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In 1799, when Charles Brockden Brown wrote *Edgar Huntly: Memoirs of a Sleepwalker,* the Western world was still reeling from its recent revolutions. Although Americans had ceased fighting with the British sixteen years earlier and Napoleon had transformed France's Terror into full-blown war with Europe, revolutionary electricity still charged the Atlantic air. In late eighteenth-century Philadelphia, Brown studied the philosophy of Enlightenment thinkers, such as Godwin and Rousseau, whose ideas influenced the American and French revolutions. There, in the nation's capital, Brown saw their abstract revolutionary and political philosophies manifest as he witnessed the fledgling United States develop and read about the progression of the French Revolution. He also witnessed there, immigrant refugees who had escaped France's Terror or the subsequent slave revolts in the Caribbean. Even as the French Revolution grew three thousand miles away, slaves in Haiti had overthrown their French masters, causing even more French to flee to the US, joining their countrymen who had fled the Terror. The French aristocrats who had sought safety from the Terror by coming to America and the refugees from Haiti told horror stories of the consequences of their efforts to escape the violence of revolution. Neither the aristocrats nor the revolutionaries had predicted that the revolution in France would devolve into the Terror or that revolution would trigger successful slave rebellions.

At the end of the eighteenth century, France was not alone in facing internal turmoil and slave rebellions. Even after the American Revolution ended, contemporary writers observed that in the 1780s and 90s: "[God's] displeasure over slavery became manifest in the nation's prolonged economic distress, in the dissension between states, and in Shay's Rebellion…yellow-fever epidemics; warfare with Barbary pirates and

western Indians; the slave revolt in St. Domingue; the danger of being engulfed in a European war" (Davis 308). Americans witnessed similar turbulence plague their ally, France, where the violence perpetrated by the unleashed lower classes suggested that America would be in similar danger if its exploited classes were exposed to "what Winthrop Jordan has termed 'the cancer of revolution'"(Davis 329). The fear that something like the bloody violence of the Terror could transpire in America was not put to rest by the great distance between the two nations. Although America did not appear to have the same preexisting conditions that led France to catastrophe, newspapers and the tales of their new French neighbors made Americans acutely aware of the dangers facing a new nation still steeped in revolution.

The resulting uncertainty and fear affected Charles Brockden Brown both as a citizen and as a writer of the late eighteenth century. His civic involvement included membership in the American Philosophical Society. There, as a dutiful American taught to value reason over emotion, he could discuss the ideas of Enlightenment thinkers with friends such as Elihu Hubbard Smith, people who shared his interest in revolutionary philosophy. The Friendly Club, "a collection of artists, playwrights, lawyers and physicians…encouraged [Brown's] literary efforts" (Grabo 10) and cultivated his aesthetic talents. As an author, Brown saw America's recent past and uncertain future as well-suited to literary development through the Gothic genre. History and dark lore in Europe had helped give birth to the Gothic; as sites of cultural memory, the many castles, haunted manors and mythical ruins lent themselves to novels such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). In the European Gothic, castles and ruins act as focal points for cultural memory; they are

reminders of what came before and bring to mind both past glory as well as inevitable decay. In a sense, these places are always haunted, if not by spirits then by memories. When characters enter these ruins, it as almost as if they are stepping into history and reliving its passionate scenes of murder, love and terror—passions that stem from painful pasts awakened not only in Gothic castles, but also in the scenes of the French Revolution. *Edgar Huntly* explores these passions and the memories connected to them in an entirely different setting, a setting with frightening implications for the newborn United States.

As an American author, Brown faced the challenge of "calling forth the passions and engaging the sympathy of the reader" (Brown 3) using the milieu of the New World whose history was seemingly shorter and its ruins less obvious. In the Preface to *Edgar Huntly*, Brown explains that instead of looking to "means usually employed for this end" (3) such as "puerile superstition and exploded manners…Gothic castles and chimeras" (3), he will use "means hitherto unemployed by preceding authors" (3) in order to achieve Gothic effects. According to Brown, "The incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the western wilderness, are far more suitable; and, for a native of America to overlook these, would admit no apology" (3). Of course, the wilderness is not as straightforward a metaphor as a ruined castle. During America's colonial and imperialist development, the metaphor of the wilderness was often used to discuss the ugly aspects of colonization and expansion in euphemizing ways. The myth of the wilderness gave the impression that Americans had overcome nature and her savage inhabitants, and that westward expansion portended danger as well as glory for the nation. The wilderness housed the history and the future of the United States.

Brown's novel is situated on the border between American civilization and the wilderness in its full mythic glory, where reminders of history's brutal reality threaten the integrity of the wilderness myth. As Edgar Huntly will learn, the two can never completely be separated. The blend of true history and imperialist metaphor is seen on the first page of Brown's novel: a famous anecdote depicting the exploitation of Indians appears in *Edgar Huntly*'s wilderness in the form of an anonymous (but capitalized) Elm tree. It suggests the story of Penn's Elm, which was the initial boundary marker for a land trade between the Penn family and a tribe of Indians. The Penns were to receive all the land a man could traverse by a day's walk starting from the famous elm. Unfortunately for the Indians, the Penns had stationed trained runners along the route and appropriated far more land than they had agreed upon. The Elm has figured in other literature of the time, and Brown's Elm invites the reader to acknowledge the reference to the well-known Penn story. This Elm, the starting place for *Edgar Huntly*, functions symbolically to stir the memories of the novel's characters and remind its readers of the abuses of the past that have since been omitted or reinterpreted within the metaphor of the wilderness.

Edgar Huntly ostensibly depicts the frontier as a place out of time, where past, present and future exist simultaneously. Because Indians still inhabit the wilderness during this time, history itself continues to live in the frontier. Conflicts still exist between Indians and settlers along the frontier, almost as if they were reenacting history. The myth of the wilderness suggests that the frontier never changes, it simply moves westward. Therefore, each time empire pushes west, history repeats itself. In sharp contrast to the certain and final state of European castles, the wilderness represents a history and a future. Just as the wilderness threatened the first settlers, it continues to be

seen by late eighteenth-century Americans as the stage of danger and violence. In this way, the frontier becomes the national metaphor through which to discuss preoccupations with potential violence in the young nation. Specifically, because it exists on the edge of society, the wilderness is a much safer place to locate one's anxieties about the potential threat of violence. Despite fears of slave rebellions, foreign attacks, or civic uprisings, it was easier to relegate thoughts of danger to 'the wilderness,' instead of living with the fear that violence might erupt from and within the city itself. The wilderness is terrifically powerful as a historical symbol because it invokes not only these contemporary fears but also brings to mind the history of colonialist abuse of marginalized peoples. The wilderness awakens these fears and memories in *Edgar Huntly*. Brown's narrator, Edgar, warns of the powerful effects caused by the act of remembering, asking: "Am I sure…that emotions will not be re-awakened by my narrative, incompatible with order and coherence?" (5). Throughout the novel, memory serves as the trigger for unpredictable chaos, suggesting the dangers of cultural memory for the American people.

Memory frames Edgar's narrative, prompted by the murder of his good friend, Waldegrave, whose body is found under an Elm tree at the edge of the wilderness: "This tree, however faintly seen, cannot be mistaken for another…My pulse throbbed as I approached it" (9). Edgar cannot separate the Elm from memories of Waldegrave's murder. Each time he sees the Elm or remembers it, painful memories of Waldegrave's death consume him; as he passes the Elm, he says, "The scene and the time reminded me of my friend whom I had lost…My recollections once more plunged me into anguish and perplexity" (7). His immediate and recurring reaction to the memory of Waldegrave's death is powerful; simply seeing the Elm "revives" "the insanity of vengeance and grief"

(7) he felt at the initial news. However, despite the rage of vengeance and the overwhelming grief and anger he feels, Edgar (as a good Citizen should) makes great efforts to minimize his emotional reaction and emphasize his rational response. Because he has been raised in Enlightenment America and taught to value reason over emotion, he quickly refocuses his energies on a productive response: "Methought to ascertain the hand who killed my friend, was not impossible, and to punish the crime was just. That to forbear inquiry or withhold punishment was to violate my duty to God and to mankind" (8). Conspicuously absent here are the tones of emotional distress and unchecked passion he initially exhibits, as if reason comes to defend against passion felt belatedly. Edgar analyzes the situation and directs his thoughts towards a systematic restoration of justice without mention of revenge or hatred. At this point in the novel it still appears that one's capacity for reason can subdue violent or passionate impulses. Despite the fact that Edgar initially felt such a strong emotional response, the vengeance he threatens is held in check by his efforts to rationalize the situation. After "time allowed for [his] impetuosities to subside, and for sober thoughts to take place" (9) Edgar reflects, "Curiosity is vicious, if undisciplined by reason, and inconducive to benefit" (16). His detached tone suggests nothing of the violent passion he expressed pages earlier because asserting reason helps him to bury the painful memories of the past.

This ability to subdue passion with reason has been credited for the American Founders' success in establishing a viable nation and government. As Edgar appears to embody these values at the beginning of the novel, his subsequent actions shed light on the weaknesses of arguments that the American Founders truly embodied Enlightenment

reason. In her book, *On Revolution* (1963), Hannah Arendt writes that in contrast to the French, Americans did not base their decisions on anything but reason:

> Since passion had never tempted them in its noblest form as compassion, they found it easy to think of passion in terms of desire and to banish from it any connotation of its original meaning…Their thought did not carry them any further than to the point of understanding government in the image of individual reason and construing the rule of government over the governed according to the age-old model of the rule of reason over the passions. (Arendt 90-91)

For Edgar Huntly and the American Founding Fathers, this model, Locke's "right rule of reason", initially succeeds in maintaining peace and order (Ferguson 164). The passions appear to be kept in check and reason prevails. Decisions are made pragmatically, and like Edgar, Americans can deal with the passionate impulses awakened by painful memories through rationalization. Their ability to deal with an ugly past through rationalization sharply differs from the approach of the French, who, subscribing to Rousseauian thought, ignored or disregarded the impact of history on the present. By adhering to reason, Americans were able to repress the impulses suggested by memories of an abused past which helped them to maintain questionable imperialist control over subjugated races. Rousseau, on the other hand, thought of his state of nature as timeless and therefore imagined his naturally good man, the citizen of the general will, to exist out of time as well. Rousseau's assumption of timelessness ignores the influence of history on the naturally good man; as no one is free of history, no one is free of resentments or desires, the absence of which Rousseau's argument for the 'natural' goodness of man relies upon. Arendt falls victim to a similar fallacy in believing that America was founded

free of history as well. If the distinction between French and American thought were as clear as Arendt believes, Brown would have never written *Edgar Huntly* because in doing so, he explores the weaknesses of reason, a possibility for which Arendt does not allow.

As a scholar of Rousseau, Brown was aware of two great problems with taking for granted the rule of reason. Rousseau argues that in a state of nature, man is ignorant of reason and therefore susceptible to the "impetuosities" of passion, violent or otherwise. Such unrestrained passion would have posed a threat to America if it had been in a state of nature, but clearly it was not, because the states of nature that Locke and Rousseau describe only exist outside of time and outside of reality. The concept of the state of nature and the idealization of this notion arose because philosophers wanted to imagine a place where the corruptive influence of history and memory would not taint humankind. They see the passions as harmless when they exist outside of society or time. Rousseau sees the American frontier as a compelling example of a state of nature and often uses the American Indian as his model of primal man. In believing that any human could exist outside of time or the influence of society Rousseau ignores reality. Indian society is no less 'society' than an Anglo society, not to mention the long intertwined histories of Anglos and Indians in America. However, almost as an admission of the paradox of the state of nature, Rousseau touches on a more realistic alternative. He asserts that once a man has been reduced to a state of utter slavery, he enters a different and more perverse state of nature as a result of his complete loss of liberty. This state is more 'perverse' because it admits the taint of history; in contrast to original man, the slave is not free from painful memories of abuses suffered at the hands of society. Both of Rousseau's images of states of nature suggest that even if Americans could control their passionate

impulses through reason, they faced irrational, passionate and violent beings both from their borders on the frontier in the form of Indians and from within their very own cities and houses in the form of slaves. This fear of violence from the 'other,' appears to be the primary danger at the beginning of *Edgar Huntly*.

According to Rousseau, Indians and slaves had been robbed of reason. But rather than existing out of time, their history is full of painful memories similar to, but much more extensive than, the kind of memories Edgar has concerning his murdered friend. If Edgar feels such a passionate and vengeful response when the Elm awakens his memory of Waldegrave's death, what would happen if the memories of these people were awakened? Edgar's situation raises an interesting issue for the American people. While reason might seem like an unshakable force, its weakness lies in the fact that while the white settlers and colonizers must repress memories of their violent past, they must also rely on the colonized peoples to do the same. If the memories of the colonized were awakened, thus igniting the passionate memories of the colonizers, chaos and violence would break out on every level of society. France had already seen a similar chain of events when the passions overtook the leaders of the French Revolution and subsequently consumed the poor of their country who in turn unleashed their passions on the upper class whereupon all the bastions of reason were destroyed by a powerful vengeance. Of course, according to Arendt, France had many more problems to start with than did America, namely the French did not give reason the importance it deserved. As she notes, Americans could "banish" the passions away—out of sight, out of mind—and thus hopefully maintain order and peace despite perpetually subjugating and exploiting the 'other' races of America. When the French stopped rationalizing the abuse of the poorest

members of the Third Estate, they began letting their compassion for the exploited, misfortunate souls dictate their action and subsequently unleashed the violent and vengeful passion of the lower classes. By adhering to reason, Americans could ignore the abuses they perpetrated as well as the potential for violence in their country—they ascribed the passions to the peoples they already controlled and could easily identify: the Indians and slaves. By thinking of these 'others' as the only threats to reason, Americans could think of themselves as secure from any violence similar to the Terror because they could keep an eye on their potential enemies. However, Brown's novel suggests that Americans were not quite as secure as they or Arendt thought

Because Americans so eagerly convinced themselves of their invulnerability, Edgar is at a loss when he attempts to find Waldegrave's killer. Because of a rationalized sense of security, Edgar has problems understanding how Waldegrave could have been killed in the first place, saying, "Once more I asked, who was his assassin? By what motives could he be impelled to a deed like this?" (7) According to Edgar, Waldegrave was such a noble man that "the existence of an enemy was impossible" (7). Edgar further laments that there were "no traces of the slayer visible, no tokens by which his place of refuge might be sought, the motives of his enmity or his instruments of mischief might be detected" (7). In the town of Solebury, where Edgar is familiar with all its citizens, he does not know whom to suspect. Despite the town's proximity to the wilderness, Edgar does not consider that Indians might have had a hand in Waldegrave's death.

It is strange and problematic that Edgar never suspects Indians (who turn out to be Waldegrave's killers in the end). In the Preface Brown clearly refers to the threat that Indians pose to frontier settlers, yet Edgar never explores that possibility. In fact, he

declares that “we imagined ourselves to be at a distance inaccessible to danger” (166) in specific reference to the Indians. Perhaps the omission is less strange in light of Edgar’s habit of repressing memories or burying the past. The murder of Waldegrave, whose suggestive name comes from the German: forest-grave, eventually leads to exploration and revelation of things buried in the wilderness ranging from the history of American colonization to the massacre of Edgar’s family during his childhood. The way the novel deals with this issue suggests Americans rationalized away the fear of Indians and slave rebellions to such a degree that they could not even suspect them of such a crime despite the obvious implications of a murder in the wilderness on the edge of Indian territory.

This dismissal of the ‘other’ creates a much more serious problem than the threat of violence from Indians or slaves. If neither Edgar nor the ‘other’ is to be blamed, then Edgar must look to his own town for a suspect. Of course, he is not too eager to suspect his own countrymen or himself. The first person he suspects is the only immigrant in the town, the Irish Clithero. Edgar initially suspects two men, but notes, “one of whom was a native…He could not be the criminal” (14). Despite his reputation as an upstanding character, the fact that Clithero is an immigrant (especially a Catholic) is enough to place him under suspicion: “these considerations appeared so highly momentous, as almost to decide the question of his guilt” (15). Edgar is quick to assign blame to the only “other” he can find. Although Edgar has no qualms about blaming the immigrant, Clithero looks just like his fellow townsfolk, and thus begins to erode the reassuring idea that danger can only come from the distinctly physically ‘other’. Aside from his origins, he is indistinguishable from the other men. The thought that a killer could live undetected in their midst poses a worse threat than the possibility of violence from those who are so

distinctly “other”. It troubles Edgar that he suspects Clithero without having a way of discerning his guilt or motives; with no outward signs to rely upon, any man might be a killer. Edgar’s quandary here suggests the same dilemma faced by Robespierre during the Terror. By likening Edgar to this distinctly French disciple of Rousseau, Brown suggests that not all Americans are as soundly schooled in reason as they believe themselves to be. Robespierre was obsessed with ‘outing’ Frenchmen guilty of treason, but had no way of distinguishing between patriots and traitors because the discerning factor he sought was completely internal. Because Clithero is outwardly identical to the ‘patriots’ of Solebury, finding what motives he has or what threat he poses is nearly impossible. As Edgar says, “To comprehend it, demands penetration into the recesses of [Clithero’s] soul” (14). Unfortunately, as the book demonstrates, discovering what lies in the recesses of one’s soul remains beyond the capabilities of even Enlightenment reason. If Clithero’s foster mother had had this knowledge, she would never have taken him under her wing.

When Clithero divulges the history of his upbringing, it becomes apparent that Edgar is not the first one to be in the dark about Clithero’s innocence or guilt. Clithero’s tale of his life in Ireland reveals that one can never know what really goes on inside a person nor predict how that person will act. Clithero’s background is lengthy enough to comprise its own novel, but in *Edgar Huntly*, it serves to foreshadow the chaos that will dominate Edgar’s life. Despite the distance between Clithero’s homeland and Edgar’s village, the same passions and similar violence transpire in Edgar’s adventures in the wilderness as well. As Clithero’s tale will show, his life is a microcosm of the French Revolution, thus it later surprises Edgar when he finds himself in a similar situation despite being in the American wilderness. In Ireland, France’s Catholic ally, Clithero is

born to a peasant family whose farm lies on the land of a wealthy noble. Clithero describes the noble as a despicable tyrant who failed to appreciate the virtues of his wife and much abused his family. He betrays the family's trust by taking a mistress and subsequently is killed by a lover of that mistress. After the death of this tyrant, the noble family is missing a father-figure, but the lady, Mrs. Lorimer, decides of her newfound freedom and wealth "to employ it in the diffusion of good" (36). She visits the peasants who reside on her land and is moved to take Clithero under her wing. She brings him into her estate and bestows upon him everything to make him equal to her own son. Mrs. Lorimer reflects Rousseau's philosophy in her commitment to compassion and benevolence. She can be seen as an allegorical figure for Robespierre or other French revolutionary leaders who embraced the idea of revolution through benevolence. Her treatment of Clithero mirrors Robespierre's attitude toward the wretched poor of France. Inspired by Rousseau's writings, these leaders believed that France would flourish as a result of their compassion for the lower classes, but by applying Rousseauian theory in practice, terrible violence resulted because of inconsistencies between utopist theorizing and concrete reality.

In his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (1755), Rousseau presents compassion as the most noble and ancient virtue. In addressing other philosopher's views of original man in a state of nature, Rousseau assigns two primal urges to man: a kind of self-preservation that avoids violence if possible, and an undeniably instinctive compassion for any other suffering being. He views man as inherently good and naturally compassionate. In Brown's novel, Mrs. Lorimer operates under this assumption when she adopts Clithero, unaware that he will turn out to be a violent, unpredictable madman. She

makes the same mistake that Robespierre made in taking too literally the noble idealism of Rousseau. This naïveté results in such a catastrophic backfiring that one has to question the wisdom of letting compassion and the view of man as inherently good dictate action and policy. Rousseau's inherently good man is one who has not been corrupted by exposure to society, one who exists outside of time and history. For this reason he creates a theoretical plane where society, time and history do not exist; by doing so, he can view humans as inherently good. Those operating on the worldly plane, however, do not have this necessary luxury and so are sorely disappointed when humans turn out not to be inherently good.

In telling his story, though, Clithero paints such an idyllic picture of Mrs. Lorimer that one could hardly question the virtue of her compassion and in fact she, like Robespierre, believes entirely in her the sincerity of her intentions. It appears that her benevolence has solved all the problems of Clithero's life until the memory of past tyranny awakens violent and passionate impulses in Clithero**.** The French Revolution, too, in its beginning stages, appeared to have solved the problems of the Third Estate. But like Mrs. Lorimer's case, imminent disaster closely followed the unrestrained expression of compassion. Where compassion rules, reason is marginalized; without reason to guide them, the lower classes of France embraced the violent passions awakened within them by being the objects of unrestrained compassion. Even Rousseau predicts the dangers of letting the oppressed have just a taste of freedom: "There is in freedom...something which fortifies robust constitutions used to it, but which overwhelms, ruins and intoxicates weak and delicate people unused to it" (*Discourse* 58). Education and social elevation can be dangerous without the guiding light of reason, but Clithero has already begun to discover

how fortunate he is to have the kind of freedom Mrs. Lorimer has bestowed upon him. Clithero explains, “In proportion as my views were refined and enlarged by history and science, I was likely to contract a thirst of independence, and an impatience of subjection and poverty” (37). Clithero’s situation so closely reflects the events and attitudes leading up to the French Revolution, so different from the situation in the United States, that while hearing the story, Edgar does not consider that similar events could unfold in America despite the fact that Clithero’s story actually foreshadows the violent chaos that will soon consume Edgar’s life. Mrs. Lorimer’s unreasoned benevolence seems foreign compared to the attitudes of the American Founding Fathers, but Brown will show that unreasoned benevolence is of equal danger to the United States. As Arendt might have guessed, Mrs. Lorimer’s benevolence towards Clithero leads to tragedy despite her good intentions; the history of subjection primes him for further memories of tyranny when Wiatte returns. That is to say, because Clithero once knew the oppression of the upper classes and has only recently distanced himself from those memories, Wiatte’s return will cause that painful history to resurface because his return signifies the possibility of further oppression.

Wiatte’s return coincides with the peak of Mrs. Lorimer’s benevolence, as if to keep her compassion in check. While she offers the hand of her beautiful niece to Clithero it is revealed that Mrs. Lorimer is only half of an interesting dichotomy: she has a twin brother, Wiatte. Just as all her energies “were exerted in the cause of virtue,” (43) her brother “exceeded in depravity all that has been imputed to the arch-foe of mankind”(44). Although they look similar, these two characters are complete opposites. Despite being polar opposites, they are clearly connected, and Mrs. Lorimer believes they

share the same life-force; if one dies, so shall the other. Knowing that Brown is exploring the idea of *revolution*, one can think of the image of a coin, with Mrs. Lorimer on one side and Wiatte on the other. In revolution, one side is bound to bring about the other. In a revolution based on benevolence, Mrs. Lorimer's benevolence and Wiatte's tyranny are perpetually connected. Without a history of injustice and oppression, benevolence and compassion would be useless; their very existence acknowledges past injustice. Compassion can only take place after witnessing the suffering of another sentient being. In this case, Mrs. Lorimer's benevolence is preceded by the rule of tyrants such as Wiatte who ensured that peasants like Clithero remain subjugated. When Mrs. Lorimer raises Clithero from poverty to nobility, it seems Wiatte reappears naturally, as if driven by need for homeostasis. Likewise, his seemingly inevitable return triggers a flood of painful memories for Clithero who has tasted freedom but remembers oppression. This being the case, Mrs. Lorimer's liberating benevolence is never far from Wiatte's oppressive tyranny. Clithero's madness begins as Sarsefield relates Wiatte's history to Clithero, who says, "The tale of that man's misdeeds, amplified and dramatized… oppressed me with astonishment" (59). Shortly after, threatening thoughts of Wiatte and the tyranny he represents begin to disturb Clithero's sleep and fearful passion consumes his waking thoughts. The astonishment he feels, his obsessive fear of Wiatte, becomes a tyranny in itself, slowly choking his freedom and sanity.

The revolution Mrs. Lorimer effects by compassionately raising Clithero from poverty to power brings about Wiatte's return in an uncanny way. However, instead of reinstating his own tyrannical reign, he is merely the catalyst for the emergence of Clithero's own passion-fueled tyranny. When Clithero is mugged by an unknown

assailant, he kills the man in self-defense, only to discover later that the man was Wiatte. As a child of compassion, Clithero cannot cope with the dissonance between compassion and self-defense. Not only does he fail to reconcile these two conflicting primal impulses, he is also unable to come to terms with his own worthiness as a pending member of the nobility; he cannot see that he has done no wrong. Instead, his guilt and fear stemming from this dark encounter consume him and lead to a tyranny worse than Wiatte's. As the object of compassion he feels a never-ending "ingratitude" because he has done nothing to warrant the kindness he has received and feels he will never be able to repay the debt (80). The strange paradox of simultaneously feeling guilty for his good fortune and fearful about losing it heightens his emotional fervor to the point of violence. The culmination of Mrs. Lorimer's benevolent revolution is characterized by bloodshed and terror. "Fear and dismay had resumed their dominion" (69), says Clithero in reaction to the events surrounding Wiatte's return, shortly before killing Wiatte, attempting to kill Mrs. Lorimer, and nearly murdering his own fiancée. Clithero's situation mirrors the Terror of the French Revolution: the liberated lower classes let their own fear of tyranny and oppression become an oppressive and violent tyranny itself and while the upper class had not returned to terrorize the Third Estate, the mob created a worse threat to their freedom.

All this chaos transpires as the result of a gradual build up of sentimentalism untempered by reason. Clithero's narrative has a much different tone than Edgar's pragmatic, thoughtful explication of events. The Irishman's narrative more closely resembles eighteenth-century sentimental novels, full of emotional gushing and dramatic feelings. When Clithero thinks of Mrs. Lorimer's niece, he says "I sometimes found my

cheeks wet with tears, that had fallen unperceived, and my bosom heaved with involuntary sighs" (49). Although Edgar uses similar descriptions in his narrative, he does not tend to do so until after he has encountered Clithero and been struck by compassion; Clithero on the other hand approaches all of life in this way. The longer he resides with Mrs. Lorimer, the more he gives in to sensibility. He has not been taught (as Edgar has) to reign in his wild passions and assert reason over his sentimental impulses; thus when Wiatte returns, the floodgates of Clithero's emotion burst open, leading to the violence which destroys his life. The unseen caveat of Clithero's descent into madness is the action of compassion as the precipitating factor. As Rousseau explains, compassion is such a natural impulse that no one expects it to lead to further suffering. Thus Edgar is unprepared for the catastrophe that will result when he is overcome by compassion for the beleaguered Clithero, despite the warning he might have gleaned from hearing of Mrs. Lorimer's mistakes.

Like Robespierre, Mrs. Lorimer never suspected that those whom she helped would become consumed by violence and turn on their benefactress. The 'real world' application of Rousseau's ideas about compassion and the inherent goodness of man reveal the dangers of arguments for the rule of the general will. If every man is supposed to hold in his heart the best interests of the nation but actions show that some are not acting in the best interest of the nation, then how can one tell who embodies the general will and who is a traitor? Clithero appears innocent at first and even receives a liberal education, yet his 'inherent goodness' and education do not prevent him from becoming a violent rebel. Mrs. Lorimer never suspects that her good intentions will go awry and understandably has no way of predicting that Clithero will mishandle her benevolence.

She does not have the luxury of racial prejudice that enables Edgar to be wary of Clithero. But after hearing Clithero's tale, even Edgar wonders, "Is there a criterion by which truth can always be distinguished?" (86). Clithero's motives remained hidden from Mrs. Lorimer, and even after his insanity is revealed, her compassion for him continues to blind her to the danger. The same question led to Robespierre's obsession with hypocrisy, causing him to see traitors everywhere; his passionate and hopeless search fueled the flames of the Terror and kept the guillotines busy. Robespierre realized that he could not tell the difference between patriots and traitors because they all appeared the same. Rousseau's theory of the general will informed Robespierre that all countrymen should have the nation's best interest in mind, but he was unable to tell who his countrymen were and who opposed his revolution. His insane attempt to tell the difference allowed violent passion to dictate his actions; he held tribunals to judge those whom he suspected of treason and allowed suspicion to be sufficient criteria for guilt. What Robespierre sought to do, that is, intuit guilt, was an impossible task that cost the lives of many French men and women. In the United States, suspicion took a different form because of racial distinctions. By deluding themselves into thinking that the only threats to the nation could come from the 'other,' the United States did not have to risk mistaking a patriotic American from a traitor because the distinction was made by race. This rationalized racism blinded Americans to real dangers threatening their country and perpetuated the exploitation and abuse of 'other' races as long as they could scapegoat their subjugated class.

Robespierre on the other hand, was blinded by his indiscriminate compassion for the lower classes and despite the potential violence he was unleashing, Robespierre, like

Brown's Edgar Huntly, failed to regard himself as anything other than incorruptible. Because he was a student of Rousseau and therefore idealized compassion as the noblest virtue, the scenes of poverty in France fueled his insatiable need to express compassion. Hannah Arendt argues that because the French were compelled to see the miserable "spectacle" of poverty around them, they were unable to exert reason over the strong impulses of compassion. This giving in to compassion equated to a loss of reason on the part of the leaders of the revolution as well as the mobs that gave it force. Rousseau argues that man in a state of nature feels only the drives of self-preservation and compassion. He writes that self-preservation is different than the "kill or be killed" philosophy supported by others because man in a state of nature has no desires until he is contaminated by society. Once he has desires he will act to achieve them (perhaps violently) unless reason restrains him. By embodying compassion, Robespierre and other French leaders revert towards a state of nature, thus disregarding the safety provided by reasoned thinking. Their compassion awakens the memories of oppression in the poor who in turn feel the passion of vengeance moving within them. The strange amalgamation of acting as if they were in a state of nature (i.e. letting passion dictate their behavior without the temperance of reason) combined with the memories of oppression and abuse at the hands of the aristocracy resulted in an almost unstoppable wave of vengeful violence and the deaths of forty-thousand French men and women. The question raised by *Edgar Huntly* is: what would happen if these elements were to come together under the right circumstances (i.e. the wilderness) in America?

With the dubious advantage of hindsight, Arendt argues that the United States was never in similar danger because the emphasis that the Founders placed on reason

made them invulnerable and led to the success of the American Revolution: “they felt no pity to lead them astray from reason” (Arendt 90). Arendt’s view ignores the very contrary sentiments of late eighteenth-century Americans. *Edgar Huntly* specifically explores fears about the potential for the eruption of violence within American society. Her argument for America’s invulnerability is weak in two ways: one, she supposes that the lack of extreme poverty in the US meant that the American Founders were never moved to compassion; and two, she disregards any suggestion that they were ever less than entirely reasonable or that their adherence to reason was nothing more than ostentation. Although class issues did not characterize the American Revolution the way they did the French, Arendt, like the American Founding Fathers, finds it convenient to elide issues of racism or colonialism in discussions of the right rule of reason. In fact, it appears as if reliance on reason grew in proportion to the misdeeds of colonialism. Repressing a violent history necessarily requires great rationalizing power. By saying, “It is as though the American Revolution was achieved in a kind of ivory tower” (Arendt 90), she invites the ‘real’ world to inform her philosophy, just as the Terror helped Robespierre to understand the dangers of idealism.

In Brown’s novel, Edgar’s encounter with Clithero and subsequent misadventures illuminate the fallacies of Arendt’s reasoning. Until Edgar meets Clithero, all the passion, violence and compassion take place abroad and by the action of foreigners who cannot exert reason over passion (the way Edgar does after Waldegrave’s death). In fact, Edgar demonstrates the same feeling of security Arendt argues for, although he does so for different reasons. Edgar never thinks that violence could come from his countrymen because he, like the rest of America, thought of danger as coming from the ‘other;’ only

later does he discover the irony of this statement. Edgar begins this journey of discovery when, at the sight of Clithero's distress, Edgar says, "Never did I witness a scene of such mighty anguish…Every sentiment at length, yielded to my sympathy" (10). As Rousseau discusses, the sight of another suffering being instinctively prompts feelings of compassion. Despite Edgar's previous prejudice, Clithero's sorrowful appearance disbands his suspicions. For a moment, compassion does function out of time, the way Rousseau described: history seems to have ceased existing, for Edgar is only aware of Clithero's suffering, and acts as if he never harbored any ill will toward the man. This illusion of timelessness appears real as Edgar begins his adventure. The more he explores this illusion, the more he finds fault with it. For now, Edgar's compassion helps him identify with Clithero and he begins to let his guard down. The compassion he feels is so strong that Edgar's reason starts to weaken; Edgar admits, "Instead of one whom it was my duty to persecute, I beheld, in this man, nothing but an object of compassion" (11). Like Robespierre, the more compassion Edgar feels, the less he his able to hold on to reason.

The decline of Edgar's power of reason increases by degrees as he becomes more and more consumed by compassion for Clithero. Interestingly, the more Edgar reverts to a state of nature (i.e. man driven by compassion and self-preservation) the further into the wilderness he goes. Edgar's journey into the woods preceding the first time he sees Clithero takes him off the beaten path: "I climbed the steeps, crept through the brambles, leapt the rivulets and fences with undeviating aim, till at length I reached the craggy and obscure path" (9). His next encounter with Clithero leads him on an even longer chase through the wilderness until Clithero disappears into the depths of a cave. Compassion,

the most noble passion stemming from the heart, has led him into the heart's domain. As Arendt suggests, the heart is "a place of darkness which, with certainty no human eye can penetrate; the qualities of the heart need darkness and protection against the light" (Arendt 91). The inference is that the heart should remain in the dark where it is safe from too curious explorers such as Edgar Huntly. She warns against entering its domain, aware of the dangers of looking too closely at the heart; for Arendt and the Founders, who all value reason so highly, the heart is not meant to be examined by reason. Edgar, on the other hand, acknowledges the danger but erroneously assures himself that his powers of reason will protect him from whatever may happen in the depths of the cave. After hearing Clithero's tale of misfortune Edgar seeks him out in the cave he previously declined to enter. As he enters the cave, he reflects:

> A sort of sanctity and awe environed it, owing to the consciousness of absolute and utter loneliness. It was probable that human feet had never before gained this recess, that human eyes had never been fixed upon these gushing waters. The aboriginal inhabitants had no motives to lead them into caves like this…Since the birth of the continent, I was probably the first who had deviated thus remotely from customary paths of men. (99)

The cave clearly is depicted as a true state of nature. Nothing of society, history or civilization exists within it, and Edgar places himself as pre-aboriginal. Rousseau began his discussion of the state of nature as an "experiment" in which he would take away all society and civilization and send man back to a place just like the one Edgar describes here. Interestingly, Edgar prefaces his decision to go into the wilderness to "rescue" Clithero by saying, "No caution indeed can hinder the experiment from being hazardous.

Is it wise to undertake experiments by which nothing can be gained, and much may be lost?" (16). However, as a 'reasonable' American, Edgar decides he can overcome the dangers that await him in the wilderness saying, "Should it be impossible to arm myself with firmness? If forbearance be the dictate of wisdom, cannot it be so deeply engraven on my mind as to defy all temptation, and be proof against the most abrupt surprise?" (15). His rationale predicts Arendt's view of early Americans; however even she could not foresee the surprise he would find inside the cave. Arendt believes that America was entirely dissimilar to France; Edgar believed that Clithero's tale of violent passion was safely confined in Europe, across three thousand miles of ocean. It is no wonder then, that Edgar reacts so strongly when his American wilderness begins to resemble scenes he previously thought impossibly foreign.

Almost as if he were transported to the streets of Paris, Edgar beholds a disheveled Clithero before him in the cave:

> His scanty and coarse garb, had been nearly rent away by brambles and thorns, his arms, his bosom and cheek were overgrown and half-concealed by hair. There was somewhat in his attitude and looks denoting more than the anarchy of thoughts and passions. His rueful, ghastly, and immoveable eyes, testified not only that his mind was ravaged by despair, but that he was pinched with famine. (100)

The language used in this description (e.g. "anarchy," "rueful," "famine") calls to mind scenes of the Terror. Arendt argues that France was moved to revolution as a result of overwhelming compassion for the masses of famished, rueful-eyed, despairing beggars in the streets of Paris. Similar scenes from Parisian streets "testified" to Robespierre the

truth he could never seem to find in his tribunals. Extreme poverty and hunger, guilt and violence characterized the Third Estate during the Terror, the result of, and driving force behind, the passions that gave shape to the revolution. Arendt suggests that America was safe from such anarchy because scenes like this did not exist in the United States.

Understandably then, more than any other moment in the tale, this 'spectacle' sets Edgar in motion. He is overcome with "benevolent intentions" (103). From this point forward, Edgar devotes all his efforts to helping Clithero both physically and emotionally. Edgar's powers of reason begin to diminish even more rapidly, and he begins to think that Clithero was very noble in attempting to kill Mrs. Lorimer, saying, "He sought to rescue her from tormenting regrets" (106). Edgar finds it quite easy to euphemize Clithero's actions despite the fact that now he even physically looks like a madman or a savage, demonstrating his ability to stigmatize and dehumanize the 'other' when clear physical distinctions are apparent.

The memories awakened in him by his compassion for Clithero begin to disturb Edgar's sleep. He spends a night at Inglefield's house but can only think of Clithero, saying, "The image of its last inhabitant could not fail of being called up, and of banishing repose" (109). Memory and compassion play out their strange relationship as compassion for Clithero awakens memories in Edgar which in turn begin to fuel further passionate impulses. As memory and compassion conspire to consume Edgar entirely, he returns to the cave yet again in search of Clithero, and in trying to bring food to the Irishman, nearly loses his life to the dangers of the wilderness as a wild panther and the perils of the landscape come within inches of killing him. This brief journey into the wilderness heightens the intensity of the memories and passions Edgar had previously

kept in check. Each essay into nature reduces his control of reason and accelerates the cycle of passions and memories. Even when he emerges from the wilderness, he does not fully regain control of reason. When he returns to town after this series of close calls memories of Clithero and now Waldegrave continue to plague him. When he sleeps, "the image of Waldegrave flitted before [him]" (124). He soon delves into a reverie of memories about Waldegrave which are now less governed by reason (as a result of the compassion that is consuming him). The reason that he previously employed to subdue his passionate and vengeful response to the memories of Waldegrave's death has evaporated as a result of having entered the wilderness, the domain of memory and passion. At this point, Edgar undergoes an incredible transformation, presumably resulting from the powerful combination of compassion for Clithero and painful memories of both Waldegrave's death and Clithero's sorry state. Here, Brown is suggesting that this combination can transform a man entirely, rendering him unrecognizable to himself.

Without any narrative continuity, Edgar awakens disrobed and disheveled in the darkest recesses of the same cave where he had earlier found Clithero in a savage state. If the cave was described as a state of nature, now Edgar is unmistakably a primal man with no history and no connection to civilization. He notes, "I was conscious, for a time, of nothing but existence" (152). It is almost as if Brown is borrowing lines from Rousseau, who describes primal man using the same terms: "His soul, which nothing disturbs, dwells only in the sensation of its present existence" (*Discourse* 90). The next thing Edgar becomes aware of is a terrific hunger, stronger than any he has felt before. Just like Rousseau's primitive man, he is driven by the need to survive. His hunger drives him first

to try eating the linen of his shirt and then prompts him to consider cutting open his arms and drinking his own blood. After experiencing the force of these passions, it would not surprise Edgar to know that the language of cannibalism was often used to describe the Terror. Gone is the reason he previously employed, replaced by primal urges. When a panther approaches, Edgar lodges his tom-hawk into its skull and proceeds to devour its raw flesh. He wastes no thoughts on the pain that will follow eating the raw panther, for, as Rousseau notes, primal man "sells his cotton bed in the morning, and in the evening comes weeping to buy it back, having failed to foresee he would need it for the next night" (*Discourse* 90). The pains that follow eating the panther cause Edgar to wish for death.

Unlike Rousseau's primal man however, Edgar stops to assess his circumstances and he attempts a superficial application of reason to his situation. Edgar is entirely unaware of how ridiculous he sounds describing his situation in such a rational and analytical way despite his forlorn state, covered in blood and filth. The irony continues throughout the duration of his wilderness journey as his actions betray his thoughtful analysis. This vestigial ability to speak the language of reason highlights an important distinction between him and Rousseau's primal man. Rousseau likes to think of the American Indian as a true primal man in a state of nature; however, he fails to consider that like Edgar, all people carry memories of society and no one, even 'savages,' can exist completely outside the influence of society. It is this contamination of time, and therefore, history, that Rousseau does not take into account when he argues for the inherent goodness of man. Or perhaps Rousseau understands the practical problems

facing his theory, and the true fault lies with men such as Robespierre who thought Rousseau's inherently good man could exist in the Enlightenment world.

The implications of society and history's influence on even an ostensibly 'primal man' become very evident as Edgar attempts to exit the cave. Although he is a 'primal man' with no history to complicate his basic desires, he does not remain this way for long. As he approaches the mouth of the cave, Edgar notices a group of Indians sleeping in the cave. Their appearance sends him into a strange vertigo in which the history of the New World is awakened. He asks himself "Had some mysterious power snatched me from the earth, and cast me, in a moment, into the heart of the wilderness?" (164). All of a sudden, the dreadful "other" is right before him as Edgar finds himself transported (almost as if through time) deep into Indian territory. Suddenly his narrative tone breaks as a flood of personal memories and history awaken within him. He recounts the Indian Wars and without ever having hinted at it before, informs the reader that his parents and baby brother were "murdered in their beds" (166) by Indians and that his "house was pillaged, and then burnt to the ground" (166). Two-thirds of the way through the novel, Indians have barely been mentioned until the wilderness brings Edgar face to face with his memory. Edgar tells us, "I never looked upon, or called up the image of a savage without shuddering" (166). How could such a strong feeling go uncommented upon for so long in a narrative told by the most effusive man in the thirteen states? Although the answer is not quite clear, Edgar makes it obvious that his mind has a terrific rationalizing power that serves to keep him ignorant of unpleasant realities his conscience would rather not face.

As he considers his situation and the possible danger awaiting him, his internal deliberations suggest the national discursive struggles that characterized the process of creating the legislation and philosophy which would govern the new nation. Edgar concludes that he could either escape unnoticed through the back of the cave, or wait in the shadows until the Indians are gone. Unfortunately the peace of mind this plan brings him is constantly interrupted by the recurring prods of memory, urging him to take revenge on the Indians for the violence his family suffered at their hands. His options become less clear as the situation becomes more complicated; Edgar must decide between the morally right choice, what he *feels* he should do and what he *thinks* he should do. Brown suggests the complications inherent in the deliberative process that Arendt describes as simply based on reason. We still do not know what Edgar would have done, because as he sits deliberating, he notices that the Indians have a captive girl with them. He has two thoughts upon seeing her: one, that she will blow his cover, and two, that he might still escape and return with others to rescue her. Quite contrary to simple, rational decision making, Edgar must deal with the conflux of reason and passions such as fear, vengeance, and compassion which all come into play in this scene.

Although he could still escape and rescue the girl later, Edgar's memories prompt him to rationalize the need for immediate violence. He goes back and forth, back and forth, oscillating between killing or fleeing, and when he does decide to attack, he cannot even be sure why he is doing so and thus presents a slew of half-reasons to vindicate his actions:

> Let it be remembered, however, that I entertained no doubts about the hostile designs of these men. This was sufficiently indicated by their arms, their guise,

> and the captive who attended them. Let the fate of my parents, likewise, be remembered. I was not certain but that these very men were the assassins of my family, and were those who had reduced me and my sisters to the condition of orphans and dependants. No words can describe the torment of my thirst. Relief to these torments, and safety to my life, were within view. How could I hesitate? (171)

While the danger certainly exists, Edgar has explained that he could have escaped. His passions however are so strong that he summons all the 'reasons' he can think of to trick himself into believing that he is acting rationally. This suggests the natural reaction of Enlightenment Americans to uncomfortable or frighteningly strong passion: to compile enough 'reasons' to rationalize actions that are truly motivated by the impulses of passion rather than pragmatic reason. Of all his reasons, Edgar elaborates most on the least plausible one. That this group of Indians might have been the same men who killed his family fifteen years earlier is quite far fetched for someone who likes to believe himself a rational thinker. Edgar proceeds to kill an Indian after deliberating even further, but even describes the act in a detached way saying, "the hatchet buried *itself* in his breast" (italics mine, 172). The same language might be used to describe the guillotine, an almost autonomous killing machine. Watching the Indian die before him, Edgar launches into another wordy defense of his actions and heads out into the wilderness; by maintaining a semblance of reason, he is able to hide the brutality of his actions from himself.

As he proceeds further into the wilderness, he continues exploring the memorial domain of the United States, a domain whose memories and passions reveal the weakness of his powers of reason. He comes to a cabin which he later explains belongs to an old

Indian woman who refused to move away with her tribe. Her hut lies not quite in civilization but not entirely in the wilderness. She is a strange representative of the strained relations between settlers and Indians; at times she is peaceful, at times she incites the Indians to attack white settlements. Her place on the border between the two worlds more accurately reflects the interactions of settlers and Indians as opposed to the supposedly isolated 'noble savages' Rousseau imagines in his state of nature. As such, the house is a symbol of the history of interaction between settlers and Indians and thus sets the stage for more violence. Edgar finds his uncle's rifle on the floor there and is convinced that another Indian raid has destroyed his remaining relatives. Shortly after Edgar arrives there, the Indians he left asleep in the cave approach and he says, "My thirst of vengeance was still powerful, and I believed that the moment of its gratification was hastening" (180). This is the first time Edgar is honest with himself about his motives and intentions—yet he continues to oscillate between passionate action and rational discourse, just as the Americans were able to colonize and exploit the wilderness and its inhabitants while maintaining a discourse of human rights and equality. Immediately after acknowledging his bloody sentiments, Edgar continues, "In a short time they would arrive and enter the house. In what manner should they be received?" (180), as if he were awaiting important dinner guests at a manor house in the city. Yet "the desperate impulse of passion" (181) spurs him on to vengeful violence. His continual application of rational discourse to such brutal scenes highlights the tendencies of American national discourse in the aftermath of its reprehensible actions. Edgar successively kills each Indian as he arrives in a gruesome and bloody manner: "The shrieks were incessant and piteous" (182). Yet he continues to relate the experience as if

he were describing a well executed sports play. Only in brief moments does Edgar admit what is really going on: “I was not governed by the soul which usually regulates my conduct. I had imbibed…a spirit vengeful, unrelenting, and ferocious” (184). And although he acknowledges the spirit in which he is acting, he denies that it reflects his ‘usual soul.’

The inconsistency between his words and actions continues as he looks over the field of carnage before him, a veritable Terror of the frontier. This field seems very disconnected from the benevolent intentions that initially led Edgar into the wilderness. Yet, like Robespierre, he neither ceases the violence nor admits how far he has strayed from his original purpose. To further distance himself from his actions, Edgar begins a new characterization of the Indians as glorious and noble warriors, forgetting that he just finished describing them as unscrupulous wretches. His words suggest the dual image of Indians purported by Western thinkers (the noble savage and the brutal savage) that enabled them both to abuse and coexist with the Indians. His oscillation never ceases; he says, “the transition I had undergone was so wild and inexplicable” (186) without realizing that it has not ended. Three paragraphs later he is already anxious to kill the last Indian: “I listened with breathless eagerness” (186). Eagerness to kill hardly sounds like a rational thought.

As Edgar’s impulses become increasingly savage, his appearance begins to reflect his actions. Once again his sentiments take a drastic turn as he regains consciousness (after presumably losing it) to find his head resting on the mutilated chest of one of his victims: “The blood had ceased to ooze from the wound, but my disheveled locks were matted and steeped in that gore which had overflowed and choaked [sic] up the orifice. I

started from this *detestable pillow*, and regained my feet" (italics mine, 189). Not only do Edgar's actions characterize him as a savage, his looks begin to too. As he seeks home, disheveled, dirty and 'steeped in gore,' his own townspeople mistake him for an Indian and try to kill him; he returns fire thinking they are Indians as well but no one is harmed.

At the outset of the tale, Edgar is quite clear about who the enemy might be. He singles out the foreigner, Clithero, and automatically assigns blame to him, never suspecting any of his countrymen. As he travels through the woods, Edgar also groups the Indians in the category of enemy, based on their 'otherness.' However, by this point in the story Edgar is completely indistinguishable from Clithero or the Indians, both in his appearance and his actions. Even his own neighbors and friends mistake him for an Indian. With this realization in mind, Edgar can no longer suspect the 'other' of crimes any more than he can suspect himself because the only criteria America has taught him to use when discerning one's motives or guilt are physical criteria. Suddenly it appears that America is in a situation much too similar to France. Now Edgar knows he can make the same mistakes the Mrs. Lorimer made in unleashing unreasoned violence. Now American cannot discriminate solely based on appearances; they, like the French face threats to national security from within the homogenous majority of citizens.

Now, for the sake of appearances and to prevent further confusion, Edgar can simply wash up and recompose himself and the townsfolk will recognize him again. However, as far as his own consciousness is concerned, Edgar knows and can never un-know that his soul is no different than any of the 'others' he previously feared. Not only did he end up physically indistinguishable from the 'other,' he acted in ways that, as he puts it, were directed as if by another soul. But in the end, Edgar must acknowledge the

fact that he alone is responsible for his actions; no scapegoat 'other' soul was at work. Edgar no longer has the luxury of suspecting violence, vengeance, and passion from only the physically distinct 'others,' but must come to terms with the fact that he too is capable of such acts, no matter how civilized he is or how rational his thought process pretends to be. It remains questionable whether or not he fully realizes it by the end of the novel. At this point, his 'power of reason,' i.e., his great ability to rationalize, protects him from awareness, suggesting the continuing rationalized ignorance practiced by Americans. Despite the cartoonish proportions of his savage appearance and behavior, Edgar never abandons his rational, sterile depiction of events. The chaos and insanity of his tale are apparent to the reader through the events Edgar describes, yet the style of his language and thought processes never hints at such madness.

The madness Edgar exhibits seems exponentially greater in light of the fact that he fails to see the inconsistency between his thoughts and actions. He is a true hypocrite, not only in the traditional sense, but also through his sleepwalking. What better metaphor for a hypocrite than a man who spends half his time completely unconscious yet entirely active? Yet Edgar's lapse into hypocrisy is not entirely unpredictable. As Arendt warns, nothing good can come from seeing one's own heart with one's own eyes. She argues that when the heart is exposed to light (i.e., reason) and made visible to human sight, its audience cannot but find hypocrisy within it; the heart must remain in darkness, unseen. Edgar violates the natural order of the heart when compassion consumes him and he descends into the darkness of the cave. The cavernous maze he finds there is no more clearly navigable than the entangled and enshrouded mechanisms of the heart. Reason

has no power there, where passion and memory are so strong (for darkness is their domain), yet Edgar is only capable of thinking in ostensibly rational ways.

The conflict is best illustrated when Edgar deliberates before killing the Indians in the cave. His 'true motive' is a passionate vengeance inspired by the memory of the massacre of his family. Yet he desperately tries to subject these feelings to rationalization. As a result, his hypocrisy begins to become evident. In the context of Robespierre and the Terror, Arendt says, "However deeply heartfelt a motive may be, once it is brought out and exposed for public inspection, it becomes an object of suspicion rather than insight…ulterior motives may lurk, such as hypocrisy and deceit" (Arendt 91). Instead of acting solely on the motives of his heart (not an altogether recommendable alternative), Edgar fumblingly seeks to provide a rational excuse for his pending behavior. However, because his desire to get revenge on the Indians is motivated solely by his heart, there *are* no rational reasons to do it. His attempted application of reason to the situation makes him a hypocrite.

Edgar thought his reason would prevail over whatever he encountered in the darkness of the cave and wilderness, but as Arendt says, "To bring the "irrationality" of desires and emotions under the control of rationality was, of course, a thought dear to the Enlightenment, and as such was quickly found wanting in many respects, especially in its facile and superficial equation of thought with reason and of reason with rationality" (Arendt 91). Edgar whole-heartedly and naively buys into this optimistic dream. He seeks to understand Clithero's obviously irrational motives in attempting to kill Mrs. Lorimer, yet again there is no rational explanation because Clithero was motivated by the heart—whether it was fear, guilt (as the result of being unable to repay Mrs. Lorimer for her

benevolence) or even anger (at being subjugated, in essence, to the tyranny of an un-repayable debt to his benefactress).

In the wilderness, Edgar realizes that he is capable of acting in similarly irrational ways. Only over time does he reluctantly begin to accept the impotence of reason in such situations. Yet he never completely abandons his efforts to rationalize his actions. This suggests that while Americans might have moments of clarity where they realize their hypocrisy, they, like Edgar, will never be able to honestly reconcile their passionate impulses with well-reasoned thinking. Here, the reader, more so than the narrator, must acknowledge the idea that Edgar and by implication, the reader, is quite susceptible to the dangers of hypocrisy.

While this acknowledgement might seem benign within the confines of the novel, its implications for eighteenth-century readers are far more frightening. Edgar's hypocrisy results from and admits the failure of reason to conquer or mitigate the passions. Furthermore, it highlights the ease with which actions motivated by violent vengeance and other passions may masquerade as rational, logical behaviors. The Terror certainly evinced the chaos that can result from such hypocrisy. Robespierre sought to root out all hypocrisy from the French court as well as from the Third Estate. Ironically, Robespierre saw hypocrisy as the greatest of all vices. It threatened, very acutely, Rousseau's idea of the general will which was to rule and direct the nation. Robespierre relied upon the idea of the general will and so relied on the assumption that every man's will supported the nation. Naturally, hypocrisy posed a great threat to the general will because there it reveals that there is no way to tell a patriot from a traitor, and worse so, that each individual cannot know whether he himself is a patriot or a traitor because the

hypocrite is a man who does not know himself. The search for hypocrites (a naturally doomed endeavor) led directly to increased bloodshed in the Terror because trying to 'out' a hypocrite is impossible without making a hypocrite out of the investigator. Arendt explains:

> The search for motives, the demand that everybody display his innermost motivation, since it demands the impossible, transforms all actors into hypocrites; the moment the display of motives begins, hypocrisy begins to poison all human relations. (Arendt 93)

To find a hypocrite is to examine the motives of one's heart, something that has been established as impossible not only by philosophers such as Arendt, but also by observing the Robespierre's frustrated attempts to do so during the Terror.

The same dilemma, the impossible search for the heart's motives, frames *Edgar Huntly* from the start. First Edgar seeks to find Waldegrave's killer, acknowledging that whomever the killer was, he could not have had any motive to kill such an innocent man. Then, Edgar proceeds to examine Clithero's motives first after seeing him dig under the Elm tree and then again when he tells his story. When Edgar tries to understand why Clithero would try to kill Mrs. Lorimer, he comes to the conclusion that intentionality is the only factor by which to assign guilt. But the novel exposes the fallacy of this line of thinking in two ways: one, *Edgar Huntly* is full of examples of good intentions gone wrong and demonstrates that intentions ungoverned by strict and solid reason are reckless and dangerous. The second problem is much greater: if a man's intentions are the basis for moral judgment, how do you judge a man who does not know his intentions (i.e. a hypocrite)? While Clithero is aware of his perversely 'good' intentions, Edgar as a sleep-

walker and skilled hypocrite (as far as his rationalizing abilities are concerned), continuously acts without the slightest awareness of intentions. Brown's original title for an earlier version of *Edgar Huntly* was *Skywalk, or Man Unknown to Himself.* Despite whatever changes were made to the final edition of the novel, Edgar is clearly a man unknown to himself.

As Edgar is our representative of a rational, civilized, typical American we can begin to see the frightening implications for society as revealed by his adventures in the wilderness. Edgar begins the novel happy with his prejudice against foreigners, Indians and any type of 'other,' but discovers that he too can look and act just as they do; he is equally capable of the vengeful violence he fears from them. In fact, by the end of the novel, Edgar cannot be sure that there is a "them" because he has destroyed all the ways he previously used to distinguish between "us" and "them." This equation of "us" and "them" creates in America a situation similar to that of the French who never had the luxury of ethnic prejudice to calm their fears. However, the need to distinguish between patriots and traitors in America does not rely on hypocrisy in the same way it did in France. Hypocrisy has other implications for America if we agree with Arendt's assumption that the success (i.e. absence of a Terror-like rebellion) of the young government in America was due to their strict adherence to reason; hypocrisy then becomes not the sign of treacherous motives, but rather denotes the failure of reason. Edgar's hypocrisy occurs only because he allowed or was led to allow passion and the heart to motivate and direct his actions rather than strictly adhering to reason. Despite the fact that his heart controlled him, he continued to operate under the assumption that he was being reasonable throughout. By depicting Edgar as a rational, typical American at

the beginning of the novel Brown suggests that any American might potentially become consumed with passion and violence the way Edgar does, and like Edgar, operate under the assumption that he or she is behaving and thinking rationally.

Hypocrisy is the manifestation of reason failing to control passion and the hypocrite is a man guilty of losing his control of reason. Hypocrisy in America did not take the form of the Terror, as it did in France. The hypocrisy of America was already luminously evident on a national level. Founding a nation by proudly proclaiming "All men are created equal" and propagating that statement as the principle cause of revolution and principle priority of the new nation while unabashedly enslaving a large portion of the human population can be nothing other than hypocrisy. Yet the leaders of America proved themselves quite capable of acting immorally in direct contradiction to their moral beliefs, values and proclamations. The creation of the frontier as a metaphor for an optimistic American future completely ignores the history of abuse the Indians suffered at the hands of white men. The Founders' ability to rationalize their actions shaped the extensive metaphor of the wilderness where they relegated both their history and their passions. The strength of the wilderness metaphor relied on a whole-hearted national subscription to the myth. Keeping at bay the sheer magnitude of violent passions subdued, the number of people subjugated by the wilderness myth required a collective and forceful effort. In burying the past in the wilderness and building the foundations of an immaculate future upon the very same grounds, Americans were even further guilty of hypocrisy. And this hypocrisy is not a benign vice. As Edgar says, "Every man without an abused past knows that rumination is folly" (106). At this point Edgar has not revealed or acknowledged his own abused past, nor does he ever consider the abused past of the

Indians. In Clithero's case (the case Edgar is speaking of), the memories of his abused past, once awakened and outside the control of reason, motivate him to act out the vengeful violence he feels. Edgar, too, does the same when his painful memories are awakened inside the cave, where he too has lost control of reason. What, then, might happen in a country where despite the reassurance that reason makes the country invulnerable, evidence demonstrates the loss of reason in slaves, Indians, settlers and government, while the nation is surrounded and populated by a vast number of people with abused pasts, whose memories are ready to be awakened at any time? If these conditions in Brown's novel lead Edgar into the bloody anarchy of vengeance fueled violence, then America certainly has the potential to suffer catastrophe as horrific as the Terror of the French Revolution.

The fear inspired by acknowledging the existence of these portentous conditions in America, the way *Edgar Huntly* presents the situation, is perhaps too great to be consciously processed. Even Brown cannot conclude his novel leaving such terror unleashed. Edgar's adventure and narrative come to a close just before the novel ends so that Sarsefield, Edgar and Clithero's mentor, can have the final word. Edgar has failed to learn much from his adventures and despite his experiences with the dangers of hypocrisy, he tells Clithero where Mrs. Lorimer is staying, incidentally inspiring him to try once more to kill the woman. When Edgar sends a letter of warning to Sarsefield and Mrs. Lorimer, she reads the letter and as a result, miscarries. Clithero is caught and sentenced to jail but commits suicide instead. Sarsefield explains, "Clithero is a madman whose liberty is dangerous" (283). Sarsefield suggests that those who cannot control their passions with reason should not be free. This of course implies Edgar and anyone else

who exhibits hypocrisy (by extension this includes the American Founders) must be kept in line by a Sarsefield-like figure. Sarsefield says of himself with regard to Clithero, “On me devolved the province of his jailor and his tyrant” (285). This foreboding message can be seen as a warning to Edgar and to others who do not adhere to the rules of reason. Had the French received the same warning and repented, Napoleon might not have been ‘required’ to come and restore order through patriarchal tyranny. But just as Clithero needed Sarsefield to take control so that the violence would end, the Terror in France only ceased through the despotic iron fist of Napoleon. Edgar and Enlightenment America have been justly warned; If Americans do not address their hypocrisy, the only options awaiting them are a violent, vengeful rebellion of the passions or the return of a tyrant.

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