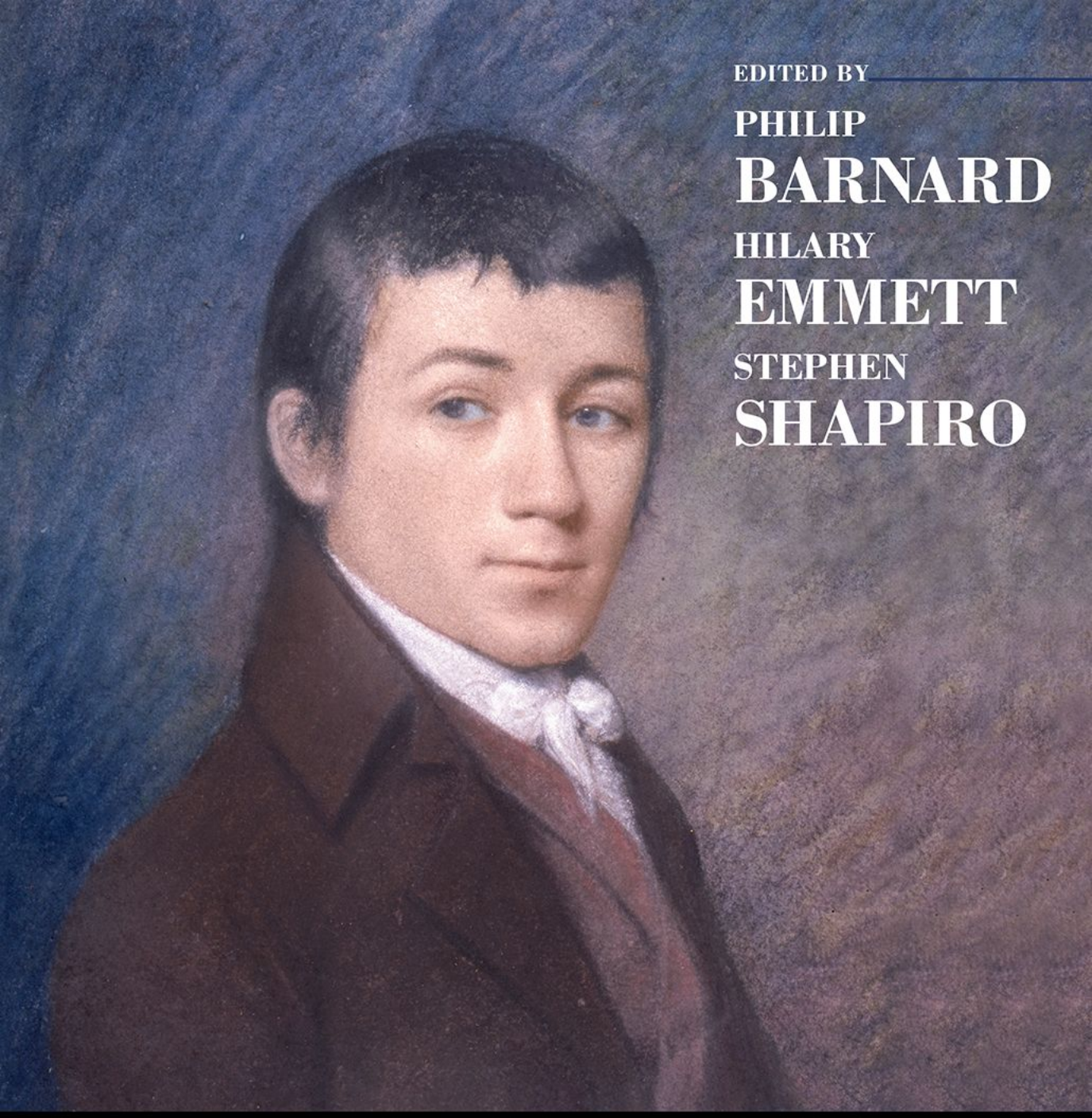

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The Oxford Handbook *of* CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

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Edited by

PHILIP BARNARD, HILARY EMMETT,

and

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We are likewise grateful for support from the English Department at the University of Kansas and the School of Art, Media, and American Studies at the University of East Anglia. Hilary Emmett received initial support from the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies at King's College, London. She thanks also, with love, David, Charlie, Leo, and Clancy. Personal thanks and Woldwinite relations of reason and desire link Philip to Cheryl Lester and Julia Barnard, and Stephen to Anne Schwan. Finally, the editors and staff, past and present, at Oxford University Press have been generous with their help and attention to the preparation and design of the volume.

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Abbreviations

Note: Since variable, non-standardized spellings were acceptable during Brown's literary career, we have not generally used "[sic]" to mark such spellings in citations from Brown's prose. However, we have used it to indicate accurate transcriptions in certain instances, e.g., the title of Brown's pamphlet *Monroe's Embassy*, and in citations from the prose of others.

Novels and Related Works by Brown

AL	*Alcuin* Brown, Charles Brockden. *Alcuin; A Dialogue with Memoirs of Stephen Calvert*. Vol. 6 of *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*. Sydney J. Krause and S. W. Reid, eds. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1987.
AM	*Arthur Mervyn* Brown, Charles Brockden. *Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793, First and Second Parts.* Vol. 3 of *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*. Sydney J. Krause and S. W. Reid, eds. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1980.
CH	*Clara Howard* Brown, Charles Brockden. *Clara Howard; in a Series of Letters with Jane Talbot, a Novel*. Vol. 5 of *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*. Sydney J. Krause and S. W. Reid, eds. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986.
EH	*Edgar Huntly* Brown, Charles Brockden. *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker*. Vol. 4 of *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*. Sydney J. Krause and S. W. Reid, eds. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1984.
JT	*Jane Talbot* Brown, Charles Brockden. *Clara Howard; In a Series of Letters with Jane Talbot, A Novel*. Vol. 5 of *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*. Sydney J. Krause and S. W. Reid, eds. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986.

MC	*Memoirs of Carwin* Brown, Charles Brockden. *Wieland; or, The Transformation, an American Tale, with Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist.* Vol. 1 of *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*. Sydney J. Krause and S. W. Reid, eds. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977.
O	*Ormond* Brown, Charles Brockden. *Ormond; or, The Secret Witness.* Vol. 2 of *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*. Sydney J. Krause and S. W. Reid, eds. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1982.
SC	*Stephen Calvert* Brown, Charles Brockden. *Alcuin; A Dialogue with Memoirs of Stephen Calvert*. Vol. 6 of *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*. Sydney J. Krause and S. W. Reid, eds. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1987.
W	*Wieland* Brown, Charles Brockden. *Wieland; or, The Transformation, an American Tale with Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist.* Vol. 1 of *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*. Sydney J. Krause and S. W. Reid, eds. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977.

Letters by Brown

Letters	*Letters and Early Epistolary Writings* Brown, Charles Brockden. *Letters and Early Epistolary Writings*. Vol. 1 of *Collected Writings of Charles Brockden Brown.* Philip Barnard, Elizabeth Hewitt, and Mark Kamrath, eds. Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 2013.

Pamphlets by Brown

AC	*Address to the Congress* Brown, Charles Brockden. *An Address to the Congress of the United States, on the Utility and Justice of Restrictions upon Foreign Commerce, etc.* Philadelphia: C. & A. Conrad, 1809.
AG	*Address to the Government* Brown, Charles Brockden. *An Address to the Government of the United States, on the Cession of Louisiana to the French, etc.* Philadelphia: John Conrad, 1803.
ME	*Monroe's Embassy* Brown, Charles Brockden. *Monroe's Embassy, or, The Conduct of the Government, in Relation to Our Claims to the Navigation of the Missisippi* [sic]*, etc.* Philadelphia: John Conrad, 1803.

Other Works by Brown

Annals	"Annals of Europe and America" Brown, Charles Brockden. "Annals of Europe and America," Vols. 1–5, *The American Register; or, General Repository of History, Politics, and Science*. Philadelphia: C. & A. Conrad, January 1807–January 1810.
Difference	"The Difference between History and Romance" Brown, Charles Brockden. "The Difference between History and Romance." *The Monthly Magazine, and American Review* 2.4 (April 1800): 251–253.
Rhapsodist	"The Rhapsodist" Brown, Charles Brockden. "The Rhapsodist." *The Columbian Magazine, or, Monthly Miscellany* 3.8 (August 1789): 464–467; 3.9 (September 1789): 537–541; 3.10 (October 1789): 587–601; 3.11 (November 1789): 661–665.
Walstein	"Walstein's School of History" Brown, Charles Brockden. "Walstein's School of History. From the German of Krants of Gotha." *The Monthly Magazine, and American Review* 1.5 (August 1799): 335–338; 1.6 (September–December 1799): 407–411.

Books by Others

Allen	*The Life of Charles Brockden Brown* Allen, Paul. *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown* [c. 1811–1814]. Charles E. Bennett, ed. Delmar, N.Y.: Scholar's Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975.
Dunlap 1815	*The Life of Charles Brockden Brown* Dunlap, William. *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown: Together with Selections from the Rarest of His Printed Works, from His Original Letters, and from His Manuscripts before Unpublished*, 2 vols. Philadelphia: James P. Parke, 1815.
Dunlap 1930	*Diary of William Dunlap* Dunlap, William. *Diary of William Dunlap (1766–1839): The Memoirs of a Dramatist, Theatrical Manager, Painter, Critic, Novelist, and Historian*, 3 vols. Dorothy C. Barck, ed. New York: New York Historical Society, 1930.
Smith	*The Diary of Elihu Hubbard Smith* Smith, Elihu Hubbard. *The Diary of Elihu Hubbard Smith*. James E. Cronin, ed. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973.

Periodicals

AR	*American Register* *The American Register; or, General Repository of History, Politics, and Science*. Philadelphia: C. & A. Conrad, January 1807–January 1810.

CM	*Columbian Magazine* *The Columbian Magazine, or, Monthly Miscellany.* Philadelphia: W. Young, September 1786–February 1790.
LM	*Literary Magazine* *The Literary Magazine, and American Register*. Vols. I–VIII. Philadelphia: C. & A. Conrad, October 1803–December 1807.
MM	*Monthly Magazine* *The Monthly Magazine, and American Review*. Vols. I–III. New York: T. & J. Swords, April 1799–December 1800.
PF	*Port Folio* *The Port Folio*. Philadelphia: H. Maxwell, January 1801–December 1827.
WM	*Weekly Magazine* *The Weekly Magazine of Original Essays, Fugitive Pieces, and Interesting Intelligence.* Philadelphia: J. Watters, February 1798–May 1799.

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Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (2006–2013), translated and edited François Guéry and Didier Deleule's *The Productive Body* (1972/2014), and authored *Pentecostal Modernism: Lovecraft, Los Angeles, and World-Systems Culture* (2017).

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Constructing Sense of Place in *Wieland*" was published in *Early American Literature*. Other work on James Fenimore Cooper, Susan Fenimore Cooper, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, and Susannah Rowson appears in *Legacy*, *Literature in the Early American Republic*, and other period journals and collections. She is currently working on a book-length project on domestic violence, which will include a chapter on Brown.

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THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN

INTRODUCTION

PHILIP BARNARD, HILARY EMMETT,
AND STEPHEN SHAPIRO

The Oxford Handbook of Charles Brockden Brown seeks to introduce readers to Brown's work across his life and across the multiple genres in which he wrote. We hope to give those who have never encountered Brown a foundation for approaching and better understanding his writing, its historical context and intellectual concerns, and the critical approaches that have been used to consider it. To readers somewhat familiar with Brown, the *Oxford Handbook* seeks to cast a light for further exploration across his extensive and varied corpus of writings. Its chapters seek to build on readers' initial encounter with Brown by showing other avenues into his work, from the relatively well-known long fictions to the lesser-known journalism, poetry, short fictions, and political writings. In the following chapters, you will find discussions of the manifold aspects of Brown's life and creative production that should both inform and encourage the next steps toward more independent study.

Since his own lifetime (1771–1810), Brown has always had a somewhat paradoxical status within American literary and cultural history. He figures in literary and cultural studies as a canonical figure well known to those versed in literary history and commonly included in university-level curricula, yet likewise as a writer not generally known to the wider public to the same degree as more iconic names such as Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, William Faulkner, and so on. At no point has Brown ever really been a forgotten figure. Even when his long fictions were least known, such as, for instance, at the end of the nineteenth century, they were nevertheless still printed in collected editions and available to interested readers. Indeed, when the first generation of American studies scholars began assembling materials for the literary study of the pre-1830s years, Brown's work was always included, often given more notice than any other creative writer before Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper. Yet on the other hand, Brown has not had the wider public status or consecration that might be expected for someone who has been continually known as a writer of high repute.

In the nearly forty years since the first scholarly editions of Brown's novels were published, his work has provided seemingly inexhaustible fuel for energizing and, at times,

catalyzing, the evolution of early American literary studies. From early work on Brown that meditated on his "firstness"—whether this was to debate his position as the first professional American novelist or to stage his so-called paternity of a uniquely American literary aesthetic—through his centrality to the New Americanist project of scholars throughout the 1980s and onward who sought to unsettle ideas of America's exceptionalism in the world by revealing the nation's transnational connections and intranational conflicts, to Brown's place in contemporary scholarship in burgeoning fields such as environmental and medical humanities, his corpus has yielded reliably rich results for scholars.

The *Oxford Handbook* surveys the recent state of Brown studies and provides resources for those interested in Brown in several ways. First, students of Brown have benefited from an expanded knowledge of Brown's biography and contexts within the early American republic (loosely defined as the national period up to the 1820s). Partly due to the conventions of nineteenth-century biography, a few clichéd or stereotypical representations of Brown were repeated as fact and cast a long shadow on later commentary. Somewhat due to the emerging stereotype of the literary figure as a Romantic misfit, Brown was initially and firmly presented as a melancholic and fragile recluse, despite contemporary accounts of his being a convivial, sociable conversationalist and a respected editor. While Brown was active in realms of literary production and editing, as well as contributing in later years to the work of his brothers' mercantile enterprises, the prior lack of attention to the day-by-day interactions with Philadelphia's literary and social spheres left many readers dependent on descriptions by tourists, who were inclined to present somewhat melodramatic portraits of the author, not least since the convention of a travel narrative required strong statements, broad strokes, and memorable characterizations.

In a similar way, and increasingly in recent decades, Brown's reception by scholars has also provided ways to both understand him as a writer and see the ways in which past characterizations have prejudged or (mis)shaped his legacy. In this respect, the *Oxford Handbook* provides some new insights into and perspectives on Brown's life and social environment, based on information and methodological tools that were not available to previous generations of readers.

Second, in keeping with Brown scholarship's developments in the twenty-first century, the *Oxford Handbook* expands the spectrum of consideration of Brown. Whereas scholarship throughout the twentieth century focused primarily on Brown's long fictions, the *Oxford Handbook* takes all of Brown's writing as a coherent corpus worthy of serious consideration. The previous focus on the four best-known long fictions (*Wieland*, *Ormond*, *Edgar Huntly*, and *Arthur Mervyn*, all from the 1798–1800 moment) is put to the side as the following chapters explore the breadth of Brown's work, as well as the changing shape of his career, a career that if anything increased in productivity in the last years of his life, before his untimely death from tuberculosis in 1810. His poetry, later writing, and journalism are considered in their relations to the better-known fiction and as notable and foundational works in their own right. Brown, as biographical subject and creator, is considered in these chapters from a variety of perspectives, many of them moving forward in substantial ways from the assumptions that governed earlier discussions.

The *Oxford Handbook* also places Brown in greater conversation with international or transnational frameworks than has previously been the case. Not only was Brown deeply informed about and fascinated with world events, but his writing can be usefully considered as belonging to contexts in which the United States is not primary. Scholarship on postcolonialism, world literature, and other transnational perspectives increasingly finds reason to be interested in Brown. In this light, the later work on history writing and international history has become more prominent.

If in the 1970s and 1980s Brown's canonical status seemed to remain under advisement, in 2019 it is well established and deeply rooted, in large part because of the tenacity with which his work has gripped scholars throughout the varied "turns" that have shaped early American studies: the transnational, spatial, archival, aesthetic, and affective. This *Handbook* thus takes stock of the significant role played by Brown in shaping scholarly understanding of the early republic and also tracks the ways in which his writing has remained central to how scholars define their own literary-historical moments.

It is our hope that in surveying the recent and current state of Charles Brockden Brown studies and providing a resource for scholars new to his writing, the *Handbook* will enable and underpin future advances in work on Brown and his milieu. The *Handbook* is the first collection of its kind in Charles Brockden Brown studies. Two earlier essay collections on Brown—Bernard Rosenthal's *Critical Essays on Charles Brockden Brown* (1981) and Philip Barnard, Mark Kamrath, and Stephen Shapiro's *Revising Charles Brockden Brown: Culture, Politics and Sexuality in the Early Republic* (2004)—both staged a series of vital interventions into Brown scholarship by demonstrating his relevance to understandings of topics from historicism to transnationalism and sexuality in the early republic, but both collections required familiarity with Brown's work and key theoretical and methodological approaches in the field of American literary studies.

This *Handbook* takes up and extends these questions but initially aims to familiarize the reader with Brown's complex literary persona and milieu(s). It provides a first section on Brown's biography that utilizes recently available archival resources and correspondence to update familiar narratives about Brown's life and career. It provides chapter-length considerations of the long fictions with which Brown has traditionally been associated but also provides detailed considerations of his production in other genres (e.g., letters, poetry, political pamphlets) and from a number of thematic and methodological or interpretative perspectives.

Finally, it is notable that the *Handbook* has come into being alongside the long-running Charles Brockden Brown Electronic Archive and Scholarly Edition project (2007–present), which identifies, edits, and makes available in digital form Brown's complete known corpus of writings (http://brockdenbrown.cah.ucf.edu), as well as providing the basis for an ongoing seven-volume Bucknell University Press edition of Brown's nonnovelistic writings. In serendipitous ways, these projects have operated in tandem; the electronic archive provides a powerful tool for accessing reliable texts of all of Brown's work, much of it available for the first time, and thereby enriches and extends Brown scholarship in significant ways. Many of the editorial contributors to the electronic archive and the Bucknell edition

have provided chapters for this book, so that the *Handbook* seeks to provide the first knowing look onto the expanded horizon of Brown's work as a whole. This *Handbook*, therefore, for the first time in Brown studies aims, if not to destabilize the primacy of the novels, then to ensure that critical work on Brown's best-known writings is considered inseparably from his vast epistolary, poetic, essayistic, philosophical, and political oeuvre.

PART I

BIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER 1

EARLY YEARS, 1771–1795

LISA WEST

Charles Brockden Brown was born in Philadelphia on January 17, 1771.[1] At the time, Philadelphia was not only the most populous city in colonial America but also a global center of commerce and the site of important political gatherings leading up to the American Revolution. Brown was five years old when independence was declared at the Pennsylvania State House, less than a mile from his home at 117 South Second Street. The era's social, economic, and political upheaval influenced Brown's early life in many ways; while there was volatility, there was also enthusiasm for long-lasting positive change and the promise of Enlightenment and Revolutionary ideals.

Through the year 1795, when Brown experienced a rift within his Philadelphia social network and turned his attention more fully to the New York intellectual scene, Brown's biography can be divided into five sections. First, his Quaker lineage, which stretches back to the origins of the religion in mid-seventeenth-century England, is significant. Brown received a solid grounding in concepts such as "the inner light," or direct communication with God, and Philadelphia's Quaker culture contributed to his lifelong pursuit of articulating moral dilemmas and understanding virtue. The first section of this chapter includes discussion of the unlawful arrest and exile of Brown's father, an event that has reached iconic status in Brown's biography. The second section reviews Brown's youth, adolescence, and classical education under Robert Proud at the Friends Latin School, where Brown continued until the age of sixteen. The third section discusses biographers' second-most-cited aspect of Brown's youth: his vexed years as a lawyer's apprentice. Brown read law for six years in the office of Alexander Wilcocks, a period during which he avoided taking the bar, devoted himself to literary and philosophical clubs, and circulated written texts in a variety of forms. His intense friendships with William Wood Wilkins and Joseph Bringhurst, Jr., played a large role in this stage of development. The fourth section also focuses on the years 1787–1793, addressing Brown's larger Philadelphia social circle, his early published material, and his unpublished epistolary narratives. The final section focuses on the years 1793–1795, in which Brown continued his literary experiments and widened the emotional and intellectual distance from his Quaker Philadelphia youth.

I. Quaker Roots and Arrest of Elijah Brown

According to Peter Kafer, the Brown family's Quaker patriarch was Richard Browne, not William Browne, as the family's personal history erroneously reported (Kafer 18). This Richard Browne, of Sywell, Northamptonshire, and his wife, Mary, were Baptists, then Puritans, before becoming Quakers. Richard died in 1662, the same year that Parliament passed the Quaker Act, which not only made it illegal for Quakers to worship in a group but also criminalized their credo of refusing to swear oaths. Ensuing years would see additional anti-Quaker legislation.[2] James Browne, born in 1656, was the fourth son of Richard and Mary, and he grew up amid this widespread persecution of Quakers in England. The Quakers' faith must have seemed positively anarchical to their contemporaries. Other English dissenters, such as the Puritans (Calvinists), already deviated dramatically from the Church of England and attempted to dismantle church hierarchies, eliminate the ritual elements of worship, and foster a return to the Bible as the ultimate religious authority. The Quakers took these reforms to further extremes, dispensing with the sacraments of baptism and communion and eliminating all clerical titles. In essence, the Quakers, or Friends, as they called themselves, affirmed that each individual, male or female, could have a personal, mystic, unmediated relationship with God, independent of a church and its customs.

According to the Quaker Records in the library of the Pennsylvania Historical Society, James Browne sailed from England in 1677 and helped to lay out the town of Burlington, New Jersey, in fellowship with other Quakers (Clark 13). William Penn had played a role in this first wave of Quaker emigration, but it wasn't until 1681 that he acquired the colony of Pennsylvania as repayment of a debt Charles II owed to Penn's father.[3] The terms of Penn's charter would have long-standing impact on the Brown clan; by guaranteeing the toleration of Quakers, Penn's colony proved to be a place where Quaker culture—and Quaker families—could thrive.

In 1702, James and his brother William Browne moved to the Quaker settlement of Nottingham on the Pennsylvania–Maryland border, where they retained five of thirty-seven original township lots (Kafer 18, 20). In this rural borderland community, they became a prominent religious family, in conjunction with the Churchmans, with whom they often intermarried (19). The Quakers did not have ministers per se, but they applied this term—or the less frequently used term *seer*—to those they thought especially graced with the inner light who were therefore well qualified to testify to others (22–23); Charles Brockden Brown was descended from a long line of such individuals. James Browne's son William was born in 1682 (Warfel 15), and William in turn fathered a son, James, who was born in Nottingham. James Brown (later generations of Browns dropped the *e* from their surname) had five children, including Elijah (b. 1740), the father of Charles Brockden Brown (16). The isolated farming community of Nottingham, fifty miles outside Philadelphia, was the ideal place to promote the Quaker practice of finding the

inner light, or hearing the voice of God within. But while the fellowship of like-minded Quakers in Nottingham surely advanced the spiritual knowledge of its inhabitants, the town's limited opportunities and homogeneity must have stifled those with more worldly ambitions. Elijah moved to Philadelphia in 1757 (16).

On July 9, 1761, Elijah Brown married fellow Quaker Mary Armitt at the Arch Street Meeting House in Philadelphia. By all accounts, this was an upwardly mobile match for Elijah (Kafer 30). In addition to having as fine a Quaker pedigree as the Browns—the Armitts numbered among Penn's original followers and had helped to lay out the city of Philadelphia—they were also quite wealthy (Clark 14). Mary Armitt's late father, Joseph, had left a considerable estate to his widow, Elizabeth, which included slaves, several properties, and a three-story brick house on Second Street (Kafer 30). Elizabeth's people, the Lisles, had also been well-to-do, and Elizabeth Armitt's name appears frequently in Philadelphia land records for the purchase and sale of real estate (Warfel 16). That the couple named their fourth son Charles Brockden, after a prosperous merchant–lawyer relation of Mary's (and the first recorder of Philadelphia), suggests that Elijah Brown, like the Armitts, was interested in redrawing the boundaries of Quaker worldliness.[4]

The anti-Quaker feeling that led to the arrest, imprisonment, and banishment of Charles Brockden Brown's father, Elijah, in 1777, has roots in the history of Quaker relations with the colonial government of America. As pacifists, Quakers object to bearing arms, and they also take seriously the biblical injunction against swearing oaths. Hence, Quakers often found themselves at odds with colonial authorities for refusing military service in defense of their fledgling settlements or for declining to swear loyalty to the British crown. These tensions came to a head during the French and Indian War (1754–1763). Quakers dominated the Pennsylvania Assembly at the time, and a political rift developed between those Quakers who objected to allocating tax money for military defense and those willing to compromise their strict principles. Ultimately, the pacifist Quakers conceded to pressure to resign their posts in 1756 (Moses 17; Kafer 26–28). This concession marks the decline of Quaker political involvement in the colony, although "Quakers dominated the mercantile life of Philadelphia" (Moses 18). Quaker relations with Native Americans also angered Pennsylvania frontiersmen, who resented attempts to integrate Indians into colonial society. In what became known as the Paxton Riots of 1763–1764, a Scots-Irish vigilante group murdered twenty Indians and marched on Philadelphia, threatening both Indians and Quakers (Kafer 32). Further adding to mistrust of Quakers in the 1770s was the transatlantic nature of the religion; there were strong ties between members of the Philadelphia and London Yearly Meetings (Moses 17).

Charles Brockden Brown was six years old in 1777, when his father was unlawfully arrested and banished with other members of his community. A few weeks before the arrests, the Continental Congress had gained possession of papers that suggested that the Quakers were involved in treasonous activity and in league with the British cause. Although the papers were later revealed to be forgeries, high-profile Quakers, Anglican Tories, and other suspects were rounded up and jailed in the first week of September. All those willing to give a loyalty oath to the United States were awarded parole; all of the Quakers refused this option on principle. No charges were brought against the prisoners,

nor did they receive a hearing or trial. In spite of the outcry raised by Philadelphia's considerable Quaker community, the Pennsylvania Assembly sanctioned the injustice by passing a special act that suspended habeas corpus for the twenty remaining prisoners. The party was banished to Winchester, Virginia, where they remained from September 29, 1777, to April of the following year. Only constant pressure on the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, as well as publicity about the deaths of two of the exiles by disease, led to the prisoners' release some eight months after their incarceration.[5] That a merchant like Elijah who had signed a community protest declaration in response to the Stamp Act in 1765 (Clark 14; Kafer 30) could be arrested in 1777 for suspicion of treason indicates the way Quaker principles of hard work and political neutrality could be misinterpreted during the period's turbulence.

II. Youth, Adolescence, and Education

Six of Elijah and Mary Brown's children survived to adulthood: Joseph (b. 1764), James (b. 1766), Armitt (b. 1768), Charles (b. 1771), Elizabeth (b. 1775), and Elijah, Jr. (b. 1776) (Letters 920). While Charles's brothers probably attended the Quaker grammar school, entering commerce as soon as they were able, he was the only sibling to continue on to the prestigious Friends Latin School (Kafer 46). It is likely that the family planned for him to become more highly educated, and eventually an attorney, so that he could help manage the litigation that accompanied their mercantile projects (Letters 842). Brown's first biographer, Paul Allen, characterizes Charles as book-oriented and studious from earliest childhood:

> The parents relate, that when an infant, in their absence from home, he required nothing but a book to divert him, and that on their return he would be found musing over the page with all the gravity of a student. On his return from school they would find him at the hour of dinner in the parlour, where, having slipped off his shoes, he was mounted on a table, and deeply engaged in the consultation of a map suspended on the side of the wall. (Allen 10)

The intellectual, emotional, and religious atmosphere of the Brown household depended heavily on Quaker culture, which integrated home, community, and learning, stressing moral behavior, piety, plain living, and tolerance (Moses 18). Children were required to attend meetings from a young age. Daily and weekly meetings encouraged both men and women to speak, or testify, about personal experiences. Monthly meetings handled organizational and membership issues—including discipline (Kafer 22). Elijah Brown was disowned in 1768, a year after the Townsend duties were passed, for failing to make good on business debt (30–31), but even after this formal discipline, the Browns moved

in Quaker circles, attended Quaker meetings, and were educated in Quaker schools with the city's leading Quaker families.

Early biographers stress the instability of Elijah Brown's financial status. It is true that Elijah was disowned by the Meeting in 1768 and imprisoned for debt in 1784, his personal finances reflecting the unpredictability of mercantile life. However, the family could turn to the Armitt real estate holdings (and their more stable financial status) during difficult financial times, and Elijah became a real estate conveyancer and land broker when trade failed (Shapiro 164–165). While Elijah's finances did fluctuate, the family never was destitute and might best be described as of the "middling orders" (Watts 27).

Despite financial fluctuations, there is much evidence to suggest that the Brown home was rich in intellectual inquiry. Elijah maintained a "lively correspondence" with friends and relatives in England and recorded extracts from international newspapers in his journal (Watts 28). Elijah's journal postdates the period of Charles's youth, but his enthusiastic reception of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft reveals that he was curious about current intellectual trends and progressive in his thought. Charles's biographer Harry Warfel notes the "fat calfskin volumes by travelers and merchant explorers" that peopled the shelves in the Browns' parlor and asserts that the globe and the atlas were put to regular use (Warfel 23). Beyond the requirements of their Quaker milieu, Brown's family seems to have delighted in knowledge for its own sake as well as for pious or moral reasons.

At the Friends Latin School, Brown was trained in the rudiments of Latin and Greek, as well as in mathematics, geography, rhetoric, and the Bible. Many of Brown's biographers have theorized that it was his schoolmaster, Robert Proud, who inspired and fostered young Brown's philomathic tendencies. Indeed, Proud—who had emigrated from England in 1759—was a distinguished scholar, notable for penning the prodigious volume *The History of Pennsylvania* in 1797. Though a Quaker, Proud was well versed in both the classics and the sciences, and David Lee Clark believes "it was precisely [Proud's] catholicity of interests and tastes that had the most abiding influence upon Brockden Brown's ideals" (Clark 21). Allen asserts that Proud was more than simply a tutor, and he relates a story according to which the instructor, having noticed Brown's tendency to study in excess of what his frail health could support, advised daily exercise to the boy as a way of bolstering his physique. Brown became so enamored of this pedestrian activity that long, solitary walks grew to be a lifelong habit (Allen 11).

During these school years (1781–1786), Brown began writing poetry, a practice that he continued throughout his life. Some of these poems may have been connected to pedagogical exercises; all attest to his growing familiarity with classical models and popular eighteenth-century poetic forms, including epigram, mock heroic poem, Hudibrastic satire, sonnet, and locodescriptive verse. These early poems existed in a manuscript culture, shared in letters, written inside a book (for one poem), copied into commonplace books, and, we can assume, read aloud and shared among family and friends.[6] While little of this early material was published in print, motifs and images recur in his later writing.

Brown's earliest surviving poem, "On Some of His School Fellows" (1786), mocks his fellow students and shows powers of observation and humor. "To Miss D.P." and "To Estrina,"

both written for Dolley Payne (the future Dolley Madison), show conventions of love and unrequited love. Poetic allusions and imitations range from Alexander Pope to John Milton, Edward Young (*Night-Thoughts*), James Thomson (*The Seasons*), Virgil, and hymnist Isaac Watts.[7] "The Rising Glory of America," whose subject matter and title anticipate poems of the early national period, was written when Brown was sixteen years old and follows the neoclassical transformation of classical pastoral poetry by writers such as Pope. Written in heroic couplets, the poem follows the trope of *translatio studii*, or the westward transfer (and progress) of culture from classical civilizations to Britain and now America. "In Praise of Schuylkill," also composed in the late 1780s, extols the local landscape. Brown's now-lost journal also indicated ambitious plans for epic poems on Columbus, Pizarro, and Cortez (Allen 11). Brown's education and early writing reveal a broad experience with literary genres, both classical and modern. His interest in poetry, rhetorical technique, and geography would continue throughout his life.

III. Law Apprenticeship, Club Membership, Friendship, and Letters

In 1787, Brown began an apprenticeship at the law office of Alexander Wilcocks. Quaker families typically did not send their children to university, preferring instead to complete their earlier "guarded" Quaker education with apprenticeship "for specific training in a trade or profession" (Moses 19). Wilcocks, an Anglican, supporter of the American Revolution and member of the American Philosophical Society, was a prominent lawyer; it is a testament to Brown's talent and family status that he secured such a prestigious (and likely expensive) apprenticeship (Moses 19). While law might seem a logical choice for a bookish young man, it also fit family needs. Brown's two eldest brothers began a mercantile firm in the 1780s; Brown likely was expected to help resolve the litigious situations that frequently arose (Letters 823; Warfel 29).

During this apprenticeship (1787–1793), Brown existed in a constant whirlwind of intellectual activity. In addition to his rigorous studies, he found time to teach himself French and, with his friends, invent a unique style of shorthand. He organized club meetings with like-minded intellectuals and composed essays that he debated with his peers. From 1789 to 1791, when Wilcocks was appointed city recorder of Philadelphia, Brown served as a copyist, and we can imagine the deadening influence of this task on a man of Brown's vision. No one could describe the mundane aspects of law better than Brown himself, in this oft-noted passage from *Ormond* (1799):

> He was perpetually encumbered with the rubbish of law, and waded with laborious steps through its endless tautologies, its impertinent circuities, its lying assertions, and hateful artifices. Nothing occurred to relieve or diversify the scene. It was one tedious round of scrawling and jargon; a tissue made up of the shreds and remnants

> of barbarous antiquity, polluted with the rust of ages, and patched by the stupidity of modern workmen, into new deformity. (O 20)

Despite similar rhetorical denunciations in other writings, such as his mock criticisms of lawyers and legal practice in letters to friends, Brown did seem to appreciate the moral questions and social concerns undergirding his field of study.[8] While Brown spent the day in legal writing, he spent evenings writing in his journal, transcribing letters, narrating "household incidents," engaging in self-reflection, and writing lines of poetry (Allen 12–13, 16).

In the early days of his law apprenticeship, Brown honed his knowledge by participating in a legal society with other students (Watts 32). The club, which met once a week, argued a previously determined case or question, and the president's duty was to sit as judge for the moot court and record his decision. During Brown's term as president of the society, he became expert at affecting the dry, disembodied voice of legal discourse, though he switched easily from this mode of writing to his journal and what early biographer Allen deemed "a poetical effusion as much distinguished by its wild and excentric brilliance as the other composition was for its plain sobriety and gravity of style" (Allen 15). Born within a year of Romantic poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, like them, he favored meditations on the workings of the mind over more practical writing, and like them, he was motivated to salvage the imagination from the materialism of modern life.

Far more to Brown's taste than the legal society, to be sure, was the Belles Lettres Society, which he formed in conjunction with eight friends in 1787. The club, including classmates from the Latin School as well as some non-Quakers, was primarily a literary society, though, in keeping with the period, Brown understood literature, or belles-lettres, to include science and reflections on the connectedness of different branches of knowledge, as he commented in the opening address (Watts 29). The young men debated philosophical and moral questions, and they shared original essays, poetry, and fiction. The Belles Lettres Society was active for several years, and it evolved into the Society for the Attainment of Useful Knowledge in the early 1790s. This Philadelphia club, like the better-known Friendly Club of New York, provided both an intellectual and a social support system. Bryan Waterman has argued that salons such as these united the eighteenth-century ideal of diplomatic, "friendly" conversation to the Enlightenment preoccupation with scientific discovery: "The relationship between the intense emotion of romantic friendship and Enlightenment modes of intellectual inquiry justified rituals of conversation, familiar correspondence, and club life itself" (Waterman 32).

One topic that engrossed the club members was the question of suicide. William Wood Wilkins, a fellow law apprentice, delivered an address, "Is Suicide Justified?" before the Society for the Attainment of Useful Knowledge in 1792, generating multiple responses from the members as they took various positions on what was generally considered a crime or an immoral act. Brown's letters to Joseph Bringhurst, Jr., in 1792 can be seen as part of that larger discussion (Letters 832–833). Brown, like Wilkins, takes an anti-Christian position that suicide can be justified on moral grounds.[9] In these letters, Brown overtly addresses moral and religious positions; he considers the "utility" of believing the soul is

infinite; he evokes sympathy in asking a reader to consider the emotional position of a possible Self-Destroyer; he uses legal terminology of "crime" and "motive"; he writes of real or imagined personal experience. This multidimensional performance shows how Brown uses a variety of rhetorical registers to address the topic at hand. Throughout these performances, he adheres to the stance that such arguments are themselves speculative—and limited. In the last of a trio of letters to Bringhurst in October–November 1792, he writes: "I still continue to think that whether Suicide be justifiable or not, is a question of importance only to those who are incited to commit it," adding, "I have stated it as unquestionably certain that no one destroys himself in consequence of the mere conviction of the moral justifiableness of his conduct" (Letters 151–152).

Even within the literary club, Wilkins, Bringhurst, and Brown formed an intimate trio.[10] Bringhurst, four years older than Brown, was a Quaker, a schoolmate, and a founding member of the Belles Lettres Society; he was training in the medical field. Wilkins, one or two years younger than Brown, moved to Philadelphia in 1788 to study law with attorney John Todd; he and Brown shared lodgings in 1791–1792. The letters show the intensity of their triangulated emotional, intellectual, and aspirational relationship. The future novelist fretted over whether Wilkins returned the intensity of his love and whether Bringhurst and Wilkins enjoyed a closer bond with each other than either one did with Brown. Comments within letters indicate they regularly shared letters among the threesome—yet also at times took umbrage at the sharing of certain information, such as personal criticism. They discussed their reading passionately; Brown was particularly effusive about Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Samuel Richardson. They debated social and moral questions, with Brown often agonizing with Wilkins over the law in theory and practice.[11] Biographers have tended to consider Brown's 1790–1793 letters windows into his deepest self,[12] but recent scholarship points to the 1790–1793 letters as more consciously constructed than autobiographical. Elizabeth Hewitt notes how, despite the emotional intensity, Brown offers very little "biographical or psychological information"; the letters are crafted to *produce* emotional response (and thus create or foster affective connection) rather than articulate genuine emotion (Hewitt 90–91). They therefore are more indicative of "epistolary performance" than autobiographical truth (Barnard 521).

One regular performance is that of the culture of eighteenth-century sensibility. When Brown writes to Bringhurst on May 6, 1792, "O My friend! Can I stay the torment of my emotions? Can I stifle the burst of tenderness or check the tears of rapture, with which my heart was agitated and my eyes suffused, on the perusal of thy letter?" (Letters 39), he invokes the rhetoric and role of an ideal friend and "man of feeling,"[13] using stylized language that asserts affective connection and sympathy. Using this manner of address, he was "drawing on well-established eighteenth-century arguments and themes such as associated sentiment (the idea that emotions are communicated from one individual to another and may be used to encourage constructive, progressive behavior)" (Barnard and Shapiro xv), derived from discussions of sympathy in Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and similar texts. In a Smithian vein, Brown continually links friendship to virtue due to the power of the sympathetic connection. In a letter written soon after October 1792 to Wilkins, then his closest friend, Brown writes of the romantic power of

such connection: "[F]riendship is, perhaps more pure but certainly not less violent than love. Between friends there must exist a perfect and intire Similarity of dispositions." He continues to link idealized friendship to a "fiction of Romance," or "magnetical influence." In such an ideal state, "Their bodies may be removed to a distance from each other but the union of their souls can never be dissolved" (Letters 158).[14]

In addition to producing emotion, performing sensibility, and discussing moral questions, there is another function of these letters that only recently has received scholarly attention. Brown's letters from this period are full of fictional fragments, comments on the nature of fiction, and transitions into and out of the imagination.[15] The letters of 1792–1793, therefore, can be considered a "laboratory for the development of Brown's early ideas and techniques concerning fiction writing" (Letters 833). Brown slips effortlessly into fanciful narratives about trips abroad which he never took and experiences he never had, including a doomed early marriage that was purely fictional or an imagined residence in a Rousseauvian Swiss village where he serves as preceptor to a young girl. He speaks in a variety of personae, for example, as a law student in England whose will decrees that his books be burned and the ashes inserted into his cranial cavity after his death. These letters frequently employ dramatic language and invented dialogue. Rousseau and Richardson are his most obvious touchstones in these experiments, but he also draws heavily on Pope, William Shakespeare, French Enlightenment writers, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and other influences. Some of these experiments end with a shift in tone as Brown overtly asks for the approval or critique of his reader; at other times, the fiction is sustained throughout the letter or even across multiple letters. The dead wife motif, for instance, is referred to at least three times in surviving letters. Sometimes Brown connects these moments to altered states of consciousness, like dreams or visions. Because he so often laces his personal letters to Wilkins and Bringhurst with these fictional episodes, created personae, or maudlin performances of feeling, they are best treated as a training ground for his narrative voice as opposed to reliable autobiographical documents.

Some of these ventures into fiction present sketches or plans for longer works. For example, within a letter dated July 29 and August 1, 1793, Brown tells the story of "Jackie Cooke," an Irish debtor who drinks heavily and physically abuses his wife (Letters 250–254). Instead of being grateful for her neighbors' kind intervention, the wife is mortified at exposure: "Their offers were received with a sullen kind of gratitude and unwilling condescension" (252). The bleak tale raises questions of benevolence and beneficence, which Brown regularly distinguishes in his letters as the difference between wishing well and doing well; it experiments with the narrative position of an observer rather than an active participant; and it illustrates female subordination and the dangers of "custom" over reason in shaping female behavior, because the mother's unreasonable dislike of help comes from socially ingrained views of decorum.

In a long letter to Bringhurst from May 1792, Brown presents a more fully realized narrative sketch, the "Story of Julius" (Letters 85–98). Julius dies of heartbreak and torment in trying to reconcile his mother's dying wishes for his marriage with his own romantic desire. His "virtuous" struggle has implications for others' happiness, since all three younger female characters (both potential lovers and a sister) reject the mother's dictates, pursuing

their own interpretations of virtuous behavior. While the *Werther*-derived plot shows the influence of Brown's reading during this time, the complex frame of this tale shows broader awareness of the possible connections between fiction writing and letter writing or of narrative and epistolary writing in general.[16] Brown creates a fictitious framework in which he alleges to Bringhurst that this "sketch" is part of an existing longer narrative that he wrote for another (fictitious) correspondent, Henrietta, and never got back. In yet another layer of this inside joke, Henrietta, the fictitious correspondent, is herself a character within a text Brown was revising during this time. Brown comments to Bringhurst near the end of the letter that he felt a deep sympathetic connection with Julius as he wrote, even conflating himself with his character. This admiration for the powers of fiction and sympathy alike can be seen in Brown's stunning rebuttal to Bringhurst's more orthodox Christianity, in his letter of December 21, 1792, which asserts that Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) presents a better model of narrating virtue than New Testament stories of Jesus (Letters 207). In these and other letters, moral issues often discussed by the club members (virtue, friendship, sympathy) extended to specifically literary questions. Brown clearly was thinking about connections between conjectural history, fiction, and virtue that he would work out more systematically in later writings.

IV. Brown's Larger Philadelphia Circle, Earliest Publications, and Epistolary Narratives

Brown's 1787–1793 Philadelphia circle included women as well as men. Bryan Waterman and Frederika Teute both write of the larger mixed-company circles that extended the connections of the New York Friendly Club. "[M]ixed-sex social settings . . . took up significant amounts of club members' time, energy, and theoretical consideration" (Waterman 131). These activities could include walks, dinner parties, and group readings of recently published material. Teute stresses the role of conversation and face-to-face encounters in these gatherings, which extended the goals of the club to facilitate a "republic of intellect." "In their exchanges of ideas and sentiments, these women and men performed an Enlightenment ideal of sensibility as they shaped their relationships with each other in a discourse of reason and affective ties" (Teute 150–151). Similar mixed-company gatherings also existed within Brown's Philadelphia circle, although the circle was shaped in part by shared Quaker values. As in New York, friends often gathered at the homes of married friends, and sisters (and their friends) often were present at other home gatherings or outings (Waterman 132; Teute 159). One such outing was a 1795 visit to the Eckstein Gallery in Philadelphia, where Bringhurst and Brown viewed sculpture and painting with female Quaker associates Louisa Biddle, Mary Attmore, Ruth Paxson, Ann Thompson, and another friend whose "Aurelia" pseudonym remains unidentified.[17] The importance of mixed-sex conversation is consistent with the message of Mary Wollstonecraft in her

1792 *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Even before 1792, Brown's writing often refers to "custom" (not nature) as responsible for gender roles. His Quaker upbringing ascribed the same spiritual authority to women and men, and even these early writings situate women as rational equals to men.

As indicated earlier, some of Brown's early poems were addressed to women. Like his letters to male friends, these poems use effusive language, reflect poetic models, comment on the nature of affection and imagination, and, at times, reflect larger social issues. He wrote "To Miss D.P." and "To Estrina" for Dolley Payne, the former when he was enamored of her and the latter as a farewell poem in 1789, before her 1790 marriage to John Todd, to whom Wilkins was apprenticed for his law education. Todd died in the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, and the widow Dolley married James Madison a year later. While both of these poems rely heavily on conventional imagery and poetic language of love, the vision of domestic bliss in "To Estrina" advocates intellectual as well as emotional affinity: "We should have liv'd the happiest pair on earth / Form'd for each other, nature gave us birth; / And minds, and manners, taste & fortune strove / alike in each to warm with mutual Love" (lines 41–44).[18] Alas, instead, the narrator has to envision her connected to one "Whose soul alike unmov'd by joys, or woes, / One dull unvarying temper only knows; / And when nor taste, nor genius, save in dress / And in mechanic arts have deign'd to bless" (lines 79–82).[19] "To D.F." was written for Deborah Ferris, a member of Brown's Philadelphia circle (and sister of friend and Belles Lettres Society member John Ferris), who was courted by both Brown and Bringhurst. The poem was written by Brown inside the front cover of Ferris's copy of Samuel Johnson's didactic treatise on happiness, *Rasselas*; the location provides yet another example of the intersection of reading, writing, social issues, and poetry of this time.

It was not a large leap for men to move from intellectual exchange in literary clubs or mixed-sex circles to writing for a more public audience. Brown, Bringhurst, and Wilkins all published poetry or essays in Philadelphia periodicals during this time. When Elihu Hubbard Smith traveled to Philadelphia in 1790 to study medicine with Benjamin Rush, making the acquaintance of Brown, Bringhurst, and others, one such publication venture resulted. In 1791, Smith, adopting the persona "Ella," began a poetic exchange (of primarily sonnets) in the *Gazette of the United States* that has become known as the "Ella-Birtha-Henry" correspondence. Bringhurst, writing as "Birtha," and later Brown, writing as "Henry," responded to "Ella" in print (Bennett). This poetic exchange imitated the briefly popular writings of the Della Cruscans in England, a literary circle of male and female poets who wrote stylized verse with pseudonyms that was published for a broader audience but mimicked intimate poetic correspondence (Waterman 44). Brown ultimately provided four of the thirty-five letters in what was then the longest literary correspondence in periodicals in America. The literary names used in this exchange were also repeated as pseudonyms in letters between the friends, blurring the boundaries of public and private conversation.

Although there is no doubt that Brown's vision was shaped by intimate dialogues with his peers, the narrator of his first significant prose publication is presented as a solitary rambler or "Rhapsodist." From August to November 1789, Brown published four essays

in *The Universal Asylum, and Columbian Magazine*, signed in succession with the letters of his surname (B, R, O, W). Brown's model in these short pieces is, on the one hand, the periodical essay format perfected by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*; yet, on the other, the series' satirical presentation of a self-defeating narrator also reveals the influence of Sterneian comic sentiment and the *Sturm und Drang* of Goethe. Instead of a disembodied observer or "spectator," Brown's rhapsodist is a solipsist, whose reflections never burst the bounds of a self-reflexive intellect. He decries sociable circles, intellectual effort, or communal grasp for knowledge. Friendship and romance are deemed "irksome" (Rhapsodist 537). "Love and friendship, and all the social passions, are excluded from his bosom" (538). He is "an enemy to conversation" who loves, instead, to "converse with beings of his own creation" (537). Self-focused, his observations focus on his processes of perception, the "devious wanderings of a quick but thoughtful mind" (467). Yet, despite these potentially antisocial attributes, he insists that he writes like a common man. The phrasing "A rhapsodist is one who delivers the sentiments suggested by the moment in artless and unpremeditated language" (467) anticipates, albeit with some irony, Wordsworth's manifesto in the preface to the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*. The third and fourth installments combine a fictitious personal history of the narrator—a history that professes early communion with nature along the "solitary banks of the Ohio" (589)—with the elaborate hoax of a (fictitious) intercepted letter, which questions the veracity of the narrator's tale and is excerpted into the essay. Amid the jokes about self-representation in "The Rhapsodist," there are serious reflections on the nature of the imagination, as when the essay considers that "The enthusiasm of religion is little different from that of poetry, and these are with great difficulty distinguished from a sublime and rational philosophy. They flow in separate channels, but it is most probable that they are derived from the self same fountain" (539). This interconnectedness of forms of knowledge remains a determining feature of Brown's mind.

The manuscript "Henrietta Letters," a designation coined by later scholars, is an epistolary fiction consisting of seventeen letters between "Henrietta" (also referred to as "Harriet") and "C.B.B." While the "Henrietta Letters" themselves are not in the body of Brown's correspondence, they are frequently referred to within the letters, for example, in the long letter than contains "The Story of Julius" (Letters 89–90); as a result, some early biographers assumed Henrietta was a real person rather than a textual creation (e.g., Clark 54). The narrative was written in 1790 (before the death of John Davidson, to whom the final letter is addressed), then copied and revised, with changes from content of the 1790–1792 Bringhurst-Wilkins letters, with the surviving manuscript dated to 1792.[20] The final letter in the series is written to "J_____ D _____," or John Davidson, providing an example of the way Brown blurred "the lines between the letters' invented and non-invented elements" (Barnard 523). The postscript to this letter leaves the amorous, Rousseauvian world of Henrietta and C.B.B. and refers to issues more closely associated with the friends' participation in literary clubs.

The theme and style of the "Henrietta Letters" reflect Brown's deep interest in Rousseau at this time, and the romantic-sensual-intellectual correspondence refers to the lover-tutor

trope in Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloise* (which Brown first read in 1788) as well as aspects of Richardson's *Clarissa*. Brown's text, however, revises Rousseau's views on women, especially insofar as it affirms their capacity to be educated as independent individuals rather than merely companions to men. Henrietta asks, "Why should Women be outstripped by men in literary pursuits? For is not female curiousity insatiable, and what other passion is requisate, to render learned labour successfull?" (Letters 688). The C.B.B. character, by contrast, engages in more stylized, emotional language than Henrietta and even includes voyeuristic fantasies of seeing her in various stages of undress. In Henrietta, Brown presents the voice of a woman with both sensual *and* intellectual desires. While she scolds C.B.B. for sharing his most explicit desires—a representational joke, since she has to evoke them to rebuke them—she seeks to tone down his passions rather than quench them completely, making them more productive of virtue but no less strong. In Letter X, she defends passionate love or "amorous" feelings as "enobling," "proof not of the weakness or depravity, but of the purity of the heart, and loftiness of the understanding of him, who is influenced by it" (699).

What are now called the "Godolphin" fragment and the "Ellendale" fragment are additional epistolary fictional experiments in the early Brown archive, both dated 1793. The Godolphin fragment is a one-sided correspondence (with moments of reported dialogue with a third party, William Conswould) from "R.H." to "Susan." The first several pages discuss a global "chain of Causes" (Letters 780) and present a global picture of civilization linking science, geology, and poetry to its sense of history. The Ellendale fragment opens with an address to "W.C.," presumably the same William Conswould mentioned in the Godolphin text. The date line identifies the place of composition as "Ellendale," a fictitious estate on the Schuylkill near Philadelphia (Letters 807 n. 3). The fictional correspondence, like Brown's actual letters, refers to "Conversations" previously held by the writer and the recipient, seeming to continue discussions on the Intellect, the Poet, Christianity, and other topics that were held face-to-face as well as in writing. What is perhaps most interesting about these fragments is that the places and characters overlap with those in other Brown fictional fragments from the early to mid-1790s: "The Story of Julius," the "Medwaye" fragment, the "Harry Wallace" fragment, and the "Adini" fragment. "None of these fragments align precisely, but this re-cycling of fictional names, locales, and motifs suggests that they were loosely associated as several outlines or experiments toward a larger fictional project that never took shape" (Letters 807 n. 3). The connections across texts, a dominant trait of the varied 1792–1794 writings, challenge simple generic categorization during these early years. They also point to Brown's literary ambition and experimentation, as well as to his circulation of materials with peers.

While it may seem that the years 1787 to 1793 are shaped by a tension between law and literature, it may be more productive to consider the way Brown's reading, writing, and conversing all intersect. His rhetorical effusions of emotion explored social character more than they exposed personal intimacy; his interest in speculative narrative was connected to the study of legal and moral dilemmas; his imaginative locales were not solipsistic spaces but playfully shared with his friends.

V. 1793–1795: Changes

In 1793, the Reign of Terror began in France; a yellow fever epidemic claimed the lives of several thousand people in Philadelphia, throwing the city into a panic; and Brown read William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), the treatise that would shift his attention from Rousseau and writers of the French Enlightenment to the Godwin circle and their brand of sociopolitical, cultural, and religious critique. In 1792, Wilkins moved to New Jersey to study for the bar and launched his own law practice the following year; other colleagues were likewise moving on to their careers. Letters from Brown to family and friends comment on his anxieties over parental approval (suggesting he feared conflict over leaving the law permanently) and his uncertainty for his future (e.g., Letters 243–245).

Brown spent May–August 1793 with Elihu Hubbard Smith in Connecticut, where he met Richard Alsop, Theodore Dwight, and other "Hartford Wits," a circle of established New England poets. He reveled in the Connecticut landscape, claiming in a July 1793 letter to Bringhurst that it was superior to Rousseauvian fantasies of "social and studious retirement" (Letters 240). He also appreciated the usefulness of these new connections, and how these connections, as well as the place, could help him pursue his plans to be a writer. Brown's professional life, however, stagnated on his return to Philadelphia in the fall. Records suggest he may have taught at the Friends Grammar School in Philadelphia for at least part of 1793–1794 (Letters 467 n. 2). Aside from this possible post, Brown avoided paid employment.

William Dunlap, a playwright and friend Brown met through Smith, stayed with Brown in Philadelphia to attend, as a delegate, the first American Convention for Promoting Abolition of Slavery in January 1794 (Letters 264 n. 10). Letters suggest that Brown visited New York City regularly in 1794, including attending, in April, a performance of Dunlap's tragedy *The Fatal Deception* (268 n. 1, 288 n. 1). While his friendships with Smith and Dunlap were growing stronger, there were still ties in Philadelphia. Brown included his longest-surviving poem, "Devotion: An Epistle," in an October 4, 1794, letter to Deborah Ferris.[21] The poem opens with an evocation of the emotional triangle that had developed between Brown, Bringhurst, and Ferris, unfolding into an "early-romantic intellectual autobiography presented to an inspiring muse who is romantically attracted not to the poet, but to another friend" (284). The letter did not achieve its goals in at least one sense, for Ferris and Bringhurst became engaged in March 1795, although they did not marry until 1799.

Wilkins died in early 1795, and, in an April 19, 1795, letter to his brother James, Brown connected that deep sorrow to his failure to attempt the bar: "It is his death that hath prevented me from fulfilling your expectations" (Letters 291). Even at that date, Brown suggested deferral rather than irrevocable rejection of the law. Brown spent the summer of 1795 in New York and Perth Amboy, the New Jersey country home of Dunlap. By this time, Bringhurst and Ferris were commenting in their letters to each other about Brown, or "Romeo," as they termed him, and his relationship (presumably a poetic exchange)

with Ruth Paxson, or "Stella," the wife of Timothy Paxson.[22] Ferris's letters are sharply critical not only of Ruth Paxson's behavior but also of her general character. Bringhurst and Ferris attempted to intervene in Brown's friendship with Ruth Paxson through a variety of means, involving other members of their social circle. An October 1795 letter from Brown to Bringhurst, remarkable for its personal content and lack of exaggerated emotion, reveals Brown's hurt and anger. The letter begins and ends with reproaches about Bringhurst's intervention with his friendship and threat to hurt Ruth Paxson's reputation.[23] The rest of the long letter is Brown's most cogent rejection of orthodox Christianity during these years, particularly its socially prescribed sense of decorum. "I listen with respect to your advice on the subject of Christianity, but, my friend, we are far from well understanding each other on this subject" (297). From this polite expression of a possible misunderstanding, or human failing in friendship's union of souls, he takes a more doctrinaire position that responds both to Bringhurst's personal meddling with Brown's friendships and to his intellectual orientation: "I once thought, as, possibly, you now think that religious beliefs were desirable, even if it were erroneous. I am now of a different opinion, and believe that utility must always be coincident to truth" (302).

With such an emotional, intellectual, and religious break with his Quaker Philadelphia circle, Brown was ready to move on. In the fall of 1795, he shifted his affiliation from Quaker views of religious tolerance to the more radical (even atheistic) views of Godwin, from the apprenticeship world of Philadelphia to the intellectual circles of New York City, from the circulation of writing within a relatively closed circle to more public ventures.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Drake University's Office of the Provost for support in completing this project. Philip Barnard provided essential direction toward recent resources. I am indebted to Lana Finley for an earlier draft of this material, particularly her research on Quakerism and Elijah Brown.
2. Parliament did pass a law in 1695 that allowed Quakers to provide an affirmation instead of an oath under certain circumstances, but the law was intended to make it easier to litigate against Quakers rather than provide alternative legal procedures for their defense.
3. Penn sailed for the colonies on the ship *Welcome* in 1682.
4. Steven Watts and Stephen Shapiro both place the Brown family history within a larger American story of how early religious or idealized colonial ventures became enmeshed in the political and economic systems of the long eighteenth century (Watts xviii; Shapiro 4).
5. For more on Elijah Brown's arrest, see Moses 20–21 and Kafer 1–14, 29–32. Kafer contends that Brown was not a typical prisoner, less respected and less religiously motivated than his fellow exiles.
6. "Historical Essay," cited from the electronic files (no pagination) for the forthcoming *Poems*, Vol. 7 of *Collected Writings of Charles Brockden Brown*, ed. Michael Cohen and Alexandra Socarides.
7. Ibid.
8. Biographers often stress a tension between his intended profession and literary aspirations; see Watts 27–48 and Ferguson 129–134.

9. That Bringhurst adopts a more orthodox Christian position is evident from comments within a May 1792 letter, such as Brown's question, "Dost thou wish me to become a convert to your doctrine? Implicitly to believe in my own Immortality?" (Letters 39).
10. Another close friend and classmate, John Davidson, died in 1790.
11. Ferguson argues that Brown was increasingly disheartened by the "inability of the law to control or even to define behavior" (Ferguson 139).
12. For example, Watts sees them as symptomatic of "severe emotional turmoil" (Watts 36) or unhealthy "internal fragmentation" (41). Caleb Crain describes Brown as "adolescent" and sees in the letters patterns of "imposture" or deception due to unstable self-image (Crain 55).
13. The "man of feeling" was a literary type popularized by Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768) and Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771).
14. On the homosocial structure of the friendship network in these letters, see Crain 66–69.
15. In fact, "Imaginative scenes and dialogues recur in seventeen of the forty-five letters from 1792–1793" ("Historical Essay," Letters 833).
16. Hewitt argues such conflations challenge the boundaries of letter writing and fiction writing (96–97; see also her chapter 14 in this volume).
17. Bringhurst to Deborah Ferris, April 3, 1785 (ms. in Charles Brockden Brown Papers, 1792–1821, Bowdoin College Library).
18. Cited from the electronic files (no pagination) for the forthcoming *Poems*, Vol. 7 of *Collected Writings of Charles Brockden Brown*, ed. Michael Cohen and Alexandra Socarides.
19. The descriptions of Estrina's future spouse, like the one here, resemble Brown's other written comments on Todd. For more on the Dolley Payne–Todd–Madison connection, see Letters 26 n. 2.
20. The "Henrietta Letters" provide an example of the "blending of fictional and ordinary correspondence during the 1792–1794 period" (Letters 751 n. 41). For a general discussion, see "Historical Essay" (Letters 838–840).
21. This blank-verse poem, like some of the other love poetry, has a life beyond its initial intention. Brown likely sent the same poem to Elizabeth Linn during their courtship, and "Devotion: An Epistle—To Calista" was revised, depersonalized, and published in the *American Register* in 1808.
22. For a summary of the Brown–Bringhurst–Ferris correspondence and the Paxson issue, see Letters 305–310.
23. In a subsequent letter, Brown directly refers to Ruth Paxson's "sencibility to reputation," as well as the harm Bringhurst's continued intervention could bring to her and her marriage (Letters 314).

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CHAPTER 2

LATER YEARS, 1795–1810

BRYAN WATERMAN

The summer of 1795 marked the start of a significant transition in Charles Brockden Brown's life, from a primary intellectual orientation toward his former Friends Latin School classmates in Philadelphia to a network of associates in New York who gathered in and around a group called the Friendly Club. This transition eased other passages in Brown's life: away from Quaker practice and Christian belief and toward freethinking; away from the sentimentalism of Rousseau and toward the radical sensibility of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft; away from legal study and toward professional writing and editing; and away from the polite regulation of mixed-sex sociability and toward increasingly unconventional views on friendship between men and women that would find expression in some of his earliest published writing. These shifts would characterize Brown's primary literary output and his social life for half a decade. Several of the friendships would endure even after he returned to Philadelphia permanently in 1800, as would Brown's fascination with the ideas that animated them.

Multiple crises spurred Brown's move to New York in the summer of 1795. In April, he lost his friend William Wood Wilkins, who a few years earlier had been his most intimate companion but whose friendship had waned as Wilkins's legal career, which took him away from the city for a time, eclipsed his sociability. Brown, already disenchanted with the idea of his own legal career, now blamed his decision to abandon it altogether on his friend's death. Suffering through "a disease, called by some Nosographers, the *dumps*" (Letters 290–291),[1] he found other friendships growing strained. Most notably, his friends Joseph Bringhurst and Deborah Ferris, who had begun to form their own romantic attachment, were pressuring Brown to curb his apparently clandestine poetic exchanges with a mutual married friend, Ruth Paxson.[2] When Brown left Philadelphia in July, Bringhurst and Ferris rejoiced that "his correspondence" with Paxson would "be entirely at an end,"[3] and by summer's end, Bringhurst could report that Brown's New York friends had convinced him the behavior had been in error.[4] But such hopes for Brown's reform would not be long-lived. Bringhurst must not have realized fully that Brown's New York friends harbored deistic beliefs and progressive views on gender relations.[5] While these new friends also prodded Brown to reform specific aspects of his behavior,

they provided him with intellectual freedom and solidarity during the years in which his writing career began to mature (Teute; Waterman 2007; Kaplan).

Brown had met some of these associates during a trip to New York and Connecticut in 1793, when he had traveled to visit Elihu Hubbard Smith, whose friendship he had gained while Smith was a medical student in Philadelphia in 1790–1791.[6] After Smith moved to New York in the fall of 1793, he activated a network of associates who had been educated at Yale or else were married into prominent Connecticut and Long Island merchant families with Yale ties. Smith himself had finished Yale at age fifteen, the school's youngest graduate to that date. He studied further with Timothy Dwight at the private, coeducational Greenfield Hill Academy before moving to Philadelphia to study medicine with Benjamin Rush. In Philadelphia, Smith had joined Brown and Bringhurst in a poetic correspondence in the city's magazines and newspapers (Bennett). Shortly after Brown's first visit to Connecticut, Smith had published *American Poems, Selected and Original*, a volume collecting and canonizing major poetry of the post-Revolutionary era. Brown may have contributed to the editorial process, but the volume includes none of his early poems. Still, his friendship with Smith opened him to a broader field of early American publishing than he had participated in to that point.

Other New York friendships solidified as Brown visited Smith in New York. William Dunlap, whose work had been featured in Smith's *American Poems*, was the son of a former British officer and Loyalist merchant. Leaving home, he joined the revolutionary cause and became an itinerant portrait painter, whose sitters included George Washington. In 1784, Dunlap's father sent him to study painting with Benjamin West in London; instead, he spent most of his time in theaters. Returning to New York City three years later, he launched a career as a playwright and cultivated intellectual interests by joining New York's Philological Society (whose members included Noah Webster) and, later, the Friendly Club. Following his father's death in 1791, Dunlap left the family business to pursue his work as a playwright. In 1796, he would purchase a quarter interest in the Old American Company, a professional acting troupe, and in 1798, he would help to open the Park Theater, which would become the city's principal playhouse for a generation.

Other new friends included William Johnson, a young lawyer and Yale graduate who lived with Smith and also participated in the Friendly Club. Two years older than Smith, Johnson had been two years behind him at Yale. Though he did not publish literary work under his own name, he became an important figure in American legal publishing. He also (like Smith, Brown, and Dunlap) kept a regular diary he shared with friends, especially after periods of separation, and he was an avid consumer of fiction whose tastes matched Brown's, Smith's, and Dunlap's.[7] Johnson would assist Brown in multiple literary and commercial projects in coming years.

Many of Brown's New York friends later achieved prominence: Smith, along with two latecomers to the club, Edward Miller and Samuel Latham Mitchill, founded the *Medical Repository*; Mitchill, a Columbia science professor who like Edward Miller was a club associate for years before beginning to attend regularly in 1798, was eventually elected to both the US Congress and the US Senate; James Kent, law professor at Columbia, became a state judge, a state chancellor, and a nationally prominent legal writer; and

Dunlap was already an active playwright, painter, and theater manager and later in life wrote histories of American theater and other arts. The group's merchants, Dunlap's brothers-in-law George and William Woolsey, belonged to important mercantile networks and were descended from, married into, and progenitors of New England clerical dynasties.[8] The Reverend Samuel Miller, Edward's brother and another latecomer to the club, would write a substantial intellectual history of the eighteenth century that gave many of these friends, including Brown, pride of place (Waterman 2007 231–242).

These friends provided the intellectual context for Brown's most significant works, including an orientation toward the British writers—William Godwin, Thomas Holcroft, Robert Bage, Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, Erasmus Darwin—whose thought would most influence his (see chapter 17 in this volume). They also provided Brown with models of industrious authorship and publishing and pushed him to make good on his literary ambitions. In the fall of 1795, after his first extended stay among these New York friends, Brown returned to Philadelphia, renewed in his determination to write fiction. He wrote Dunlap about progress on a novel that would be "equal in extent" to Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, which would "render my system of morality perfect in all its parts" and "produce something valuable for its utility."[9] The note illuminates Brown's conception of fiction at this crucial juncture, when Godwin provided him with not only a formal model for philosophical fiction but also a utilitarian rationale for critiquing institutional—especially religious—impediments to truth seeking. Over the next few years, as Brown experimented with fictional forms, including periodical essays and philosophical dialogues, and attempted to start several novels before drafting the now-lost *Sky-Walk* in 1797, he would test Godwin's ideas by having his characters adhere to or depart from basic principles. And to the end of his career, he explored, in terms resembling Godwin's, the relationship between narrative history and romance (Emerson).

Brown's letters to Bringhurst in the fall of 1795 reveal not only his irritation at Bringhurst's meddling in his friendship with Ruth Paxson but also his determination to challenge conventional Christian morality. Doubting Christ's divinity, Brown felt "the acceptance of his doctrines, moral and metaphysical, must depend on their intrinsic evidence" to be regarded as true and useful. He rendered anathema the idea that people should adopt Christian precepts out of a fear of eternal punishment. Such ideas had been percolating for some time. Three years earlier, he had similarly provoked Bringhurst by suggesting that Samuel Richardson's novel *Sir Charles Grandison* might be a more useful "picture of moral perfection" than the New Testament.[10] Parting ways intellectually with Bringhurst, Brown announced that his present thinking was governed by a new "Oracle," Godwin's massive philosophical treatise *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, which had been published two years earlier.[11]

Smith, in an unsent letter, would later narrate this momentous turn in Brown's intellectual history. "Now & then a ray of truth broke in, but with an influence too feeble to dissipate the phantoms, which error had conjured up around you," Smith wrote of his friend's romantic past. Then "*Godwin came and all was light!*"[12] Smith shared Brown's enthusiasm. A month after making a birthday resolve to "keep my eye, & my heart, fixed on the majestic, simple, sublime, & venerable temple of Truth,"[13] Smith received an

update from Brown on his novel in progress, which he expected would be controversial: "What different sentiments will it excite! And how much rancor, & misrepresentation must he encounter! And not he alone, but all those who are united to him by the ties of friendship & bonds of resembling opinions." The novel Brown was composing may have been an early attempt at *Arthur Mervyn*, as many critics assume, though it may also have been a continuation of a series of stories he had worked on for years, in which he reimagined the Christian story in a contemporary setting on a farm outside Philadelphia. Smith thought the book would generate enough public opposition to put their philosophy to the test: "Storms & tempests hover over our heads, ready to burst, or are gathering in slow & sullen vengeance, to break, & overwhelm us with destruction. But I trust that we shall put forth the conductors of virtue, & turn aside, or disarm the lightnings of superstitious fury."[14]

For Smith, the resistance he and Brown had both received from conservative friends offered the first sign of these looming storms. Brown ended his summer 1795 trip with a stay at Dunlap's country home in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, a visit that seems to have been a catalyzing moment for Brown, Smith, and Dunlap. Brown came away determined to confront Bringhurst and to take up novel writing in earnest. Smith, similarly resolved to write and publish, worried that "the unavoidable disclosure of my peculiar sentiments" would wound his parents and perhaps even lead to blasphemy prosecution in his home state of Connecticut, something the friends explicitly discussed in Perth Amboy.[15] Dunlap, echoing Brown, followed up these conversations by writing to Godwin and Holcroft about his desire to embody their principles in his plays. "Your political justice is my Gospel," he wrote to Godwin in October 1795. "I read in it daily, I weigh its arguments and trace its doctrines to all their consequences. To aid the progress of these truths, I conceive to be a duty incumbent on me both by writing and acting" (Green 441–443).

The enthusiasm these friends showed for Godwin stemmed from more than admiration of style and resulted in more than mere imitation. Gathering information about Godwin's circle by piecemeal, intuiting connections between favorite authors, they identified almost spiritually with what they took these writers to represent: a belief in the progress of knowledge (and with it, the possibility of human perfectibility) through a free and friendly exchange of ideas; a rationalist approach to morality that eschewed motives such as fear of divine punishment or hope for eternal reward in the afterlife; a confidence that truth telling—unrelenting sincerity and frankness—would have tangible positive effect on society; and a utilitarian commitment to community good rather than personal profit. Their reading of Holcroft, Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Hays especially fostered their interest in women's education and the possibilities of mixed-sex friendship and conversation. When they learned that Godwin and Wollstonecraft had become a couple, they were ecstatic. "Miss Wollstonecraft is now the wife of Mr. Godwin," Smith wrote to his Connecticut friend Idea Strong in October 1797. "[And] as he is a man independent in his circumstances, we may expect that she will have ample leisure for the cultivation of those sciences in which she so much delights, & for gratifying her friends by successive & interesting publications." Just a few weeks later, papers arrived with the news of Wollstonecraft's death in childbirth.

"The loss of 50,000 french & as many Austrians, on the Rhine or in Italy, would have affected me less," Smith wrote in his journal.[16]

From summer 1796 through the following March, Brown spent much of his time in New York reading and writing, often in the company of friends. In Smith and Dunlap in particular, Brown found monitors who held him to his own ideals. Whereas his early friendships were sometimes articulated in a highly sentimental, Rousseauistic vein, the defining characteristic of his friendships in New York was a frank mutual assessment of successes and especially failures. The early friendships had been founded on a principle of likeness. "Between friends there must exist a perfect and entire Similarity of dispositions," he had written to his early friend Wilkins. "Not only the same excellences but the same defects must be common to both. Soul must be knit unto Soul."[17] By contrast, Brown's new friends both pointed out and complemented his strengths and weaknesses. "No two men were ever more sincerely attached to each other than Charles Brockden Brown and Elihu Hubbard Smith; yet in many particulars no two men were ever more different," Dunlap wrote years later in his biography of Brown, emphasizing their ability to maintain intimacy in spite of limited personal similarities.[18]

Friendly Club members believed that such differences offered opportunities to confront error and receive correction. Godwin himself put it this way in a letter to Dunlap in 1796: "The consent of a judicious & unprejudiced neighbour, confirms me in my sentiment, & gives me satisfaction in my conduct."[19] This idea could best be implemented in a social circle like theirs. "[U]nreserved communication in a smaller circle, and especially among persons who are already awakened to the pursuit of truth, is of unquestionable advantage" to society's improvement, Godwin wrote in *Political Justice*. "[C]andid and unreserved communication" allowed such friends "to compare their ideas, to suggest their doubts, to remove their difficulties, and to cultivate a collected and striking manner of delivering their sentiments" before "go[ing] forth to the world." In this ideal scenario, "Every man will be eager to tell and to hear what the interest of all requires them to know. The bolts and fortifications of the temple of truth will be removed. . . . Knowledge will be accessible to all" (Godwin 1793, 1: 212, 214–215).

Such a thought animated Brown's friends. Smith echoes Godwin's intellectual utopianism in a description of the Friendly Club he sent to a British magazine editor in early 1798, volunteering his friends' services as American correspondents:

> There exists in this city, a small association of men, who are connected by mutual esteem, & habits of unrestricted communication. They are of different professions & occupations; of various religious & moral opinions; & tho' they coincide in the great outlines of political faith, they estimate very variously many of the political transactions of the men who have, from time to time directed the councils of the nation. This diversity of sentiment, however, as it has never affected their friendship, has made them more active in investigation; & tho' they may have formed different judgments concerning facts, has led them to a general concurrence in the facts themselves.[20]

This concurrence enacts what Godwin called a removal of difficulties; it stems from what he elsewhere in *Political Justice* called the "intercourse of mind with mind" in

conversation, "one or the other party always yielding to have his ideas guided by the other" (Godwin 1793, 2: 379). This model of communication—what Smith, referring to Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives*, called "severe truth"—was not just the club's raison d'être (Smith 44). It also provided an ideal social environment for emerging writers, who served not just as trial audiences for one another's work but as collaborators in a larger intellectual project.

Though Brown had attended the Friendly Club intermittently as a visitor during previous visits to New York, the winter of 1796–1797 saw him admitted as a full member. He attended just more than a dozen club meetings at friends' homes on Saturday evenings between September and March. During the months of Brown's greatest activity, club members started publishing the *Medical Repository*, the first American medical journal; staged Smith's slight opera and two plays by Dunlap; and, with their larger, mixed-sex circle, read several novels, including work by Bage, Hays, Friedrich Schiller, Inchbald, and Cajetan Tschink. Brown and Smith both contemplated dramatic adaptations of Bage's novel *Hermsprong*. The group also consumed new medical literature by Erasmus Darwin, whose *Zoonomia* club members would issue in an American edition and Brown would cite in *Wieland*. Although Brown apparently did not join them, perhaps for financial reasons, nearly all other Friendly Club members participated in the abolitionist Manumission Society.[21]

Brown left New York rather suddenly in March 1797, apparently having had a temporary falling out with Dunlap. The move was "fortunate," Smith thought, and even though Brown "went away, apparently, not with the best spirits," Smith hoped he might establish connections with Vermont editor Joseph Dennie to find an outlet for the myriad projects he had started but had not yet seen to completion. "I fear he will effect but little, in Phila.," Smith wrote (Smith 300). But his worries turned out to have been ill founded. Back in Philadelphia, Brown set about the most industrious period of his career. That summer, he completed substantial portions of *Alcuin*, a fictionalized philosophical dialogue on women's rights, which Smith read to male and female friends in New York before he set about publishing it there. By January 1798, Brown had finished writing his first novel, *Sky-Walk* (Dunlap 1930, 1: 201).

Brown's banner year would be 1798, though it also included a number of personal tragedies. Working with Philadelphia magazine editor James Watters, whose publishing office was located in close proximity to the Brown family's home, Brown began to serialize several periodical sketches and novels, including "The Man at Home," "A Series of Original Letters," a version of *Alcuin* titled "The Rights of Women," a chapter of *Sky-Walk*, and early chapters of *Arthur Mervyn*. Brown and Ruth Paxson, who also became a *Weekly Magazine* contributor, dug out their scandalous poetic correspondence of 1795 and submitted it to Watters as well.[22] In March, Brown wrote to Smith that he was "assiduously writing novels & in love."[23] That romance, with a young woman named Susan Potts, would dissolve under family pressure, the first of his disappointments that year. "Brown tells me the manner in which his mother breaks off his connection with Miss Potts," Dunlap wrote in his diary in September 1798, although the relationship languished for more than two more years (Dunlap 1930, 1: 343).[24] Having resumed his friendship with Dunlap, apologizing for his behavior the previous winter, Brown

returned to New York in July with *Wieland* mostly completed. *Sky-Walk*, at press with Watters in Philadelphia, would go missing when the printer died of yellow fever there that summer. In New York, Smith died in a yellow fever outbreak in mid-September, just as copies of *Wieland* were coming from the press. Brown, who believed himself also infected, recovered.

Smith's death devastated the club and the larger circle but didn't slow Brown's productivity. He had already drafted portions of *Wieland*'s sequel, *Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist*, that fall. He completed *Ormond* in the last few weeks of the year. His friends began to work on proposals for a new magazine he would edit. Within months, Brown had become an American of some "intellectual renown," at least in New York and Philadelphia. Traveler John Davis described meeting Brown in "a dismal room in a dismal street" in New York around this time, "quite in the costume of an author, embodying virtue in a new novel, and making his pen fly before him" (Davis 1: 157). Brown noted in a February 1799 letter to a brother that "to be the writer of Wieland and Ormond is a greater recommendation" in society "than ever I imagined it would be" and that he spent most nights "conversing with male or female friends."[25] But not all his early readers were equally warm to his fiction. Margaret Bayard, a young New Yorker who would soon become fast friends with Brown's New York circle, was more than favorably impressed by Brown's conversation when she first met him in October 1798 in the wake of Smith's death. But she was less than enthusiastic about his new novel. "Weiland [sic] has met with a bad reception in [New] Brunswick," she reported to her future sister-in-law, Mary Ann Smith, in October 1798, "& I have not heard of one who was pleased with it. I cannot deny that it is a display of genious & strong nervous language, but I regret having read it. Do not even look into it, Mary, for from the first to the last page the gloomiest terror is prevalent. It has several nights disturbed my repose & I fear its bad effects are not yet erased from my mind. I asked him, what could have given rise to such dreadful images & found the book had been written, while he was in the midst of the yellow fever & his mind under the influence of misery & terror which it produced."[26] Later, complaining to her fiancé, Samuel Harrison Smith, that Brown's books gave her nightmares, she said she had politely declined to read *Edgar Huntly* and only took up *Arthur Mervyn* with caution.[27]

Other female readers seemingly agreed. In an undated letter written around the turn of the nineteenth century, Margaretta Akerly, another New Yorker, wrote to her sister, Catharine Mitchill, about the "curious . . . taste" of a mutual acquaintance, "the Charming Mrs. Higinson," who "must be a little nervous, for I heard her say, that reading Brown's Ormond made her unwell for near a week."[28] Mrs. Higinson's reaction would seem to confirm the opinion of a Philadelphia reviewer a few years later, who wrote that Brown was "unpopular with the female world, on account of his terrific subject."[29] But Akerly herself suggests some disdain for Higinson's nervousness, and Bayard noted in another letter a female acquaintance who found Brown's Gothic novels perfectly "adapted to her taste."[30] When Davis reencountered Brown in Philadelphia later in his travels, he found him "ingratiating himself into the favor of the ladies by writing a new novel." Whether women readers enjoyed Brown's novels in large numbers is difficult to know, but Davis clearly imagined they did (Davis 2: 20).

Brown's Gothic mode didn't settle well with some male readers, either. Federalist jurist Kent, Brown's Friendly Club associate, expressed some objections to *Wieland* when it was published in the fall of 1798, based on its dark tone and indebtedness to Godwin. Though initially receptive to Godwin, Kent had been put off by his posthumous biography of Wollstonecraft, which revealed her suicide attempts and unconventional sexual behavior, and in the wake of the French Revolution, he had adopted the conservative line that "projectors" or "speculators" like Godwin were laying out plans beyond the capacity of ordinary "men as they are."[31] Responding to Kent's criticism, William Johnson, who had helped Brown earlier that year decide on a "suitable catastrophe" for *Wieland*,[32] defended Brown in terms that help explain both Brown's agenda for his fiction and some readers' reluctance to embrace it. According to Johnson—perhaps disingenuously, considering that Brown was just then completing his draft of *Ormond*—Brown planned to *avoid*, in future publications,

> the development, or discussion of any principles, which will shock even your prejudices, on certain subjects.—But if I understand you, it is wrong to call your opinion a prejudice.—To us it must be a salutary principle of conduct, however we may, at times, regard with indulgence or approbation, ingenious speculations, on the consequences which should flow from a different state of things. The major propositions of Mr. G[odwin] and Mr. B[rown] are hypothetical, and the inferences are correctly made;—yet they afford not a rule of conduct for the beings who now walk the earth.—But enough.[33]

Johnson's explanation highlights the degree to which Brown imagined a philosophical-moral program for his fiction, one that seems to have united with its "doleful tone" in falling afoul of readers like Kent. Some of Brown's peers simply objected to his writing fiction at all. His Philadelphia friend Thomas Cope thought Brown "would please one better if instead of employing himself in producing mere works of fancy he would apply the rare talents of which he is undoubtedly possessed to the promotion of science & the pursuit of useful & practical philosophy" (Cope 43; November 16, 1800).

Brown indicated repeatedly, though, that his fiction aimed precisely for such promotions and pursuits.[34] Shortly after Smith's death, Brown aimed to supplement his literary career with an editorial one on the same set of principles. The *Monthly Magazine, and American Review*, starting in the spring of 1799, would expand his friends' field for practical observation and commentary on scientific as well as literary topics. Equally important, Brown hoped it would prove "very profitable" in financial terms as well.[35] Friendly Club member Samuel Miller, writing to the Massachusetts minister Jedidiah Morse to solicit subscribers, described the magazine as a group endeavor: "There is a Society or club of about 10 gentlemen," he wrote, "who meet once a week, to consult about the Magazine, & concert plans to make up its contents & to promote its interests."[36] Maria Templeton, part of the club's extended social circle, who would a decade later marry William Johnson, wrote to Bayard about the magazine's collaborative nature: "He will be aided by Dr. & Mr. Miller, Dr. Mitchell, Mr. W. Johnson, Mr. Dunlap, & Mr. [Samuel M.] Hopkins."[37] William Johnson wrote to a friend in Albany: "It is proposed by several Gentlemen to patronize, & aid the publication of a periodical work in this City.—Proposals have been

circulated, and a considerable number of subscribers obtained.—The plan of the work would assign it a higher rank, among periodical works, than that of a magazine, though it bears that simple & vulgar appellation.—"[38] The *Monthly Magazine* began publication in April 1799 and continued through the end of the following year. Biographers have sometimes complained that Brown's friends failed him in producing content, but the period's conventions of anonymous or nearly anonymous publication make it difficult to know with any certainty which friends contributed and how regularly. Certainly, Bayard's accounts of the club's mixed-sex social circle in New York indicate that multiple members contributed and also actively solicited content from others, including her.[39]

The *Monthly Magazine* mirrored attempts within the club to transcend political differences. In its inaugural issue, Brown, as editor, announced: "There already exists a sufficient number of vehicles of political discussion and political information, and it is presumed that readers in general will be best pleased with a performance limited to scientific and literary topics."[40] A later piece, framed as a conversation between two *Monthly Magazine* readers, decried the general audience's quickness to assign political implications to virtually any contribution. "These things being considered," one participant concludes, seeming to state a position on behalf of the editors, "I cannot help thinking that the Magazine had better be free from theological and political polemics. I am willing to give up my share of them from this prudential consideration."[41]

Politics and religion, in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the lead-up to the presidential contest between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, had become explosive topics, and the Friendly Club's members and extended circles were made up of people on all sides. Johnson and Kent were Federalists, as were the Woolsey brothers, allied with their brother-in-law Timothy Dwight in Connecticut. Smith had been a Federalist and a friend of Timothy Dwight and his brother, Theodore, but differed with them on religion. Mitchill and the Millers were Democrats. Dunlap remained quiet about politics but chafed at the staunch Federalism of his Woolsey and Dwight brothers-in-law and was an admirer of Jefferson throughout his life.[42] In the larger social circle, their friend Maria Nicholson belonged to a prominent New York Democratic-Republican family. Bayard was engaged to Samuel Harrison Smith, an aspiring Philadelphia journalist who would soon be tapped to edit Jefferson's *National Intelligencer*. Bayard, who wrote to her fiancé frequently about her evenings spent in conversation with Brown and friends, said she believed their views resembled his.[43] The range of views members held, then, which they had hoped would aid them in their search for truth, certainly had the potential to create friction in the political turmoil surrounding Jefferson's election.

The *Monthly Magazine*'s short life cycle coincided with one aspect of this political ferment that Brown found particularly intriguing: the rise of the New England clergy's campaign against the Bavarian Illuminati and other rumored Jacobin conspiracies to overthrow governments in Europe and America (Stauffer). The club's reaction to this transatlantic campaign was multifaceted and shifted in real time as accounts of the conspiracy circulated through the mid-Atlantic and the northeast. Elihu Smith seemed, before his death, to find the conspiracy theories fascinating but far-fetched (Smith 412). Dunlap rejected them as religious fanaticism and began to draft a never-completed

novel, *The Anti-Jacobin*, in which he parodied his brother-in-law, Timothy Dwight (Dunlap 1930, 152–172, 322, 345). Brown's fictional appropriation of the Illuminati scare (particularly in *Memoirs of Carwin*) doesn't so much indicate his endorsement or denial of the rumors as it reveals his fascination with the anxieties about publicity and public authority that they evoked (Waterman 2007, chap. 2), and though the *Monthly Magazine* praises Morse for exposing legitimate "villainy," it warns against full-blown hysteria (Clark 153). The club's clearest public resistance to the Illuminati scare—and perhaps the source of political tension that eventually disbanded the club—came from the Reverend Samuel Miller, who criticized Morse's "indiscreet and excessive zeal" in the February 10, 1801, edition of the *American Citizen* under the pseudonym Candour. In response, the Reverend William Linn, who three years later would become Brown's father-in-law, wrote to Morse: "Mr. Miller['s] . . . piece is not such as your friends here approved . . . but he would do it his own way, & proved what I have often found, that it is in vain to remonstrate with a *Democrat*."[44] When Miller called on Brown to contribute to the second volume of his *Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* a few years later, Brown referred to this ongoing controversy; Miller had commented in that letter, dated December 1800, that he would "rather have Mr. Jefferson the President of the United States, than [Charles C. Pinckney] an aristocratic Christian."[45] Miller's and Mitchill's enthusiasm over Jefferson's ascension to the presidency—and Mitchill's career, launched in 1801, as a Democratic-Republican member of Congress—was probably received coolly by the club's Federalists. Most nineteenth-century accounts of the club credit political partisanship for its ultimate collapse.

By August 1800, Brown had begun to contemplate a return to Philadelphia if the *Monthly Magazine* didn't soon prove profitable (Cope 55). His New York publisher, the French émigré Hocquet Caritat, had traveled to London hoping to negotiate an edition of Brown's novels there.[46] *Arthur Mervyn*'s second part was set for publication that fall in New York, but Brown wasn't hopeful about its profitability, either. He had spent the spring and summer working on new novels, *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot*, in which he planned to abandon "gloomy representations" (Cope 43) and substitute "moral causes and daily incidents in place of the prodigious and singular" (Letters 462–464). If writing and editing could not earn him a living, however, he would be forced to join his brothers' mercantile firm. The prospect of moving back to Philadelphia was not inviting. "All the inanimate objects of this city," Brown wrote to his former teacher Robert Proud in September, "are uniform, monotonous, and dull. I have been surprised at the little power they have over my imagination." In spite of friends like the Paxsons and the Copes, he still lamented the loss of New York's "[s]ocial and intellectual pleasures," which to him were "every thing" (Letters 455–456).

In November, however, Brown met up in Philadelphia with Elizabeth Linn, the oldest daughter of the New York Dutch Reformed minister William Linn. The encounter would help him determine to abandon the magazine and stay in Philadelphia. Brown had been introduced to Elizabeth Linn earlier in the year in New York. They may even have met as early as the fall of 1796, when Elihu Smith noted in his diary that he had accompanied "the Misses Linn" home from an evening spent at Edward and Samuel

Miller's lodgings in New York. (Brown, who had spent the day with Smith, may have been there, too.) The Linns were only marginally connected to the Friendly Club's larger circle. Smith noted that though the Linn sisters apparently knew who he was when he met them in 1796, he had "not [been] at all acquainted" with them previously (Smith 226). He may not have been inclined to know them better; a few months earlier, he had "looked over a miserable sermon of Dr. Linn's," and a few days before that, at Dunlap's home, he had read a manuscript play that Elizabeth's brother, John Blair Linn, had submitted to Dunlap's theater company, which he thought was "not altogether deficient in marks of talent, [but] is eminently wanting in dramatic propriety."[47] When Brown met the Linn sisters again in early 1800 through New York friends, Elizabeth identified herself as a reader of his work (Letters 518). After they encountered each other again in Philadelphia, where John Blair Linn had settled in the ministry, the relationship intensified rapidly over the space of a few months.

As biographers have noted, the courtship changed Brown's career permanently. If nothing else, Brown's financial pressures were magnified by the prospect of marriage and family, and his determination to stay in Philadelphia meant not only joining his brothers in business but eventually taking up some anonymous political writing on topics related to commercial regulations. But his association with the Linn family also seems to have required some intellectual gymnastics, including what appear to be sly semidisavowals of positions his fiction had seemed to put forward, especially on matters of religion.

If William Linn's religious devotion and Federalist partisanship were at odds with Brown's Godwinian tendencies, the Linn family's literary sensibilities must have been attractive to him (Sprague; Anderson; Leary). Brown had favorably reviewed William Linn's oration on the death of Washington in the March 1800 *Monthly Magazine*.[48] He published commentary on John Blair Linn's work in the April and December 1800 issues, and he found the Linn sisters, during his courtship of Elizabeth, to be worthy interlocutors and correspondents.[49] In Brown's *American Review*, his brief continuation of the review portion of the *Monthly Magazine*, he offered a lengthy and even-handed review of John Blair Linn's long poem *The Power of Genius*.[50] When Brown began the monthly *Literary Magazine, and American Register* in 1803, Linn frequently contributed pieces signed "I.O."[51] Brown also published work by his soon-to-be sister-in-law Susan, who would in the 1820s herself turn novelist.[52] And shortly following his and Elizabeth's marriage in late 1804, Brown contributed a life sketch to a posthumous edition of another long poem by her brother, who had died in August that year.[53] The cumulative effect seems to be courtship by editorial promotion, but it also indicates the degree to which literary activity characterized the Linn family environment.

Brown and Linn's protracted courtship stretched from December 1800 to November 1804, though they seem to have reached an understanding about an engagement by April 1801. When their romance began, Brown was thirty years old; Linn was five years younger. Linn spent these years in Philadelphia and New York, and while Brown traveled to New York on occasion to see her, he maintained his Philadelphia residency, as Cope had predicted he would, for the rest of his life. These four years saw Brown

undertake a number of new publishing projects: two novels, *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot*, both published in 1801; *The American Review, and Literary Journal*, which ran through 1802; and the early years of the *Literary Magazine, and American Register*, which ran from 1803 to 1807. Brown also published two anonymous political pamphlets, *Address to the Government* and *Monroe's Embassy* (both 1803; see chapter 12 in this volume), which critiqued Jeffersonian policy without necessarily advocating for Federalist alternatives, and a translation, with copious commentary in the notes, of the comte de Volney's *View of the Soil and Climate of the United States* (1804). Though the early courtship seems to have been dominated by Elizabeth's concerns about Brown's lingering feelings for Susan Potts[54] and her initial sense that Brown might engage in "imposture" and "duplicity,"[55] the evidence of their correspondence—or Brown's side of it, at least (her letters are not extant)—suggests that the largest obstacles were financial. Brown spent at least half of the four-year engagement working for his brothers. But he continued to hope that writing and editing might provide a living for him and his eventual family. Friends attempted to bring him business. Cope, for instance, secured for Brown a job writing a history of slavery, which Brown never completed, and Benjamin Rush hoped he would write a history of prison reform, a subject he felt "would glow under the eloquent strokes of his masterly pen" (Letters 637 n. 1).

Brown's parents and the Linn family may have objected to the engagement, though evidence is hard to come by. Linn's status as a non-Quaker may have troubled the Browns, though their older sons had also married outside the fellowship. They refused to attend the wedding, which was officiated by William Linn and resulted in Brown's expulsion from the Society of Friends.[56] William Linn, for his part, may have shared the sense of some that Brown's politics were too democratic; he may also have been exposed to rumors about Brown's early apostasy from Christian belief and preference for Godwin's system, which by this point had been associated in the Federalist imagination with Jefferson's politics.[57]

The Linns' feelings about their daughter's engagement to Brown may not be discernible from available evidence, but an episode in *Jane Talbot*, which Brown apparently had completed during the earliest months of his relationship with Linn (and then temporarily resolved not to publish), seems at least suggestive. The central dilemma is classic Brown: Jane Talbot is a married older woman whose husband passes away during the course of the story; Henry Colden is attracted to Jane but has already committed to another. In the novel, the moral monitoring comes from Jane's surrogate mother, Mrs. Fielder, who opposes Henry's attempt to marry Jane (now widowed). Henry's early letters, shown to her by one of his childhood friends, reveal him to have been a Godwinian: a "scoffer at promises," a "despiser of revelation," an "opponent of marriage." The novel never disproves her account of Henry's beliefs, and in the end, Henry undergoes a public conversion to Christianity that puts his sentiments in harmony with Jane's. But it seems significant, given fundamental narrative patterns in Brown's fiction, that this characterization of Godwinism comes from Mrs. Fielder, the novel's voice of false delicacy and rigid conservatism and the source of Jane's and Henry's misery. By contrast, throughout the novel, Jane repeatedly affirms that Henry's skepticism helps her refine

her own faith. In the end, the epistolary form holds subversive potential, keeping alive Brown's tendency to frame his reading audience as jury, since we know less about Henry's actual beliefs than about others' views of him and his own self-interested epistolary performance.

It is tempting to read this episode in Brown's final novel as part of a campaign to protect his reputation from the same kinds of accusations Henry Colden faces. In May 1800, during the same months he may already have been writing *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot*—and well into the transatlantic anti-Jacobin backlash against Godwin and Wollstonecraft—Brown told his friend Bayard that he still believed Godwin's to be "the most perfect" philosophical system he had encountered: "But said he, were I to marry, I should wish for my wife to be a Christian, with this system engrafted on her. For religion would afford that sanction & authority which would enforce obedience, & those motives which encourage to perseverance."[58] If Henry's concession at the novel's end indeed mirrors the author's own compromises, however, Brown's reputation was already fixed as a radical. Almost a year after *Jane Talbot* was published, for instance, Federalist scion Thomas Boylston Adams could still describe Brown, in a letter to his brother John Quincy Adams, as "a small, sly Deist, a disguised, but determined Jacobin, a sort of Sammy Harison [*sic*] Smith in 'shape and size the same'."[59]

If Brown ever abandoned his confidence in Godwin's philosophy, he never made that disavowal publicly.[60] He did, though, in launching the *Literary Magazine* in late 1803, publicly affirm his support for—though not necessarily his faith in—Christianity. Following an extended fantasy scenario in which he imagines his readers' curiosity about his identity and sentiments ("In politics, for example, he may be a malcontent; in religion a heretic"), he offers, in characteristically cagey language, some assurances that he is "without equivocation or reserve, the ardent friend and willing champion of the Christian religion. Christian piety he reveres as the highest excellence of human beings, and the amplest reward he can seek, for his labour, is the consciousness of having, in some degree however inconsiderable, contributed to recommend the practice of religious duties." Like most of Brown's periodical work, the *Literary Magazine* had very little explicit commentary on religion or partisan politics. The editorial, then, which also includes Brown's often cited assertion that he "should enjoy a larger share of my own respect, at the present moment, if nothing had ever flowed from my pen, the production of which could be traced to me," seems to announce more than it actually does (Dunlap 1815 2:60). Brown doesn't express regret here for anything he has written, only that he is so readily known as the author.

And yet authorship remained a defining identity—and aspiration—throughout Brown's final decade. "[A]uthorship, as a mere trade," he wrote in the fall of 1803, "seems to be held in very little estimation":

> While the *poor author*, that is to say, the author by trade, is regarded with indifference or contempt, the *author*, that is, the man who devotes to composition the leisure secured to him by hereditary influence, or by a lucrative profession or office, obtains from mankind an higher, and more lasting, and more genuine reverence