural protector” (125). Thus, Melbourne plants the seeds of the plan

before Ormond even meets Constantia for the first time.

These events in Philadelphia provide Constantia with the foundation for a new identity. Up to the point when she meets Ormond, Constantia has been compelled to perform the actions that she does in order to survive. While this makes her an admirable woman, it does not transform her into a model American, since it merely demonstrates a tenacity and will that could be present in any citizen of any country. In order for her transformation from hard-working individual to prototypical American to take place, Constantia must take control of her circumstances and choose the path that Brown's readers could then emulate. Constantia must face the promises and threats of Europe in the form of Ormond, while juggling the influences of her female acquaintances, especially Martinette and Sophia, who remind Constantia of how much more of the world she has yet to experience. However, while Constantia is enticed by the lives of her fellow women abroad, they are perhaps too radical for Brown's audience to be considered viable options for a potential American identity. Martinette, with her cross-dressing and participating physically in revolution, may have been too masculine a representation. Sophia, though she is much more like Constantia than Martinette is, can only help Constantia consolidate her experience at the end of the novel by taking Constantia back to Europe.

Ormond: Gothic Illuminatus

In a 2010 radio interview on the attraction of the Gothic genre, Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, Director of the Comparative Literature program at the University of Texas in Austin, stated: “All Gothic is trivial but it gets us to look at the sacred text of a nation.” That is, the visceral elements of the Gothic style – ruins, mystical abilities, and devious villains, among others – expose the underlying attitudes and development of America. Certainly a character such as Ormond, who can effortlessly penetrate social circles and private dwellings, seems far-fetched to our modern sensibilities, but Ormond exposes one of the fears of the nation in the years following the American Revolution: infiltration from Europe. Richmond-Garza’s notion of the Gothic providing access to the sacred text of a country is similar to Leslie Fiedler’s position that the Gothic occupies a central place within American fiction. Fiedler writes that the American novel is “most essentially a Gothic one” (142). Brown was heavily influenced by the British Gothic and in adapting that tradition with his American novels, he presents through the character of Ormond a Gothic-style challenge to confront and test Constantia’s emerging American identity – one that threatens her life and her virtue in a supernatural way. Ormond fills this role with his vast network of contacts and the ability to disguise himself. At the same time, Ormond brings with him to America the influence and threat of the Illuminati and its alleged efforts to control the governments of the world.

The perceived threat to America stemmed from the French Revolution and the bloody outcome that some Americans believed endangered the new Republic through the import revolutionaries who sought to spread upheaval for their own ends. Whitman Ridgway writes that there was a sense among the population during the 1890s that there existed a growing fracture between the citizens of America and the federal government. This distancing was attributed to

“the influence of radical ideas inspired by the French Revolution, the emergence of Democratic Societies in the 1790s, and the corrupting influence of foreign radicals, who had immigrated in especially large numbers to the major commercial cities” (141). Mary Chapman illustrates this fear in her edition of *Ormond* by including a selection from John Robison’s *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All Religions and Governments of Europe* (1798), which highlights the activities and influence of the Illuminati, an organization which Ormond may have had some ties to.

The Illuminati, was allegedly formed in 1776 in Bavaria by Adam Weishaupt, believed, according to Robison, that it was their charge to “make men happy” (*Fear of Conspiracy* 38). However, Robison feared that this outcome was to be accomplished through the robbing of the rich by “the idle and profligate poor” (38) and the destruction of Christianity. This destruction would result in the disintegration of “all the civil governments of Europe” (38). Furthermore, Robison asserted that the Illuminati would not stop with their conquest of Europe. He warned that they would “extend their operations to the other quarters of the globe, till they have reduced mankind to the state of one indistinguishable chaotic mess” (38). The expansion of the Illuminati’s power and influence would certainly challenge the new Republic and perhaps lead to its downfall. Although all secret societies, including the Illuminati, were banned in Bavaria in 1784, many, including Robison, believed that the organization survived and was still operating throughout Europe and in America. Robison asserted that in the eyes of the Illuminati, “patriotism and loyalty were called narrow-minded prejudices, and incompatible with universal benevolence” (*Fear* 38). Brown appears to have tailored the character of Ormond to represent this threat from Europe. Ormond, with his revolutionary past, high-minded ideals (at least in

speech), and vast wealth positions himself as the ultimate American Gothic figure of the Illuminati in the new Republic.

However, neither Ormond's participation in the plan for creating a better world through national oversight by a secret society nor his potential supernatural abilities complete him as an individual. On the contrary, his abilities make Ormond the most dangerously fractured character in the novel. Ormond is not the gentleman he seems, but is driven by obsession and is cold and calculating in his efforts to embody the guise of a generous and reasonable man. Ormond's control over his own emotions and actions spins violently out of his grasp in the wake of his desire to possess Constantia by any means necessary, and he becomes a machine of lust and destruction by the novel's end.

Ormond is in many ways a typical Gothic villain: he has fabulous wealth, is extremely intelligent, and possesses the ability to hear apparently private conversations and disguise himself convincingly enough to infiltrate his targets' homes. Watts argues that Ormond is "a study in duplicity" and over the course of the novel, he becomes "a moral chameleon to other characters and to the reader as well" (93). Ormond as moral chameleon is represented in the novel by his wealth and abilities that allow him access to a number of spaces where he does not belong. Ormond uses his fortune for seemingly altruistic purposes, but actually seeks to control those he has given money to. For Brown's readership, Ormond's moral and ideological instability could serve as a stand-in for the influence of European ideas in America. Bill Christopherson furthermore, Christopherson recognizes, for instance, that Brown's characters are not simply one-dimensional representations of Gothic stock characters. Rather, Brown's characters are "naive adolescents confronted by the evils that are, finally, projections of greater evils within [that] dramatize traumas of self discovery and denial that make for sophisticated

romance” (2). Within *Ormond*, the greater evil being confronted is the stress of defining a lasting identity in the new Republic and the trauma involved in national self-discovery.

Ormond differs greatly from Brown’s other antagonists, who are often less effective characters. John Cleman’s study of the villains and heroes of Brown’s novels notes that in contrast to some of Brown’s other characters who perform evil deeds, such as Clithero (*Edgar Huntly*), Welbeck (*Arthur Mervyn*), and Theodore Wieland (*Wieland*), Ormond rises to the top as the most threatening. Clemen asserts that while Brown’s other antagonists are “motivated by a simple, unintellectual, almost compulsive desire to gratify their personal wants,” Brown’s depiction of Ormond “has the appearance of being more calculated, cerebral, the result of a certain ideological bent” (196), which Cleman associates with the “Godwinian belief that evil results from a corrupt social system” (196) and must be eradicated before man can advance.

In Chapter XXII of *Ormond*, which Sophia dedicates to the “delineation of the character of Ormond” (125), Clemen finds support for his assertions. Sophia notes, among other elements, that Ormond believed that “he was part of a machine” which could eliminate the “mortal poison [that] pervaded the whole system” of society (127). In addition, though Ormond claims to value nothing more than honesty, when he discovers as a youth a “remarkable facility in imitating the voice and gestures of others,” he decides to use this unique form of duplicity not for the good of mankind, but for “higher purposes” (129). Upon meeting Constantia, these higher purposes, at least in the pages of *Ormond*, largely involve covertly observing Constantia voyeuristically for his own gain, pleasure, and control. In short, Ormond pretends that his actions are governed, even in his eventual madness, by a particular set of ideals. These ideals – reason, utopianism, honesty, and the like – are twisted to serve him in the advancement of his own purposes. However, when these ideals hinder Ormond’s goals, he is content to ignore them in favor of any

means that will allow him to possess whatever object he seeks.

This inconsistency in Ormond's character is demonstrated early in Ormond's history when, at the age of eighteen, he enlists as a volunteer in the Russian army. Ormond captures a young Tartar girl following a battle and returns with her to his tent. While on the way, Ormond meets a fellow soldier who "on pretense, claimed the victim" (251). Rather than surrender his prize, Ormond duels the soldier and runs "his antagonist through the body" with a sword (252). Ormond then takes the girl "and having exercised brutality of one kind upon the helpless victim, stabbed her to the heart" (252). The next day, Ormond raids a group of "Turkish foragers" and "brought away five heads, suspended, by their gory locks, to his horse's mane" (252). Ormond deposits this gruesome gift on the grave of the soldier that he had recently murdered and "conceived himself fully to have expiated yesterday's offence" (252). This narcissistic, psychotic drive, combined with his apparent supernatural abilities, and a fractured sense of justice make Ormond a formidable representation of European influence, imperialism, and abuse of power.

Ormond's ability to intrude into those private American places, such as Constantia's home in Philadelphia, where he does not belong, is aided by the unsettled nature of identity and class in the new Republic. America's lack of the strict class system that was present in England promoted a fluidity that was both liberating and disturbing to the Republic's residents. Since anyone could potentially hold any job, provided he possessed the adequate skills and desire to work, there was no set stereotype or assumed characteristic for a given profession. Thus, Ormond's disguise as chimney sweep might not be as complicated as Ed White and Michael Drexler make it out to be when they proclaim Ormond to be African American and, furthermore, "a black man disguised throughout the novel as white" (356). To support this claim, they read deep into Constantia's brief interaction with Ormond when he enters her home dressed as a

chimney sweep. Drexler and White see Constantia's attitude toward the disguised Ormond as a reflection of early American attitudes toward slaves. They conclude that, "it is not that Ormond is a white man momentarily disguised as black, but rather a black man disguised throughout the novel as a white" (356).

Drexler and White are searching for the fantasy in Republicanism. To them, Republicanism is the idea of the new Republic, and is only accessed by eighteenth-century readers in an abstract way through literature, not as an everyday reality. Accordingly, they attempt to delineate those instances that seem "fantastic" in the structure of *Ormond* – such as Ormond's continued infiltrations. Although there certainly is a fantastic element to *Ormond*, and indeed all of Brown's early novels, the issue of his motives is not as complex as Drexler and White make it out to be when they assert that Ormond is African American. Since Ormond, who poses as a chimney sweep, a man of compassion, and a generous friend, is simply using his skill of disguise, there need not be anything supernatural about his choice. For example, after hearing Melbourne's story of Constantia's hardship, Ormond decides to infiltrate the Dudley house to observe Constantia. He determines that the best way to accomplish this is with a disguise of the "most impenetrable kind" (145). In preparation for his role, he undergoes the "most entire and grotesque metamorphosis imaginable" but does so with "perfect ease" (145). Drexler and White contend that Constantia is drawn in due to her feeling of "superiority over the lowly slave" (356), but Constantia is fooled not because of class, but because she has an imperfect knowledge of the occupation of a chimney sweep. She has been educated with academic, analytical, scholarly, and esoteric skills that, while they provide her a basis for governing a household, give her no background for interacting with contractors. Given Constantia's inexperience, compounded by the freedom of society offered in America, she has no idea how a chimney sweep should appear

or act. Thus, any man who puts on soot and the clothes and manners that approximate a chimney sweep would likely be indistinguishable from the actual object in Constantia's eyes. Ormond forces the identity of chimney sweep into her mind without the need to act the part. Whether Ormond could pass for an actual chimney sweep in like company is irrelevant to his ruse. Unlike Craig's elaborate scheme, Ormond does not require any expert forgery or complex act to establish his credibility; Ormond needs only to wear a facade of a chimney sweep to "be" one in Constantia's presence.

The first impression that Ormond makes in the novel is not through his person but through his home. When Constantia goes to Ormond's house to seek out Craig, she first encounters Ormond's abode rather than the man himself. Constantia is conducted into the home by an English servant whose uniform was "extremely singular and fanciful" and is shown into a parlor decorated "with a gay design, the walls stuccoed in relief, and the floor covered with a Persian carpet, with suitable accompaniments of mirrors, tables, and sofas" (112). Ormond's house identifies him as not simply a wealthy gentleman, but to be an outsider. Unlike Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and John Adams, who all furnished their homes with objects from Europe and Asia, Ormond does not appear to be simply decorating with these objects, but establishing himself as separate from America. Nearly everything that Constantia sees in the house, from the English servant dressed in an unfamiliar uniform to the lavishly outfitted parlor with a Persian rug, signals that the house is more than the dwelling of a wealthy man. Ormond is seeking with his home to create a European space within America. The objects in the house, from the servant to the rug, are foreign – Ormond's home is a small foreign country on American soil. Similar to the way Constantia's role as a social outsider allows her to cross gender lines, Ormond's appearance in the novel could indicate to Brown's readers that Ormond is not simply a

man of foreign ideas, but a foreign entity importing his power into the heart of the new Republic by setting up his dwelling as a foreign space.

When Ormond finally appears to Constantia in the novel, he is mysterious and attractive – nothing like the sinister and depraved man that he becomes by the novel’s end. In these early sections, he represents the best of what the settlers left behind to come to the new Republic: wealth, influence, and status as citizens of a European power. However, rather than running to his side, Constantia is suspicious of Ormond and his motives. Instead of treating him as her salvation from the problems with Yellow Fever and financial hardship, she treats Ormond exactly as John Robison would encourage her to treat any potential intruder – suspiciously and with “anxious attention” (*Fear* 41). Certainly some small measure of this suspicion can be traced to her father’s deception at the hands of the supposedly European Craig and Ormond’s apparent connection to him when she discovers that Craig is staying with Ormond in Philadelphia. However, if Brown is using Constantia as a model for a new American identity, the cold reception that Ormond receives indicates that the citizens of the republic have the ability to mature beyond their English roots and have grown into their own population independent of European influence. The challenge that Brown is presenting for his readers is establishing that identity, which Constantia models in the novel’s final scenes by killing Ormond in self defense, before being drawn in by the intruder and succumbing to the influence of Europe.

Ormond’s initial reaction to Constantia following Craig’s self-serving and deceptive revision of the events that cause Constantia to seek an interview with Craig is one of compassion. Upon hearing Craig’s revised telling of Constantia’s hardship, Ormond decides to assist her. When he listens to Craig’s tale of the look-alike brother who commits all of the embezzlement from the Dudleys and who Craig is “often mistaken for” (116), Ormond gives

Craig “a note of one hundred dollars . . . and enjoined him to send it to the Dudleys that evening, or early the next morning” (117). Of course, Craig has no intention of doing so and leaves Philadelphia almost immediately with Ormond’s money. When Ormond later hears of the elder Dudley’s arrest for possession of a forged bank note, Ormond carefully examines the information at hand and determines that Constantia’s version of events does not “exactly tally with the information received from Craig” (125). In the initial passages that address Ormond, he is not yet the lust-obsessed intruder he becomes at the end of the novel, but a man of enlightenment, who is both careful in judgment and philanthropic. However, as Sophia reveals late in the novel, he is capable of rape and murder without remorse (251-2). At first Ormond appears to Constantia – and the novel’s readers – as the model of a modern enlightened traveler with a solid grasp of his own identity. However, if initially Ormond is painted generously by Brown, the image rapidly is focused more sharply on his negative characteristics in the following chapter, revealing a duplicitous and potentially violent individual.

The narrator begins Chapter Twelve by stating, “I know no task more arduous than a just delineation of the character of Ormond” (125). The narrator sees Ormond as a unique specimen among men. She feels that she has a “kind of duty, first to my friend, and second to mankind, to impart the knowledge I possess” (126). Sophia’s descriptions are both a history of the man and an attempt to outline his identity by describing those events, such as participating as a volunteer in the Tartar army and his rape and murder of his female captive, that shaped him. It is only Ormond that the narrator feels a duty to mankind to explore in depth. The reason for this can be traced to Brown’s overarching goal for his early works: to contribute to a national literature. While the character Craig, for instance, is a criminal and grifter, he serves to expose Dudley’s European self, which Dudley clings to even after Craig’s deceptive, fraudulent scheme is

revealed. Ormond, on the other hand, attempts to disrupt rather than assist Constantia in shaping her role as a potential new American identity,

Ormond has abilities that aid him in the application of his self-serving perspectives. The narrator notes that “[i]n his early youth he discovered in himself a remarkable faculty in imitating the voice and gesture of others” (129). The addition of gesture imitation propels him one step beyond *Wieland*’s Carwin in ability to deceive. Furthermore, while Carwin claims that he is not in control of his biloquisim, Ormond has complete command of his ability, which “would have rendered his career, in the theatrical profession, illustrious” (129). But rather than entertain, he “devoted his abilities to higher purposes” (129). These “higher purposes” are mainly found in service to himself. The narrator states that Ormond has “an aversion to duplicity” having “frequently been made its victim” (129-130), yet falling prey to duplicity has not made him a better person. In fact, he is the opposite: a sociopathic megalomaniac who seeks to dominate in every aspect of his life. In his single-minded approach, he always deals in calculated absolutes, illustrated by Ormond’s practice of distinguishing between “men in the abstract, and men as they are” (127). This character flaw is obvious in the way he argues with Constantia about topics such as marriage and his repeated statements to her regarding his sincerity. During their discussion regarding Helena, Ormond’s mistress, befriended by Constantia, Ormond tells Constantia that “Marriage is absurd,” owing chiefly to the “incurable imperfection of the female character” (134). He flatly states that “no woman can possess that worth which would induce me to enter into this contract, and bind myself, without power of revoking the decree, to her society” (134). Ormond’s stance on marriage, that it is “absurd” and “binding,” in some ways mirrors Constantia’s own views that it is a kind of trap. However, while Constantia bases her opinion on lack of social equality, Ormond’s position is that it is the woman, not the social structure, who is

to blame. Furthermore, Constantia's solution to her view of marriage is simply to not marry her suitors, while Ormond circumvents the problem by either taking a mistress whom he has no intention of marrying – as with Helena – or imprisoning and raping the woman he desires – as with the Tartar girl. Ironically, while he proclaims his singular nature of thought and action in relation to reason, in body he is anything but sincere and singular. This duplicity in Ormond manifests the first signs for Constantia of the existing fracture that will grow and throw his character into chaos, driving him to madness and the attempted rape of Constantia at the end of the novel.

Within the Republic, Ormond ignores established social contracts in favor of his own brand of autocratic society. Ormond seems to neatly fit into the pattern of Robison's assertions about the Illuminati – particularly Robison's claims that the Illuminati's "first and immediate aim is to get the possession of riches, power and influence" (39) while "root[ing] out all religion and ordinary morality, and even to break the bonds of domestic life, by destroying the veneration for marriage vows" (39). Since Ormond sees himself as the ultimate enlightened individual, his ego has no compunction regarding the reorganizing of social norms to fit his own beliefs, such as his view of marriage as "absurd" (134). Of course, he does not see the absurdity stemming from any great social or religious deficit; instead, his reasoning lies within his own notion that "no woman can possess that worth which would induce me to enter into this contract, and bind myself, without power of revoking the decree, to her society" (134). While there is a brief recognition on his part that his opinion "may possibly be erroneous" (134), his earlier blanket statement of "no woman" either implies homosexual tendencies – for which there is little evidence – or that he really does not believe in the possibility of his error.

Ormond uses every tool at his disposal to attempt to destabilize Constantia's social

connections in her emerging role as head of the household. In addition to his outward appearance carefully calculated to mislead, Ormond chooses precise words to draw out and capture his prey. The power of words, either printed or spoken, is not lost on him. In debating with Constantia, Ormond asserts that “words are meant to carry meanings” (162), but when Constantia refuses to agree with him, he retorts, “I thought you understood my language, and were an Englishwoman” (162). Of course, Constantia understands Ormond perfectly; she simply does not agree with him; Ormond’s accusation, that he thought Constantia an “Englishwoman,” implies that she is something less civilized than, and inferior to, the English. Certainly he knows she is neither English by birth nor loyal to the crown. Since Constantia does not agree with him, and he can think of no better rebuttal to her refusal to agree with his position, he resorts to classifying her a lesser being. Ormond implies that Constantia has become someone who not worthy of his time and effort.

Rather than fall immediately to Ormond’s influence, Constantia seeks symbolically to integrate him into American society, thus adding Ormond as a potential American. Constantia attempts this integration when she speaks to Ormond about his mistress, Helena. Helena requests Constantia’s assistance in persuading Ormond to marry, but Constantia initially refuses the request as “romantic and impracticable” (153). However, after deliberation, Constantia accepts Helena’s proposition by rhetorically asking herself “was [Constantia] not a rational being, fully imbued with the justice of her cause?” (154). Furthermore, by approaching Ormond in a rational, reasonable, and logical way, she hoped that she could “change his course by the change of his principles” (154). Yet, when she speaks to Ormond about marriage, he rejects the idea, saying that Helena is a “noisome weed,” a woman who “cannot be shunned too cautiously, nor trampled on too much” (161). Constantia’s plea to Ormond for him to marry Helena and pull her back

from “the brink of a gulf which I shudder to look upon” (161) is an attempt by Constantia to create a new paradigm within the Ormond and Helena relationship – a relationship that, if not based on equality, at least resembles the marriage that Helena wishes to have. If Constantia were to succeed in generating a union between Ormond and Helena, she believes both of them would voluntarily surrender their singular natures by the act of becoming a married couple. In doing so, they would become part of the social order of America and be one step closer to integration. Furthermore, the moral function of a society to demonstrate solid ethical behavior would be reinforced since Helena would no longer be in danger of acquiring the reputation of a fallen woman or Ormond’s mistress. Finally, in Constantia’s view, the union would secure Ormond and make him a safe entity in the community, as he would no longer be perceived singularly as a foreign influence. However, Ormond is aware of Constantia’s efforts and rebukes her by telling her, “you are building nothing. You are only demolishing” (162), indicating that Constantia’s efforts will fail and that Ormond cannot and will not be willingly integrated into the nation. With this encounter, Ormond shifts from attempting to court Constantia to forcing her to unite with him through intimidation and isolation. To this end, he systematically dismantles her support structure in America, beginning with her father.

Ormond has fostered Dudley’s continued reliance on Europe, even in Dudley’s poverty, unemployment, and blindness. After Ormond visits the Dudleys, disguised as a chimney sweep, he decides to assist them with their financial needs. To that end, Ormond “calculated the amount of what would be necessary for the annual subsistence of this family on the present frugal plan” (146) and sent the corresponding amount. In the letter that accompanies the gift, Ormond anonymously claims to have had “pecuniary engagements with Craig” (146) and seeks to discharge as much of Craig’s debt to the Dudleys as possible. However, Ormond’s use of money

is never for anything but the achievement of a particular goal , for example proximity to and control of Constantia, since Ormond believes “the use of money was a science, like every other branch of benevolence, not reducible to any fixed principles” (144). Ormond’s view of all forms of benevolence as an uncertain “science” shows his callousness when dealing with others; he applies his generosity only with self-serving, opportunistic, strategic ends in mind and “was content in all cases to employ it” (144). Following the letter and money, Ormond recommends to Helena that she hire Constantia as a seamstress. Thus, Constantia and Dudley have their continued support provided for briefly by Ormond’s “bella Siciliana” (147), as well as by the money from Ormond that Dudley receives in the anonymous letter.

Ormond even goes so far as to restore Dudley’s sight. Ormond sends a skilled surgeon “lately arrived from Europe” to tend to Dudley’s vision problems (179). The doctor is described as “one of the numerous agents and dependents of Ormond, and had been engaged to abdicate his native country for purposes widely remote from his profession” (179). This passage further indebts Dudley to Europe while demonstrating Ormond’s ability to induce people to “abdicate” their homeland in service of unrevealed plots. It is this ability to compel another to his will that Ormond seeks to use on Constantia. However, she rebukes his continued advances and flees the city after her father’s death to hide in her old family home, where Ormond tracks her down, setting the stage for their final encounter, which will be discussed at length in the ensuing section.

Ormond uses his resources and abilities for disguise in an attempt to control and possess Constantia. Each move he makes is carefully calculated as in his favorite game, chess, which Ormond “was prone to consider . . . as a sort of criterion of human capacity” (143). Though he approaches Constantia as a variation of this game, his egotistical reliance on his own abilities

will blind him to the fact that Constantia is in a position to defeat him as an opponent. This defeat will physically vanquish Ormond while simultaneously claiming a potential individual identity for Constantia and the citizens of the new Republic.

Facing Europe: Constantia's Final Encounter with Ormond

Ormond promises Constantia during their discussion about his marrying Helena, "Your house is your citadel. I will not enter it without leave" (162). Of course, Ormond has ignored this statement repeatedly upon his introduction into the novel. Houses and personal spaces are important to Brown as the ultimate contested space. Elizabeth Hinds describes Brown's use of homes as challenged spaces both in respect to the Gothic and the changing role of domesticity during Brown's career:

Brown transforms the already domesticated genre of Gothic fiction by way of the more modern sense of 'the domestic,' putting into action as he does the household as the space of active virtue at the same time that home can become a paradoxically dangerous territory, a space whose mythologized values are not always confirmed (27)

For Brown the house is metaphorically the most private place in the mind where thoughts are sorted out; since nearly all of his characters retreat to a family home. Physically, it is a family's seat of power that is in effect a small nation within a larger one where home rule governs above all else. If a character is unable to assert identity in the small space of the bedroom, the smallest, most private space of a house, she stands no chance of expanding identity into the nation as a whole.

Stripped of his righteous façade, Ormond is no longer a model European who adheres to logic and Enlightenment, but the obstacle representing Europe incarnate for the new Republic. His disguise of logic and benevolence hides a past that is violent, egotistical, and controlling – exactly what many Americans viewed Europe to be during the later years of the French Revolution and rumors of infiltration by the Illuminati. When Constantia confronts him during

their final struggle, Ormond responds with, “How hopeless is thy ignorance! To enlighten thee is past my power. What do I know? Everything” (246). Ormond’s claim to ultimate knowledge is enhanced by his assertion that not only does he know everything, but also there is nothing that Constantia can do without her actions passing into his view. Additionally, he claims that when she sits down to write a letter to Sophia, he will “know its contents before they are written” (246). Although he is attempting to intimidate Constantia by exaggerating his abilities, Ormond’s claims give him the power of history and nation, since he invokes his power as a means to rule over her. Though he is still very dangerous to Constantia, through his increasing madness, he is also vulnerable to defeat when someone such as Constantia, observing him, sees his cruelty and deception clearly and knows what Ormond is attempting.

The final encounter between Ormond and Constantia is the most telling in terms of Brown’s goal of documenting the struggle for the type of individual that could serve as the basis for future identity within the new Republic. Before the encounter, Constantia is reflecting on her family summer home and her wish not to sell it when she accompanies Sophia on their planned trip to Europe. The property, which had “fallen to one of [Dudley’s] creditors” (117) upon his financial ruin, had been purchased by Ormond and given to Helena. Ormond then convinced Helena to will the property to Constantia in the event of her death – which takes place shortly after when Helena commits suicide. Ormond’s reaction to the scene, that despite Helena’s death he is “determined to live and be happy” (175), illustrates his callousness and the calculated nature of his plot to restore the property to Constantia. Constantia sees the sale of the home, that would “consign the fruits of [Dudley’s] industry and invention to foreign and unsparing hands . . . [as] a kind of sacrilege” (254). Her feelings are further supported by the fear of exposure to the “revolution and war that seemed to actuate all the nations of Europe” (254). Having lived

through a portion of the American Revolution and its after-effects on the country, she has no desire to relive that experience in Europe. To Constantia, the relative safety of her home, even threatened by Ormond, is preferable to the perils of Europe. In addition, she is exhibiting her strengthening ties to her homeland over any lingering familial connections to the Continent. She acknowledges that America “was by no means exempt from these tendencies” toward war, but that the new Republic was “more favourable to the dignity and improvement of the human race than those which prevailed in any part of the ancient world” (254). In Constantia’s estimation, then, her country’s new individual and national identity must not be based in Europe. Furthermore, this identity, once formed, will be assertive enough to improve the human race in a way that Europe is incapable of. But before she can solidify her identity, she must face and defeat Ormond.

And so, one evening Constantia has confined herself to her bedroom in the old family mansion, which “in the original structure of the house, had been designed for study” (256). This converted space is isolated and offers “a landscape of uncommon amplitude and beauty” (256). Her writing implements are set on the desk, but as she sits to write, she “gain[s] a faint view of a man and horse” which contains “something of the figure and movements” of Ormond (256). His identity is still solid enough to be recognizable from afar. However, when Constantia goes to strike the match to light a lamp, she hears a sound that “betokened the opening of the door that led into the next apartment” (258), and is trapped and “immersed in darkness” (258), unable to see. The sounds continue until Constantia gains the courage to open the door. There, she is confronted first by a body “supine, motionless, stretched on the floor” (260), then by the figure of Ormond standing in the gathering darkness.

Like her initial encounter with Ormond’s house, she now again first sees not the man, but

his work. Though she does not yet know it, Ormond has murdered Craig and brought him as a kind of gift for her. However, he is not foreclosing her American identity by eliminating the only tangible connection she has to the country. Instead, he is erasing any influence she may have had on the nation while closing in on her. His final goal is no longer to integrate her into Europe. Ormond indicates this when he says to her, "I am come to witness the fulfillment of my words and the completion of your destiny. To rescue you I have not come: that is not within the compass of human powers" (260). There is a supernatural tone to Ormond's menacing pronouncement that the struggle that is about to take place lies outside the "compass of human powers." Constantia finds herself trapped by a door "over which her key had no power" (263) with Ormond closing in. Constantia considers her options and decides that she can either kill in self-defense, since "the most violent expedients for defense" (268) would be justified, or she can kill herself "to save the greater good" (269) of her virginity. It is interesting to note here that both Constantia and Ormond justify their respective actions by appealing, in Constantia's case, to a "greater good" and in Ormond's case, to a "higher purpose" (129). The invocation of these larger concepts underline Brown's goal of creating a metaphor for potential individual American identity and the dangers in continued conflict with identity created by a reliance on European culture.

After explaining that it was he who killed Craig as revenge for Dudley's murder at Craig's hands (although Ormond had also orchestrated Dudley's murder), Ormond tells Constantia that she is not out of danger. He asks her, "Thinkest thou that the enmity which bereft thy father of life will not seek thy own?" (262), but his very presence answers his own question. Though Ormond has disposed of that particular paternal European influence, Ormond is the chief European threat for Constantia. Ormond continues by promising that there are "ills which my

counsel will enable thee and thy friend [Sophia] to shun” (262). Constantia could perhaps save herself by submitting to Ormond at this point, but Ormond’s “counsel” is no offer of marriage. Counsel implies giving direction to her actions, direction that would be dictated by Ormond’s European connections and ideals. These would be in the service of his goals, not the goals of the new Republic, and would prevent Constantia from solidifying a solely American identity.

Ormond’s assault on Constantia’s identity continues, and Ormond reveals his deepening psychological fracture with a brief slip into the third person when he says, “Have I not told thee that Ormond was his own avenger” (264) and “Know you not that Ormond was fool enough to set value on the affections of a woman” (265). With this, Ormond is dismissing Constantia’s ability to challenge him based on her gender and his foolish mistake of thinking her a suitable mate. In effect, Europe is discarding the notion of America, and individual American identity, as a possibility. Despite this increased instability, Ormond insists to Constantia that his plan and use of Craig to further his goals was to be “productive only of good” and that “governed by itself or by another, it will only work you harm” (266). Ormond’s admission that his resources were capable of being “governed by itself or by another” indicates that he is not fully in control of the methods he deploys and might represent a larger conspiracy directed by one of the European powers to which Ormond allegedly has ties.

Constantia’s response to Ormond is first to attempt escape, then to challenge him physically, but she concludes that “all the habits of her life and all the maxims of her education had conspired to unfit her. Her force of muscles would avail her nothing against the superior energy of Ormond” (267). Constantia considers her options and decides that she can either kill in self-defense, since “the most violent expedients for defense” (268) would be justified, or she can kill herself for the “greater good” (269) of protecting her innocence and virtue. However, it is

unclear what “greater good” she is referring to. Certainly, she could be implying that saving her honor is part of the greater good, but she might also be pointing toward saving her endangered American identity.

Listening to her threat of suicide, Ormond scoffs at Constantia, saying, “Living or dead, the prize I have in view shall be mine” (269). While this passage implies that Ormond intends to rape Constantia whether she is living or dead, Ormond’s threat also suggests an alternate reading in light of this thesis – that his influence will remain whether *he* is living or dead. In the Gothic trope of the seduction and fall of a woman, Ormond must threaten Constantia’s virtue. However, in Brown’s story of the forming of American identity in the face of European threats, Ormond’s threat lies more with his influence than with his threat of physical violence. These threats of a lasting European influence are present throughout his encounter with Constantia in her family home. If she is unable to successfully form an individual identity free from Ormond’s, and Europe’s influence, prematurely terminating that identity (and her life) is a better option to ensure the greater good, since she can then be regarded as a martyr in service of the new Republic and the progress she made in identity formation can be preserved.

Brown conducts all of his murders in *Ormond* offstage, but what should be the satisfying death of Ormond for Brown’s readers is curiously absent. The narrative is, in fact, abruptly interrupted by Sophia who breaks into the chapter to enumerate some of Ormond’s less desirable traits. While the interruption is jarring, and indeed disappointing given the fast pace Brown sets in the preceding paragraphs, Constantia’s victory and emancipation does not come with Ormond’s death, but prior to his stabbing. She attains the upper hand when, faced with violence and probable death, she determines that “[t]o find safety for her honour, even in the blood of an assailant, was the prescription of duty” (268). She asserts her will to protect her virginity and

sexual purity at all costs, including life itself. Constantia's choice, to kill in self-defense, allows her to finalize her identity and moves her completely from the girl on her father's farm to a citizen of the nation. She has weighed the life and death of both her own family and those who would threaten her, and made the choice to preserve her American identity rather than allow a foreign power to continue to have influence in her life and in the new Republic.

Conclusion

Following the death of Ormond, Sophia, who had feared that Constantia was not safe in the country home and that it was, in fact, “more hazardous than her abode in the city” (270), decides to return early from her errand of making arrangements for their trip to Europe. Sophia’s journey from the city to Constantia’s home is filled with foreboding images of what awaits her. She remarks that “the sky was gloomy, and the air boisterous and unsettled” (270) while “any near or unexplained sound sufficed to startle me” (271). When she arrives at the Dudley home, Sophia gains entrance with the help of the “sons and servants” of Laffert (272) – the same farmer who, Ormond claims, betrayed Constantia’s location to him.

Upon entering the home, Sophia discovers Constantia alive, but still among the bodies of Craig and Ormond. Sophia notes that “a smile of disdain sat upon [Ormond’s] features” while “the wound by which he fell was secret, and was scarcely betrayed by the effusion of a drop of blood” (273). Even in death, Ormond appears confident and defiant, and his wound hardly appears sufficient to have ended his life. Sophia removes Constantia to her chamber, but for a time, Constantia would do nothing but hold Sophia’s hand.

When Constantia finally does speak, she laments: “What have I done, what have I suffered, within the last dreadful hour! The remembrance, though insupportable, will never leave me. You can do nothing for my relief. All I claim is your compassion and your sympathy” (273). After listening to Constantia’s explanation of the peril that preceded Ormond’s death, Sophia concludes that “the violence of Ormond had been repulsed by equal violence” but that the act “was surely not a deed to be thought upon with lasting horror, or to be allowed to generate remorse” (274). In this assessment, Sophia delivers Brown’s message regarding the actions necessary for establishing individual American identity in the shadow of European influence: the

process is violent and holds the potential to scar, as it has done with Constantia, but it is a necessary action, and its negative effects will fade as it produces the potential for the rise of a distinctly American individual.

However, if Constantia becomes Brown's model for an individual in the new Republic, her departure for England and her subsequent extended residence there complicates reading her as a prototype for American identity. It seems unlikely that Brown's new American – who should be strong and stable after confronting and defeating the influence of Europe and the expectations of gender in post-Revolutionary America – would need to recover anywhere, least of all in the place that she has apparently been fighting against. We should uncover Brown's potential motive in Constantia's move to England, it is helpful to return briefly to *Alcuin* and "Walstein's School of History."

In *Alcuin*, Alcuin speaks of professions in a way that seems to be an epigraph for *Ormond*: "He that roots out a national vice, or checks the ravages of a pestilence, is, no doubt, a respectable personage: but it is no man's duty to perform these services" (35). For Alcuin, the protection of a country from "national vice" and "pestilence" is everyone's responsibility and should not fall to a single class or occupation. However, Alcuin grants that certain professions (doctors and lawyers) have more responsibility since they can cause more harm: "degrees and examinations, and licenses may qualify us for the trade; but benevolence needs not their aid to refine its skill, or augment its activity" (35). He concludes by stating: "the more leisure [an occupation] affords us to gratify our curiosity and cultivate our moral discernment, the better . . . which obliges us to consider the condition as preferable" (35). Constantia, then, possesses a man's education, but retains the femininity that is "preferable" which allows her the additional leisure time, the education, and space needed to cultivate an American identity. While the

assumption that being a woman grants her more time seems counter-intuitive to twenty-first century readers, it does seem that Brown is working from this assumption, at least in part.

Constantia holds a position in *Ormond* that is between gender roles but is still able to navigate both while performing her job as a citizen by marking the “national vice” of the nation, namely, its dependence upon European ideas and traditions, while demonstrating a potential American identity.

In “Walstein’s School of History,” Brown presents a possible reading for the end of *Ormond*. Brown, writing about Walstein’s pupil, Engel, debates the uses of literature for moral instruction. After dismissing books that teach upper class citizens their duty because the “forms of human society allow few individuals to gain the station of general and statesman” (*Rhapsodist* 151), Brown settles on instruction of citizens each within their own “social and domestic province” (152). He notes that “virtuous activity may be thwarted by a foreign and superior influence” (152), which points to Ormond and his attempts to divert Constantia from her path of self-discovery to instead become a woman to whom he could speak to like an “Englishwoman” (162). In effect, Ormond’s wishes to possess and control Constantia’s identity in order to shape her smart and beautiful figure into a woman he can fully manipulate for his own plans. While there is a hint of Ormond here, Brown continues by making evil analogous with water: “It may seem best to purify the fountain, rather than to filter the stream: but the latter is, to a certain degree, within our power, while the former is impracticable” (152). It is in these lines that he reveals why Constantia must go to England. Were she to stay in America, she would be a purified fountain, having eliminated the challenge presented by Ormond – which Brown deems “impracticable.” Instead, she goes to the source of the river, Europe, where she can recover from

her encounter with Ormond and effectively “filter the stream” of influence while presenting a potential American identity that is strong, but does not ignore its roots.

Brown supports this interpretation in the closing paragraph of *Ormond*. As Sophia concludes Constantia’s story, she writes that she hopes “this tale may afford you as much instruction as the contemplation of the sufferings and vicissitudes of Constantia Dudley has afforded me” (276), indicating that the message from the novel is to be gained in reflection, not in the overt Gothic setting or fantastic characters. *Ormond* becomes for Brown’s readers a tale of instruction and reflection. In order to gain an idea of the potential of an American identity, independent spirit, and love of liberty that is free from the influences of Europe, Brown’s readers needed to witness the negative effects of too closely retaining European ties, as Stephen Dudley does, and also witness the rise of Constantia’s identity as a possibility for what an American might be in the wake of the Revolution.

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