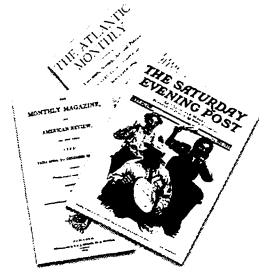

Constructing Indigeneity: Postcolonial Dynamics in Charles Brockden Brown's *Monthly Magazine and American Review*

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Charles Brockden Brown was the first professional author in the United States, one of the early lights in the tradition of the American novel, and the founder and major contributor to a number of early American periodicals such as *The Monthly Magazine and American Review* and *The Literary Magazine and American Register*. In this regard, he provides a gauge of the conflicts, tensions, and issues that characterize American culture in the decades following the Revolutionary War. Brown was born in Philadelphia in 1771 in the midst of increasing political conflict. The son of Quaker parents, he experienced both religious training and exposure to the practical realities of eighteenth-century urban mercantile culture. His father, Elijah, entertained radical political sympathies, but like other Quakers he did not actively support the Revolution. The family business suffered as a result, and Brown grew up in an environment where both Christian and political idealism clashed in a conflict of ambivalent values. Brown reached early adolescence as the war came to a close, and after an education in law he embarked upon the precarious career as a man of letters. His literary efforts lasted for about a decade—from 1792 to 1802—a period following the constitutional crisis between Federalists and Anti-Federalists, but a time still reflecting many of its ideological tensions. Brown's editorial work in *The Monthly Magazine and American Review* reflects the temper of the age, mirroring the uncertainty of a nation split by political battles and party faction, by the conflicts that naturally arise as a new nation attempts to construct a cultural identity through the appropriation and modification of imperial influences.

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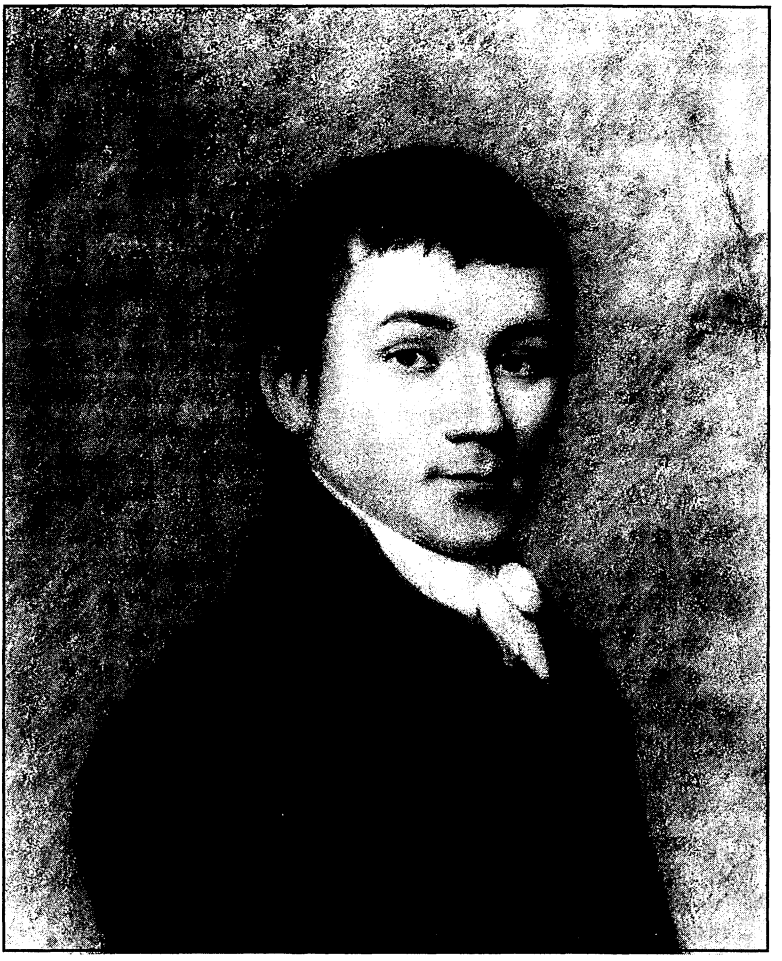


Figure 1: Portrait of Charles Brockden Brown by James Sharples, circa January 1798. (Provided courtesy of the Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts.)

Critics and literary historians have debated Brown's politics and social philosophy. Scholars in the 1950s and 1960s point to the influence of Godwinian social radicalism. William Godwin (1756-1836) was the father of Mary Shelley and husband of Mary Wollstonecraft.[1] He was an anarchist and foundational influence for romantic poets such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Godwin argued that human beings were creatures of environment and that governmental institutions were inherently corrupt. In 1950, Lulu Rumsey Wiley traced the influence of Godwin's ideas on Brown's gothic romances.[2] Donald Ringe referred to the influence of Godwin in

his 1966 study of Brown's works. Also in 1966, Warner Berthoff wrote that "When Brockden Brown, erstwhile Godwinian, abandoned the novel and turned to political journalism, this, broadly speaking, was the point of view he instinctively adopted."[3] But critics also observe a dissonant, more conservative perspective. In the same article, Berthoff argued that Brown's editorial sympathies were also strongly influenced by an "enlightened conservatism."[4] The exploration of Brown's implicit conservatism, his support of Federalist politics, his antipathy to the Jefferson administration, continues among recent critics. Shirley Samuels reacts against the assumption that Brown was uniformly radical, stating that "underlying his more radical gothic sensibilities is a rather conservative concentration on education and the family—a concentration which anticipates the focus on the family in succeeding American novels."[5]

This critical debate suggests that a persistent ambivalence regarding political issues informs Brown's literary efforts, creating a conflict of sensibility that appears not only in his fiction but also in his editorial work. William Hedges points to the "ambivalence of his political feelings—his joint attraction to and fear of radical utopianism."[6] This conflict leads to a dramatic tension that strengthens and empowers Brown's use of the gothic mode in novels such as *Wieland* and *Edgar Huntly*, which is a concern specific to literary critics and Brown scholars in particular. But upon close scrutiny these tensions are pertinent to cultural historians, theorists, and Americanists in general. Brown's ambivalent views on political and social matters reflect a broader conflict in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American culture as a whole. The popular journalistic literature of the new nation, as contained in *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, provides an invaluable guide to the political and epistemological perspectives that existed in the American early national period. During this era, the cultural phenomena theorized as "postcoloniality" are clearly operative, as Brown's literary efforts reveal noticeable conflicts between the hegemonic discourses of the imperial power and the emerging counter-narratives of the new nation.

Many theorists have characterized American literature as "postcolonial," but working critics have too often ignored this assertion. Applications of postcolonial theories have been largely limited to dialect studies in "local color" fiction.[7] Although some critics, such as Lawrence Buell and Janet Gabler-Hover, resist the notion of postcoloniality in early American texts, the cultural and political situation in America during Brown's time, the last three decades of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century, mirrors in specific ways the regions and nationalities that recent postcolonial theorists explore. In a remarkable study entitled *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin provide a useful descriptive study of postcolonial regions and literatures. These theorists distinguish between two different kinds of colonies: the "native" colony, the region where the colonizer establishes political and economic dominance over indigenous populations, and the "settler" colony, where the colonial settler, while

alienating, suppressing, and controlling native peoples and remaining tenuously linked to Europe, establishes a political independence while struggling for cultural autonomy separate from the colonizer.[8] These two forms of colonial arrangement affect the historical process of cultural development. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin point to America as a site of postcolonial dynamics:

> . . . the literatures of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka are all post-colonial literatures. The literature of the USA should also be placed in this category. Perhaps because of its current position of power, and the neo-colonizing role it has played, its post-colonial nature has not been generally recognized. But its relationship to the metropolitan centre as it evolved over the last two centuries has been paradigmatic for post-colonial literatures everywhere.[9]

American literature quite clearly manifests all the features of the settler colony, displaying the same cultural processes of regions more universally recognized as postcolonial. D. E. S. Maxwell cites the United States as the prototypical postcolonial situation, a region displaying the basic features of the settler colonies of Canada, New Zealand, and Australia.[10] These countries, as well as various Latin American countries in their early years of nationhood and independence, involve a crisis of identity, as they attempt to construct indigenous cultures through the process of appropriation, abrogation, and syncreticity. The appropriation of colonial influence—in politics, art, literature, philosophy—the abrogation or rejection of other aspects of colonial culture, as well as the combination of colonial and native influence, typify the postcolonial situation in the settler colony. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin mention Brown specifically, stating that "the works of Charles Brockden Brown in the United States provide excellent examples of such a conflict."[11]

Brown's editorial selections in *The Monthly Magazine and American Review* reveal a crisis of identity typical of an author both inscribed within yet marginalized by a dominant literary and cultural tradition. In Kenneth Dauber's terms, Brown's work was "unsure of itself from the beginning," and was primarily concerned with its own nature, its own identity as a historically and geographically specific cultural production.[12] Brown was torn between a tendency to appropriate English political ideals, epistemological systems, and social values, and a desire to abrogate the influence of the imperial power, thereby reconstituting his emerging culture through an identity rooted in "place."[13]

This is a discursive phenomenon common in the postcolonial context. It is manifest in the work of Irish writers such as W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, Seamus Heaney, and Stewart Parker, as well as in the work of Indian authors such as R. K. Narayan and the Trinidadian V. S. Naipaul. Like these writers, Brown's

literary efforts provide important insights into a new and emerging literary and cultural consciousness, a consciousness that reflects precisely the same conflicts and contradictions that have historically appeared among settler colonies worldwide. To apprehend these conflicts and contradictions, selections from *The Monthly Magazine* must be precisely and carefully analyzed, but they must first be situated within the cultural context of postcolonialism. This essay will therefore involve a discussion of 1) American historical context and postcolonialism; and 2) discourse and counter-discourse in *The Monthly Magazine*.

I

Before beginning an analysis of the discursive conflicts in Brown's editorial work, it is necessary to situate the texts within a cultural moment, not within the "objective" world of a history previously received, but within a history reconfigured by the concerns of postcolonial theorists.[14] Albert Memmi suggests that any writer in the postcolonial realm must be considered as an artist situated within a special world, an environment characterized by the cultural influences of the colonizer, yet a world that constructs the postcolonial artist in a manner influenced by "place," by a specific set of cultural influences that emanate from historical, political, geographical, and intellectual factors.[15] The sense of displacement typical of people living in a postcolonial situation, the simultaneous attachment to an unfamiliar place and an oddly familiar yet still somehow foreign cultural tradition, is precisely the experience reflected in Brown's social world.

The political discourse and ideology of Brown's time was defined by earlier European thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke, but it was expressed and reconsidered in an American context by political figures like Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was an older contemporary of Brown who wrote during Brown's youth. Upon close inspection Jefferson himself expressed some of the paradoxical attitudes associated with the developing identity of the settler colony. Egalitarian revolutionary though he was, Jefferson in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) displays an aristocratic sensibility directly appropriated from the European colonizer. He expresses an ambivalence and fear of the liberties achieved through revolutionary conflict. Jefferson contemplated the fragility inherent in democracy and the transience of the individualistic fervor upon which a people's government depends. He suggested that the values that fueled the Revolution must be codified while a humane temper still remained. Even democracy could not protect the masses from their own complacency and from political corruption.

Implicit in Jefferson's political ambivalence is a respect for European intellectual culture coupled oddly with a desire to create a new nation in a new and distinctive landscape. The anxiety characteristic of this situation is central to the work of the Trinidadian postcolonial writer, V. S. Naipaul, particularly in *The Mimic Men*. Through his narrator Kripal Singh, Naipaul explores the tension

inherent in the postcolonial writer between the competing ideologies of imperial metropolitan "center" and colonial "margin." As he recalls his early school lesson about the "weight" of the king's crown, Singh creates a contrast between the order created through colonizing culture and the disorder that characterizes not only the social world but also the consciousness of the postcolonial subject. While Naipaul displays keen insight into this power/language/order nexus, he remains oddly attracted to the ideologies of the colonizer, even though they construct his culture as nothingness and disorder.[16] In America, this attraction and split consciousness is apparent in Jefferson, and it found its way further into the political sphere, leading to the final phase of polemical writing of the Revolutionary era that informed Brown as a youth, resulting in *The Federalist Papers*. These polemics appeared in the New York newspapers between October 1787 and April 1788 and were written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison. The essays contain a clear and lucid analysis and assertion of Federalism and the separation of powers, and they further theorize the distinction between direct and representative democracy. They reflect an anxiety about the limits, practicability, and purpose of the new American democracy, displaying an attraction to European imperial and aristocratic culture. Here the postcolonial dynamics of empire and nationhood are central to the very debates that characterize the early national period.

These political conflicts were augmented in Brown's time by philosophical debates that dealt specifically with epistemology. Questions about the nature and validity of knowledge were at the center of the European enlightenment, and the epistemological questions that preoccupied the American intelligentsia did not originate on this continent. But whenever a people achieve political independence in a new place, their first problem becomes how to incorporate that place into a known frame of reference. Questions related to how one "knows" the new region, how one "knows" one's place within it, become immediate and crucial. Intensified epistemological conflicts are characteristic of the postcolonial situation, and certain rifts, junctures, and subtle differences can be observed between colonizer and colonized.

This heightened concern with epistemological issues is often expressed by postcolonial writers in varying degrees of subversiveness. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin suggest: "in the questions post-colonial texts posed, in their radical attempts to address the issues of language, reality, and their inherited and now troubling epistemological assumptions, there was a necessary subversive element."[17] There is always a political and social dimension to any process of epistemological questioning. As Edward Said writes: "No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society."[18] The political dynamics typical of the postcolonial situation in America affected in noticeable ways the stances American authors such as Brown took on the philosophical issues related to the creation of knowledge.[19]

The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in America can be seen as a period which evolved from a theologically based set of epistemological systems, such as Quakerism and Calvinism, to Deism and the empiricist skepticism of the Enlightenment period.[20] In considering Brown's work, Roland Hagenbüchle complicates this by observing the influence of David Hume (1711-1776). Hume was the British philosopher, historian, and economist who wrote *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739, 1740) and *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1758), among other works. He called into question aspects of Lockean epistemology in his criticism of causality. Causal relationships among perceived objects in the natural world were not verifiable in the objects themselves but were observed by human minds and conditioned by the habits and natural processes of those minds. Causal relationships were understood not through observation and perception alone but by habitual association and custom. While early nineteenth-century English novelists rely on Locke's epistemological optimism, Brown's work in America tends to reflect Hume's skepticism, his attack on causality and substance.[21]

The circumstances that focused these issues for Brown in America evolved out of the political debates of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists. Though the debates had ended on the floor of Congress by the time Brown came of age as a man of letters, the contested issues remained central to American politics until the Civil War. The constitutional crisis of the 1780s revolved implicitly around epistemological assumptions regarding the validity of human perception. Humean skepticism, the critique of objective causality (which accounts to some degree for Brown's later Federalist sensibilities), must call into question the public's capacity to analyze and understand their own cultural circumstances, and thereby implicitly challenges the notion of egalitarian democracy. What characterizes these conflicts is a preoccupation and attraction typical of the settler colony with colonial influence in the realm of speculative philosophy. But what further characterizes these debates is the heightened preoccupation with epistemological questions that often appear in postcolonial societies, together with the initial signs of juncture and difference, reflected in subversiveness, that lead to new cultural identity through appropriation, abrogation, and syncreticity. Political independence does little to relieve the crisis of identity of the settler colony, a crisis that finds dramatic expression in the world of ideas, in debates revolving around epistemological questions.

These are some of the tensions that appear in Brown's work. As William Hedges suggests, Brown was "forced to borrow essentially alien narrative devices and situations" and he was "able to adapt them to native conditions only imperfectly." Yet like Yeats, Naipaul, and Narayan, he is instrumental in establishing a new native tradition in the context of the settler colony, since "He is credited with being the first to sense the peculiar suitability of such derivative and discredited fictional forms as romance and melodrama to what are more and more alleged to be the deepest American impulses."[22] Of course critics through-

out the twentieth century have recognized these conflicts in Brown. Richard Chase paraphrased Marius Bewley, who discusses the "opposition between tradition and progress or between the past and the future; between Europe and America, liberalism and reaction, aggressive acquisitive economics and benevolent wealth."[23] But with the advent of cultural studies and postcolonial theory, which became truly widespread among literary scholars in the late 1970s, we can see that these tensions reflect the broader social phenomenon referred to as postcolonialism. To echo the ideas of Maria Bulgheroni, Brown's modernity, his prototypical existential alienation, display similar sensibilities to colonized peoples worldwide.[24]

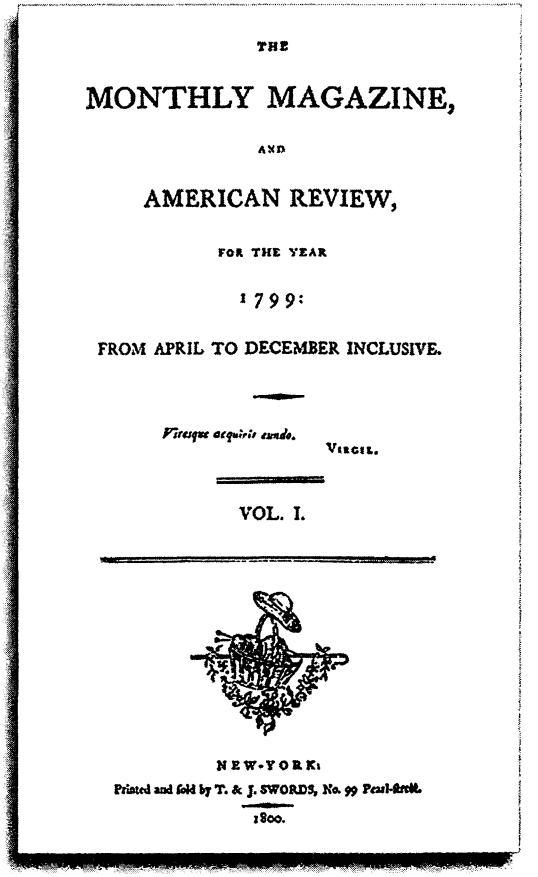
II

An analysis of periodicals such as Brown's *Monthly Magazine and American Review* is particularly revealing when considering the American postcolonial situation. A study of his primary texts such as *Wieland* and *Edgar Huntly* reveals an interesting amalgam of hegemonic and counter-discursive elements. But the author's attempt to produce works of artistic merit lead to a necessary focus on form, genre, style, and language. In addition, as Richard Terdiman asserts in his analysis of nineteenth-century French literature, the literature of any postcolonial period often defines the condition of its existence as counter-discursive, and, in designating itself as oppositional, it marginalizes itself and does not lend itself to a ready identification of the mainstream hegemonic discourses that function within the culture.[25]

To seize and understand the dominant discursive patterns is a complicated process, and to grasp these patterns one must move outside the realm of high culture. Popular periodicals offer a more fruitful area of analysis, since by necessity they directly reflect the social and political climate. Terdiman, in his discussion of early nineteenth-century French newspapers, stated that in their "ubiquity," in their tendency toward the banal, commercial presses functioned as a medium for the dominant ideas of a culture.[26]

In the late eighteenth century in America, the periodical was a comparatively new literary form. In its identity as a "popular" or "commercial" literature, and in its effort to appeal directly to its audience, this literature functioned to reflect the enigmatic and complicated cultural demographics of the American postcolonial situation. Like the newspaper in Terdiman's analysis, American periodicals manifested the "dynamics of resistance," reflecting both hegemonic and counter-discursive narrative elements. As a new form yet to be fully appropriated by high culture, these journals reflected a multiplicity of cultural voices. (Brown in fact singlehandedly wrote much of *The Monthly Magazine*, but his own conflicting political and theological sensibilities and his desire to create a successful journal led to the heterogenous nature of the various selections). In the first two issues of *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, published in April and May, 1799, these various viewpoints become apparent in Brown's selection of non-fiction and polemic materials, didactic and moral essays, and informal epistolary pieces.

Conflicting perspectives in the inaugural issue first become apparent in the epistle entitled "Original Communications" (April 1799) in which a "CANDIDUS" criticizes Brown's aims for the periodical (Dunlap, in his early biography of Brown, suggests that CANDIDUS is probably Brown himself). This criticism points to the conflicts and contradictions in the editorial position Brown adopts, and in it Brown pokes fun at his own conflicted sensibilities. In reminding the editor of "an old fable of a farmer," CANDIDUS warns Brown that "in his eagerness to please all, he displeased every body, and, most of all, himself. . . ."[27] CANDIDUS refers to Brown's apparent egalitarian sensibilities, his desire to produce a publication that responds to an audience that includes people of all classes, tastes, values, and occupations. The author of the epistle asserts that the


THE

MONTHLY MAGAZINE,

AND

AMERICAN REVIEW,

FOR THE YEAR

1799:

FROM APRIL TO DECEMBER INCLUSIVE.

Viresque acquirit eundo.

VIRGIL.

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:

Printed and fold by T. & J. SWORDS, No. 99 Pearl-ſtreet.

1800.

Figure 2: Title page of the inclusive 1799 issue of *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, edited by Charles Brockden Brown, printed by T & J Swords.

"disciples of all the professions, the students of all the sciences, the lovers of literature and poetry," are invited to Brown's "banquet."[28]

Certainly, one of Brown's primary goals is the financial success of his journal. But in conceiving of a publication that will achieve this success, he apparently embraces a rather egalitarian view of his audience. Brown would certainly not expect a tradesman or a farmer to purchase a journal that is too general in nature, and as such addresses their concerns in a severely limited way. Brown seems to believe that these people must possess, in addition to their utilitarian concerns, an interest in literature, poetry, and the empirical sciences. Conversely, people of "taste," whose central interests are intellectual, must also be concerned with the problems and issues that confront the merchant and working classes. Brown seems to assume a consistency of taste and values in his audience, reflecting the historically specific values of one segment of the population during the early national period. In attempting to "appeal to all," Brown's egalitarian sensibilities lead him to normalize the audience, investing the "all" with the values, interests, and merits of divergent cultural and social groups.

These sentiments must be contextualized considering the political and social debates that were occurring in America at the time. Brown, though he later became a Federalist, seems clearly influenced in this piece by Jeffersonian politics and the egalitarian social principles and assumptions Jefferson supported. But one can also observe here what so many critics have observed elsewhere—the appropriation of European thought, in the influence of the radical social philosophy of William Godwin (who through Brown's father was in some sense the hero of Brown's youth).[29]

Godwin subverts the notion that humanity in its fallen state must submit to social authority and government. The contrary is in fact true. Human beings are corrupted by the manipulations and artifices of any socially constructed institution. It follows then that the ideologies implicit in those institutions, whether political or epistemological, function to re-constitute individuals, bringing them from a "natural" to a social state of being. Godwin's early romanticism and radicalism becomes manifest in Brown's egalitarian sensibility. By implication, Godwin celebrates the egalitarian ideals of agrarianism and the lower classes, who are not constructed socially out of institutional values. Brown's tendency to normalize his audience reflects both romantic and radical sentiments (appropriated largely from European social philosophy) as well as the essential principles of Jeffersonian politics that were operative in America at the time.

Brown's editorial intentions, however, are not consistent in this regard. His skepticism of "liberty," which becomes so apparent in *Wieland* and other of his works, appears also as CANDIDUS continues his epistolary response to Brown. The editor apparently intends to "speculate on the manners and morals in the style of Addison and Johnson." In this intention there is no direct adherence to the elitist and aristocratic principles these writers support and defend. But considering Brown's well-noted skepticism of pure "liberty," his desire to appropriate the

"styles" of European models reveals an attraction to the colonizing culture. This becomes apparent because Brown promises to "extract the quintessence of European wisdom; to review and estimate the labors of all writers, domestic and foreign; to exercise, by turns, the pencils of Richardson and Tacitus."[30] The editor's attraction to the wisdom of antiquity betrays a faith in the political and epistemological systems of a more aristocratic segment of the European intelligentsia, viewpoints that are fundamentally anti-egalitarian in nature. The epistle of CANDIDUS reveals in Brown a peculiar combination of conflicting values. These values emanate both from Europe, from the cultural circumstances in early America, and from Brown's urban world. Philadelphia was the center of the political debate that attempted to bring order to the chaos of the American postcolonial era. In this environment, aristocratic and egalitarian principles, shaped into discourses by literature, oratory, and debate, struggled to re-constitute the new nation. Thus Brown's editorial intentions reflect the tensions of an American postcolonial situation.

These tensions are quite similar to those expressed by the contemporary postcolonial Indian author, R. K. Narayan, whose *The Vendor of the Streets* is deeply rooted in native traditions but embodies an irony clearly based in modern British literature. Irony is in fact central to the work. The novel tells the story of a shopkeeper, Jagan, and his complex relationship with his society's rituals and traditions, which are complicated by his son Mali, who is determined to modernize them. In his home, Jagan has a portrait of the District Tax Collector. Children pull the picture from its frame, make fun of the image within it, and finally leave it amongst the family junk pile.

This novel could be viewed as a comic attack on colonial influence. But Narayan directs an irony typical of modern British authors at Indian traditional institutions as well, specifically through Mali. In *The Vendor in the Streets*, the voice and style of the colonizer act upon issues and traditions drawn from native materials. British and native Indian traditions reflect divergent political values, yet both inform the complex texture of Narayan's novel. Like the CANDIDUS piece, the author's perspective is split and hybridized, both stylistically and thematically.

In *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, an epistemological conflict that characterized the intellectual environment of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is outlined in an essay entitled "Parallels between Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon" (May 1799). The author of this piece establishes these intellectuals as representative of three related but separate epistemological views and asserts that "the studious or lettered part of mankind may, at present, be divided into two sects, one of which is friendly, and the other hostile to religion."[31] After locating the epistemological conflict in relation to theology, and establishing Christianity as the frame of reference for intellectual debate, the author outlines the components of the confrontation.

Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) was the British historian who wrote the monumental work *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

(1776, 1781, 1788). He explained the "origin and progress of the Christian system" and in the process of doing so he "attacked the truth of this system with the dangerous weapons of sarcasm and irony."[32] Hume, on the other hand, while sympathetic to Gibbon's views, approached the problem from a more radical point of view. He was "led by his nature into somewhat different tracts" as he was "the enemy, not of any particular form of religion, but of religion itself."[33] David Hume's thinking becomes important when considering the epistemological issues both in other pieces within the journal and in *Wieland.* But in his selection of this piece, Brown simply challenges a dominant theological perspective, and becomes party to an intense debate which deals openly with epistemological issues.

The author continues this process as he discusses William Robertson (1721-1793), the Scottish historian and Presbyterian minister who wrote *History of Scotland during the Reigns of Queen Mary and of James VI until his Accession to the Crown of England,* (1759), *History of the Reign of Emperor Charles the Fifth* (1769), and *History of America* (1788). Robertson approaches the newly acknowledged "problem" of religion by performing a kind of late eighteenth-century version of cultural criticism. Robertson distinguishes between the "substance" and "semblance" of religion, pointing out that the culture specific prejudices of individual societies, the "ignorance and ambition of the middle ages,"[34] led to the misinterpretation of Christian precepts.

The ideas of all three men were central to the theological conflicts which were occurring during the Enlightenment period. Gibbon provided a historical account of the rise of Christianity and in the process launched a pointed critique of Christianity. Hume, in his response to Lockean empiricism, criticized the assumption of objective causality upon which all religions were based. Robertson, more moderate in his thinking, preserved in his system of thought an "ideal" Christianity, but criticized the various forms, expressions, and doctrinal misinterpretations that evolved as a result of socialization processes.

The theological conflicts represented by these three figures exist within the context of a larger conflict of epistemological views, and Brown's selection of this piece reflects his concern for what in the American postcolonial era has become epistemological "crisis." The thinking of Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon on the issue of religion was reflected and amplified in Brown's time. America was a site of intense theological conflicts that were fueled by the rising emphasis on empiricism and the epistemological debates that occurred as a result, and these concerns had a significant affect on the formation of cultural values. In *Democracy in America,* Alexis de Tocqueville commented on the relationship between religion and American cultural identity

> It must never be forgotten that religion gave birth to Anglo-American society. In the United States, religion is therefore mingled with all the habits of the nation and all the feelings of Patriotism, whence it derives a peculiar force. . . . In the United

> States, Christian sects are infinitely diversified and perpetually modified; but Christianity itself is an established and irresistible fact. . . .[35]

American Puritanism, in its purest form, had perhaps taken its last gasp with the Great Awakening. America was still, however, an intensely religious nation. The Quakers remained influential in Brown's home city of Philadelphia. Throughout the eighteenth century, vast numbers of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians migrated into the Delaware Valley and into the Appalachian hill country. In the 1790s and into the nineteenth century, the Second Great Awakening emerged among Baptists and Methodists, especially in the southern backcountry and the Old Southwest regions of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri. This renewed religious fervor involved a new revivalism, typified by charismatic and emotion-based preaching styles and various forms of "enthusiasm," all of which became essential characteristics of American Protestantism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[36]

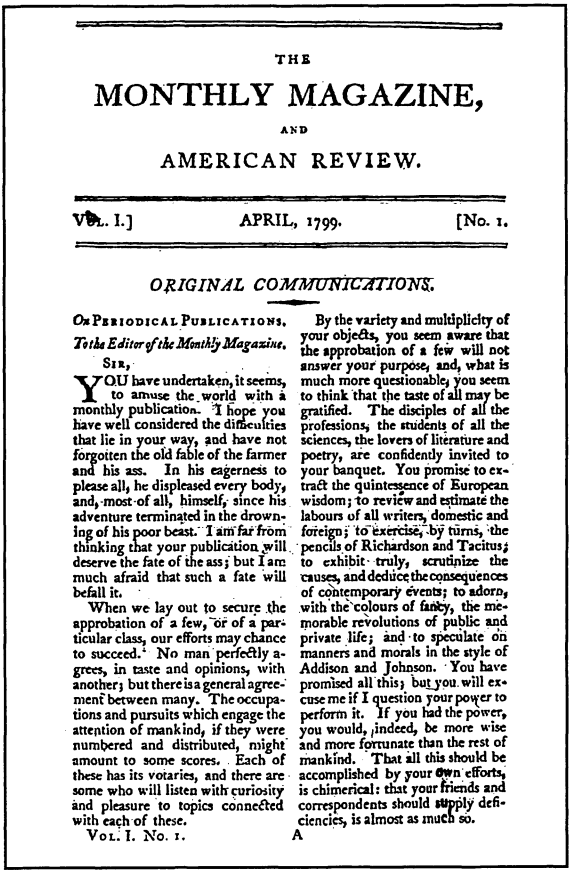
As a counterpoint to this phenomenon, the New England Unitarians were becoming a significant force, perhaps not in numbers so much as in intellectual and cultural influence. In 1803, upon the death of David Tappan, a moderate Calvinist and Hollis Professor of Divinity, a power struggle ensued for control of Harvard. Upon the election of Henry Ware for President of Harvard in 1805, the Unitarians became a dominant voice among the American eastern intelligentsia. The Unitarians were sympathetic to Enlightenment thought, particularly Lockean empiricism, but were anxious also to discover and maintain an epistemological basis for religion in the face of secularization. To do so, they appropriated the influence of empiricism and the philosophical paradigms being established by the Scottish Common Sense Philosophers.[37] In basic philosophical and theological perspective, these Unitarians became in part the basis of New England Transcendentalism, which was defined and advanced by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, Theodore Parker, W. E. Channing, and later Walt Whitman. In turn, Unitarianism became a point of commentary and contemplation for writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville.

The discussions of Gibbon, Robertson, and Hume, all focusing on the epistemological basis for religion in general and Christianity in particular, were important to the people of the emerging nation-state of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the American context, "crisis" occurred because this conflict of theological systems and epistémes was exacerbated by a lack of social and cultural definition, by the aforementioned political conflicts and debates that fragmented the early nation. What in the old world were the normal conflicts associated with the evolution of thought became in the American settler colony crucial issues to resolve in the process of constructing an indigenous cultural and political identity.

This conflict could be observed in much of the European literature of the period, and certainly one cannot claim that the epistemological conflict was uniquely American. But again, the postcolonial situation in the new nation functions to transform an epistemological "dilemma" into a "crisis." Edward Said suggests that no system of knowledge can be produced independently of its author's involvement in historical and cultural circumstances, and he also suggests that there is an important political dimension to any dominant discourse, whether epistemological or otherwise.[38] Brown's preoccupation with materials that portray these conflicting systems of knowledge reflects the political and cultural concerns of early America.

In an indirect manner, voices within this epistemological debate challenged the notions of human nature expressed by Thomas Paine, John Locke, and Thomas Jefferson, notions upon which the Declaration of Independence and the Revolution itself were based. The debate that had raged between Federalists and Anti-Federalists regarding the structure of government was at least in part informed by assumptions regarding humanity in general. Before adhering to the ideal of liberty or authority, one must in some sense resolve the epistemological dilemma. Can we rely upon individuals to interpret reality in an effective manner? How much faith can we place upon the individual? Or should systems be constructed and authority exercised such that society is protected from the "apparitions" that are witnessed through the inherent flaws in the individual consciousness? All these questions suggest that the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century "crisis in epistemology" is inseparable from the political, social, and cultural issues that were of central concern to the new nation. The epistemological questions that critics such as Roland Hagenbüchle have observed in Brown's work emanate from Brown's desire to establish a basis upon which we can "know" the new land, from his desire to codify an epistéme. In *The Archeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault argues that knowledge and political arrangements are interdependent, that both are the basis of culture. As epistemological questions are appropriated into an early American context, they begin to take on a different character, becoming crucial issues that must be resolved in the process of constructing an indigenous cultural identity. Thus, epistemological issues had particular political implications in the American postcolonial situation.

Another selection in *The Monthly Magazine*, a brief essay entitled "Parallel Between New-England and Great Britain," (April 1799) directly addresses these circumstances. The piece is written in epistolary form, and reflects contradictory impulses on the part of the author, a desire at once to identify with and to distinguish between the new nation and its imperial ancestor. The author begins with a comparison, by reminding the reader of "that portion of our country called New England,"[39] which in appearance resembles Great Britain, "of which it is a sort of daughter."[40] In comparing the two locales, the author makes certain observations that reveal more about his own conflicting impulses than about the places themselves. Certain of the observations are highly questionable. The



THE

MONTHLY MAGAZINE,

AND

AMERICAN REVIEW.

VOL. I.] APRIL, 1799. [No. 1.

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

ON PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS.

To the Editor of the Monthly Magazine.

SIR,

YOU have undertaken, it seems, to amuse the world with a monthly publication. I hope you have well considered the difficulties that lie in your way, and have not forgotten the old fable of the farmer and his ass. In his eagerness to please all, he displeased every body, and, most of all, himself, since his adventure terminated in the drowning of his poor beast. I am far from thinking that your publication will deserve the fate of the ass; but I am much afraid that such a fate will befall it.

When we lay out to secure the approbation of a few, or of a particular class, our efforts may chance to succeed. No man perfectly agrees, in taste and opinions, with another; but there is a general agreement between many. The occupations and pursuits which engage the attention of mankind, if they were numbered and distributed, might amount to some scores. Each of these has its votaries, and there are some who will listen with curiosity and pleasure to topics connected with each of these.

By the variety and multiplicity of your objects, you seem aware that the approbation of a few will not answer your purpose, and, what is much more questionable, you seem to think that the taste of all may be gratified. The disciples of all the professions, the students of all the sciences, the lovers of literature and poetry, are confidently invited to your banquet. You promise to extract the quintessence of European wisdom; to review and estimate the labours of all writers, domestic and foreign; to exercise, by turns, the pencils of Richardson and Tacitus; to exhibit truly, scrutinize the causes, and deduce the consequences of contemporary events; to adorn, with the colours of fancy, the memorable revolutions of public and private life; and to speculate on manners and morals in the style of Addison and Johnson. You have promised all this; but you will excuse me if I question your power to perform it. If you had the power, you would, indeed, be more wise and more fortunate than the rest of mankind. That all this should be accomplished by your own efforts, is chimerical: that your friends and correspondents should supply deficiencies, is almost as much so.

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Figure 3: Introductory page to "Original Communications," from the April 1799 issue, written by CANDIDUS, who is most probably Brown himself.

statement asserting that "the area, or superficial extent of each, was examined, and discovered to be exactly the same" suggests a desire to identify the new land with the old, a certain nostalgic longing to identify, physically and perhaps culturally, with Great Britain. The author continues with a contrast in longitude and latitude, continuing further with a more favorable view of the climate of New England. He then moves from the physical to the social realm, observing that the British are given over to urban life, since "one seventh of the British people reside in the metropolis," whereas, "as many persons are spread over the whole surface of New England."[41]

When discussing politics, the discussion becomes more revealing. The author concludes that the "virtue" and "happiness" of a people depend chiefly upon two things, the quantity and equal distribution of knowledge and property.

Here the author's pre-disposition towards the merits of his native land become apparent, as the egalitarian democratic ideal appears. He reminds readers that "every native of new England can read and write," a fact that "cannot be said of the natives of Britain."[42] He reminds us of the abundance of periodical literature that functions as a vehicle of knowledge and taste in America. The comparison continues with a selective review of the characteristics, merits, and shortcomings of each country, and as the essay proceeds the author becomes openly critical of the political and social problems in Great Britain. The inequitable distribution of property, urban problems, and various other social injustices, all function to negatively characterize Great Britain. These problems do not exist to the same degree in the new nation. The complicated discursive process typical of the postcolonial era appear as Brown's attachment to the old world is complicated by his recognition of its flaws. The hope of a new land exists simultaneously with the nostalgia for the old, and the conflict of political values surfaces clearly, as the ideals of democracy confront the notion of aristocracy.

Sentiments similar to these emerge from other settler colonies, particularly Ireland. The development of Anglo-Irish culture over many centuries mirrors the same conflicting loyalties. Centuries of British occupation in Ireland led to the development of an Anglo-Irish ascendency. These Anglo-Irish represented a minority of the population, and their philosophical perspectives, values, and religious practices bore a striking resemblance to the Virginia tidewater aristocrats in America (many of whom were loyalists). The Anglo-Irish were largely but not entirely English in ancestry, and they tended to be Protestant. They were generally loyal to the English Crown, a loyalty expressed in the Act of Union in 1800, when the Irish Parliament voted to unite Ireland and Britain, an act that effectively made all of Ireland subject to English rule. Ironically, the Act of Union served to eradicate the Anglo-Irish ascendency, forcing the Anglo-Irish as well as the Native Irish into a state of subjection. This political situation was exacerbated in the nineteenth century by the potato famine, mass evictions and forced migrations of rural folk, and the traumas of the Land War and the Fenian Era, all of which led to the armed struggle for independence between 1916 and 1921.

As the Anglo-Irish ascendency was absorbed over time into Irish culture, Ireland displayed sets of conflicts similar to those in America. Irish people recognized the necessity for independence but displayed at all levels an attachment to British culture. This attachment becomes apparent in the twentieth century in the work of many Irish writers of Anglo-Irish descent or affiliation, figures such as James Joyce, W. B. Yeats, among others. These are precisely the conflicts that appear in "Parallel Between New-England and Great Britain." Toward the end of the essay the author addresses language, an issue central to the arguments and paradigms of most postcolonial theorists. The author's conclusions regarding the political and social dimensions of language use are remarkable for the period. In extending his ambivalent critique of Great Britain, he states that "the bookish, polished, or latinized Saxon, is scarcely known to one fiftieth

of the British people. . . ."[43] The author suggests that dialect and speech signify social position, and he alludes to the existence of a hegemonic discourse, while celebrating the hope of liberation from the oppression inherent in the language of aristocracy. In dealing with the simultaneous attraction to colonial influence and desire for a new identity, he elucidates the political, cultural, social, and linguistic issues typical of the settler colony.

Another epistolary piece in the April edition of *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, entitled "On the State of American Literature" (April 1799), betrays the same conflict, the same attempt to establish what Emerson called an "original relation to the universe." In the author's desire to find merit and defend the literary efforts of Americans, he confesses that he tends "to approve of many things merely because they are American,"[44] and in doing so, he demonstrates the impulse to extract and build, out of the confrontation of conflicting values, a new nation and an original cultural mythos. Authors who followed managed to respond to this need. Novelists such as James Fenimore Cooper, William Gilmore Simms, and Nathaniel Hawthorne created an American hero that responded to the philosophical and cultural ambiguity of the age. This hero, realized in characters such as Natty Bumppo and Hester Prynne, manifest a self-reliance unprecedented in previous literatures, an ability to function within an environment of epistemological and theological doubt, within a social and cultural context that exists without the governance of a centralized political authority, a dominant epistéme, or a homogeneous cultural mythos. These figures are in some sense the heroes of Franz Fanon's separatism, agents of cultural regeneration that function independently, natives who behave like natives, relying upon the materials of "place" rather than on the literary traditions and epistémes of the colonizer.[45] In contemplating the issue of an American literary tradition, the author of this piece confronts the problems typical of the postcolonial situation in the settler colony, the need to construct an indigenous cultural ideal specific to the new land, distinct from the concerns of the old world.[46]

Thus, Brown's literary efforts, particularly his editorial work in *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, reflect a competing amalgam of social, political, theological, and epistemological perspectives. The notion of the "postcolonial" as a cultural phenomenon helps to clarify the apparent contradictions that critics have observed in Brown's life and work. The politics of his later years should not be oversimplified, nor should they be classified under general terms such as "conservative" or "reactionary."[47] They are a response to a unique set of conflicts specific to the new land, and Brown seemed to possess a remarkable awareness of the problems associated with individual "freedom" in the absolute. The epistemological issues raised by figures such as John Locke and David Hume, amplified further by the secularization process and a declining faith in the efficacy of the Quaker's "inner-light" and divine revelation, served to call into question the individual's ability to assimilate and evaluate experience. But this criticism of the individual is counteracted by the radicalism of Godwin, causing Brown to

become skeptical of the institutions that emerge from competing epistemological systems. Like Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, Brown seemed to possess a faith in the "individual" divorced from institutions, and he feared the dehumanizing power of institutional authority. His editorial work does not reflect a consistent vision or agenda. Instead, it manifests a system of internal contradictions that function to problematize the issues central to the new nation.

Brown possessed the peculiar sensibility of a literary figure working within the postcolonial settler situation, a sensibility not dissimilar to universally recognized postcolonial writers such as W. B. Yeats, R. K. Narayan, and V. S. Naipaul. With no "native" tradition to draw from, he worked with the intellectual stuff of the old world, and he struggled to re-constitute that material in the new land, re-interpreting it and making it applicable and pertinent to early America. Brown's critics often characterize him as they do other figures of the period. To them, his work appears "derivative." But as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin recognize, these judgements typify the critical discourses of hegemony.[48] Brown appropriates his materials from the old world, but his concerns are specific to the new. His work must appear inferior if evaluated based upon the standards delineated by the English literary tradition. But whether true or false, these judgments are unproductive. Through an appropriation and re-situation of European ideas and forms, Brown's work manifests a noble attempt to construct indigeneity in the new land, and Brown himself is an essential progenitor to the central figures of the American Renaissance, a cornerstone figure in the "American" literary tradition.

Notes

I would like to extend a special thank you to Cheryl Oreovicz and Robert Paul Lamb of Purdue University for their generous advice and commentary on early drafts of this essay.

1. Mary Shelley was the author of *Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) and Mary Wollstonecraft was the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

2. Lulu Rumsey Wiley, *The Sources and Influence of the Novels of Charles Brockden Brown* (New York, 1950).

3. Warner Berthoff, "Brockden Brown: The Politics of the Man of Letters," *The Serif*, 3 (December 1966), 5.

4. *Ibid.*, 6.

5. Shirley Samuels, "Infidelity and Contagion: The Rhetoric of Revolution," *Early American Literature*, 22 (Fall 1987), 189.

6. William Hedges, "Charles Brockden Brown and the Culture of Contradictions," *Early American Literature*, 9 (Fall 1974), 112.

7. Certain critics have expressed a skepticism regarding the applicability of postcolonial theories in an American context. In "American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon," *American Literary History*, 4 (Fall 1992), Lawrence Buell argues that the concept of postcoloniality is somewhat problematic when considering American literature, because America emerged as a "proto-imperial" rather than a postcolonial power. He suggests that analyses which overemphasize the phenomenon of postcoloniality tend to reduce American texts to allegories of national identity making. In *Truth in American Fiction*, (Athens, Georgia and London, 1990), Janet Gabler-Hover implicitly critiques the applicability of pluralistic postcolonial paradigms, arguing that Brown's work seems to ground truth claims in a particular model of language, thereby abrogating the influence of

a multiplicity of cultural voices. But in a postcolonial context this language model exists in a state of flux, and the somewhat desperate attempt at "grounding" is particularly indicative of the writer in the postcolonial situation. Buell focuses on the expansionist years of the early and mid-nineteenth century, rather than on the early national period, which was a time when the long-term success of the American nation-state was still in question.

8. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London, 1989), 133.
9. *Ibid.*, 2.
10. D.E.S. Maxwell, "Landscape and Theme," *Landscape and Theme: Extracts from the Proceedings of a Conference Held at Bodington Hall, Leeds* (London, 1965), 3.
11. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 136.
12. Kenneth Dauber, "Criticism of American Literature," *Diacritics*, 24 (Spring 1977), 55.
13. For an extensive discussion of "place," which is a concept linked to identity and indigeneity in postcolonial literatures, see Peggy Nightengale, ed., *A Sense of Place in New Literatures in English* (St. Lucia, Australia, 1986).
14. To use the phrase "concerns of postcolonial theorists" is perhaps an oversimplification. Postcolonial "theory" cannot be categorized under the umbrella of a single paradigm. The separatism of Franz Fanon contrasts markedly with the pluralism of Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin. Terms such as "appropriation" and "syncreticity," are somewhat more appropriate to the concerns of the pluralist. Still, postcolonial theorists from various perspectives share a concern for a central issue—the process by which indigeneity is constructed in the postcolonial context.
15. Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (New York, 1965), 79-118.
16. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writers Back*, 90.
17. *Ibid.*, 138.
18. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), 10.
19. For a thorough discussion of epistemological issues as they relate to American history and national and literary identity, see David Van Leer, *Emerson's Epistemology: The Argument of the Essays* (New York, 1986).
20. For a complete discussion of Lockean empiricism as it appears in Brown's work, see Toni O'Shaughnessy, "An Imperfect Tale: Interpretive Accountability in *Weiland*," *Studies in American Fiction* 23 (Spring 1989), 42-54.
21. Roland Hagenbüchle, "American Literature and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis in Epistemology: The Example of Charles Brockden Brown," *Early American Literature*, 23 (1988), 122.
22. Hedges, 108-109.
23. Richard Chase, *The American Novel and its Tradition* (Garden City, New York, 1957), 1,6,11. Marius Bewley, "Fenimore Cooper and the Economic Age," *American Literature*, 26 (1954), reprinted in *The Eccentric Design: Form in the Classic American Novel* (New York, 1959), 18.
24. Marisa Bulgheroni, *La Tentazione della chimera: Charles Brockden Brown e le origine del romanzo americano* (Rome, 1965).
25. Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, 1985), 117.
26. *Ibid.*, 117.
27. Charles Brockden Brown, ed., *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, 1 (April 1799), 1.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Wiley provides an in-depth discussion of Brown's influences in general, and Godwin's *Inquiry* is a text from which Brown drew much of his political and social thinking.
30. Charles Brockden Brown, ed., *Monthly Magazine and American Review*, (April 1799), 1.
31. Charles Brockden Brown, ed., *Monthly Magazine and American Review*, (May 1799), 90.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, 91.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835; New York, 1956), 144-145.
36. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, 1972), 387. See also Edwin S. Gaustad, *A Documentary History of Religion in America to the Civil War* (Grand Rapids, 1982); Catherine L. Albanese, *American: Religions and Religion* (Belmont, Calif., 1981); Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America* (New Brunswick, 1992).
37. See Daniel Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861* (Middletown, Conn., 1970).
38. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 7.
39. Charles Brockden Brown, ed., *Monthly Magazine and American Review*, (April 1799), 13.
40. *Ibid.*, 12.
41. *Ibid.*, 13.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*, 15.
44. *Ibid.*

45. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1963), 223.

46. See the discussion of Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville that appears in Henry Seidel Canby, Thomas H. Johnson, Robert E. Spiller, and William Thorpe, *Literary History of the United States* (New York, 1953).

47. For a thorough review of Brown's political leanings, see David Lee Clark, *Charles Brockden Brown: Pioneer Voice of America* (Durham, 1952).

48. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 136.