

observe mankind, and study ourselves, the greater will this uncertainty appear, and the farther shall we find ourselves from truth.

This uncertainty, however, has some bounds. Some circumstances of events, and some events, are more capable of evidence than others. The same may be said of motives. Our guesses as to the motives of some actions are more probable than the guesses that relate to other actions. Though no one can state the motives from which any action has flowed, he may enumerate motives from which it is quite certain, that the action did *not* flow.

The lives of Cicero and Pombal are imperfectly related by historians. An impartial view of that which history has preserved makes the belief of their wisdom and virtue more probable than the contrary belief.

Walstein desired the happiness of mankind. He imagined that the exhibition of virtue and talents, forcing its way to sovereign power, and employing that power for the national good, was highly conducive to their happiness.

By exhibiting a virtuous being in opposite conditions, and pursuing his end by the means suited to his own condition, he believes himself displaying a model of right conduct, and furnishing incitements to imitate that conduct, supplying men not only with knowledge of just ends and just means, but with the love and the zeal of virtue.

How men might best promote the happiness of mankind in given situations, was the problem that he desired to solve. The more portraits of human excellence he was able to exhibit the better; but his power in this respect was limited. The longer his life and his powers endured the more numerous would his portraits become. Futurity, however, was precarious, and, therefore, it behoved him to select, in the first place, the most useful theme.

His purpose was not to be accomplished by a brief or meagre story. To illuminate the understanding, to charm curiosity, and sway the passions, required that events should be copiously displayed and artfully linked, that motives should be vividly depicted, and scenes made to pass before the eye. This has been performed. Cicero is made to compose the story of his political and private life from his early youth to his flight from Astura, at the coalition of Antony and Octavius. It is addressed to Atticus, and meant to be the attestor of his virtue, and his vindicator with posterity.

The style is energetic, and flows with that glowing impetuosity which was supposed to actuate the writer. Ardent passions, lofty indignation, sportive elegance, pathetic and beautiful simplicity, take their turns to control his pen, according to the nature of the theme. New and striking portraits are introduced of the great actors on the stage. New lights are cast upon the principal occurrences. Everywhere are marks of profound learning, accurate judgment, and inexhaustible invention. Cicero here exhibits himself in all the forms of master, husband, father, friend, advocate, pro-consul, consul, and senator.

To assume the person of Cicero, as the narrator of his own transactions, was certainly an hazardous undertaking. Frequent errors and lapses, violations of probability, and incongruities in the style and conduct of this imaginary history with the genuine productions of Cicero, might be reasonably expected, but these are not

found. The more conversant we are with the authentic monuments, the more is our admiration at the felicity of this imposture enhanced.

The conspiracy of Cataline is here related with abundance of circumstances not to be found in Sallust. The difference, however, is of that kind which results from a deeper insight into human nature, a more accurate acquaintance with the facts, more correctness of arrangement, and a deeper concern in the progress and issue of the story. What is false, is so admirable in itself, so conformable to Roman modes and sentiments, so self-consistent, that one is almost prompted to accept it as the gift of inspiration.

The whole system of Roman domestic manners, of civil and military government, is contained in this work. The facts are either collected from the best antiquarians, or artfully deduced from what is known, or invented with a boldness more easy to admire than to imitate. Pure fiction is never employed but when truth was unattainable.

The end designed by Walstein, is no less happily accomplished in the second, than in the first performance. The style and spirit of the narrative is similar; the same skill in the exhibition of characters and deduction of events, is apparent; but events and characters are wholly new. Portugal, its timorous populace, its besotted monks, its jealous and effeminate nobles, and its cowardly prince, are vividly depicted. The narrator of this tale is, as in the former instance, the subject of it. After his retreat from court, Pombal consecrates his leisure to the composition of his own memoirs.

Among the most curious portions of this work, are those relating to the constitution of the inquisition, the expulsion of the Jesuits, the earthquake, and the conspiracy of Daveiro.

The Romish religion, and the feudal institutions, are the causes that chiefly influence the modern state of Europe. Each of its kingdoms and provinces exhibits the operations of these causes, accompanied and modified by circumstances peculiar to each. Their genuine influence is thwarted, in different degrees, by learning and commerce. In Portugal, they have been suffered to produce the most extensive and unmingled mischiefs. Portugal, therefore, was properly selected as an example of moral and political degeneracy, and as a theatre in which virtue might be shewn with most advantage, contending with the evils of misgovernment and superstition.

In works of this kind, though the writer is actuated by a single purpose, many momentous and indirect inferences will flow from his story. Perhaps the highest and lowest degrees in the scale of political improvement have been respectively exemplified by the Romans and the Portuguese. The pictures that are here drawn, may be considered as portraits of the human species, in two of the most remarkable forms.

There are two ways in which genius and virtue may labor for the public good: first by assailing popular errors and vices, argumentatively and through the medium of books; secondly by employing legal or ministerial authority to this end.

The last was the province which Cicero and Pombal assumed. Their fate may evince the insufficiency of the instrument chosen by them, and teach us, that a change of national opinion is the necessary prerequisite of revolutions.

ENGEL, the eldest of Walstein's pupils, thought, like his master, that the narration of public events, with a certain license of invention, was the most efficacious of moral instruments. Abstract systems, and theoretical reasonings, were not without their use, but they claimed more attention than many were willing to bestow. Their influence, therefore, was limited to a narrow sphere. A mode by which truth could be conveyed to a great number, was much to be preferred.

Systems, by being imperfectly attended to, are liable to beget error and depravity. Truth flows from the union and relation of many parts. These parts, fallaciously connected and viewed separately, constitute error. Prejudice, stupidity, and indolence, will seldom afford us a candid audience, are prone to stop short in their researches, to remit, or transfer to other objects their attention, and hence to derive new motives to injustice, and new confirmations in folly from that which, if impartially and accurately examined, would convey nothing but benefit.

Mere reasoning is cold and unattractive. Injury rather than benefit proceeds from convictions that are transient and faint; their tendency is not to reform and enlighten, but merely to produce disquiet and remorse. They are not strong enough to resist temptation and to change the conduct, but merely to pester the offender with dissatisfaction and regret.

The detail of actions is productive of different effects. The affections are engaged, the reason is won by incessant attacks; the benefits which our system has evinced to be possible, are invested with a seeming existence; and the evils which error was proved to generate, exchange the fleeting, misty, and dubious form of inference, for a sensible and present existence.

To exhibit, in an eloquent narration, a model of right conduct, is the highest province of benevolence. Our patterns, however, may be useful in different degrees. Duties are the growth of situations. The general and the statesman have arduous duties to perform; and to teach them their duty is of use: but the forms of human society allow few individuals to gain the station of generals and statesmen. The lesson, therefore, is reducible to practice by a small number; and, of these, the temptations to abuse their power are so numerous and powerful, that a very small part, and these, in a very small degree, can be expected to comprehend, admire, and copy the pattern that is set before them.

But though few may be expected to be monarchs and ministers, every man occupies a station in society in which he is necessarily active to evil or to good. There is a sphere of some dimensions, in which the influence of his actions and opinions is felt. The causes that fashion men into instruments of happiness or misery, are numerous, complex, and operate upon a wide surface. Virtuous activity may, in a thousand ways, be thwarted and diverted by foreign and superior influence. It may seem best to purify the fountain, rather than filter the stream; but the latter is, to a certain degree, within our power, whereas, the former is impracticable. Governments and general education, cannot be rectified, but individuals may be somewhat fortified against their influence. Right intentions may be instilled into them, and some good may be done by each within his social and domestic province.

The relations in which men, unendowed with political authority, stand to each other, are numerous. An extensive source of these relations, is property. No topic can engage the attention of man more momentous than this. Opinions, relative to property, are the immediate source of nearly all the happiness and misery that exist among mankind. If men were guided by justice in the acquisition and disbursement, the breed of private and public evils would be extinguished.

To ascertain the precepts of justice, and exhibit these precepts reduced to practice, was, therefore, the favorite task of Engel. This, however, did not constitute his whole scheme. Every man is encompassed by numerous claims, and is the subject of intricate relations. Many of these may be comprised in a copious narrative, without infraction of simplicity or detriment to unity.

Next to property the most extensive source of our relations is sex. On the circumstances which produce, and the principles which regulate the union between the sexes, happiness greatly depends. The conduct to be pursued by a virtuous man in those situations which arise from sex, it was thought useful to display.

Fictitious history has, hitherto, chiefly related to the topics of love and marriage. A monotony and sentimental softness have hence arisen that have frequently excited contempt and ridicule. The ridicule, in general, is merited; not because these topics are intrinsically worthless or vulgar, but because the historian was deficient in knowledge and skill.

Marriage is incident to all; its influence on our happiness and dignity, is more entire and lasting than any other incident can possess. None, therefore, is more entitled to discussion. To enable men to evade the evils and secure the benefits of this state, is to consult, in an eminent degree, their happiness.

A man, whose activity is neither aided by political authority nor by the press, may yet exercise considerable influence on the condition of his neighbours, by the exercise of intellectual powers. His courage may be useful to the timid or the feeble, and his knowledge to the ignorant, as well as his property to those who want. His benevolence and justice may not only protect his kindred and his wife, but rescue the victims of prejudice and passion from the yoke of those domestic tyrants, and shield the powerless from the oppression of power, the poor from the injustice of the rich, and the simple from the stratagems of cunning.

Almost all men are busy in acquiring subsistence or wealth by a fixed application of their time and attention. Manual or mental skill is obtained and exerted for this end. This application, within certain limits, is our duty. We are bound to choose that species of industry which combines most profit to ourselves with the least injury to others; to select that instrument which, by most speedily supplying our necessities, leaves us at most leisure to act from the impulse of benevolence.

A profession, successfully pursued, confers power not merely by conferring property and leisure. The skill which is gained, and which, partly or for a time, may be exerted to procure subsistence, may, when this end is accomplished, continue to be exerted for the common good. The pursuits of law and medicine, enhance our power over the liberty, property, and health of mankind. They not only qualify us

for imparting benefit, by supplying us with property and leisure, but by enabling us to obviate, by intellectual exertions, many of the evils that infest the world.

Engel endeavored to apply these principles to the choice of a profession, and to point out the mode in which professional skill, after it has supplied us with the means of subsistence, may be best exerted in the cause of general happiness.

Human affairs are infinitely complicated. The condition of no two beings is alike. No model can be conceived, to which our situation enables us to conform. No situation can be imagined perfectly similar to that of an actual being. This exact similitude is not required to render an imaginary portrait useful to those who survey it. The usefulness, undoubtedly, consists in suggesting a mode of reasoning and acting somewhat similar to that which is ascribed to a feigned person; and, for this end, some similitude is requisite between the real and imaginary situation; but that similitude is not hard to produce. Among the incidents which invention will set before us, those are to be culled out which afford most scope to wisdom and virtue, which are most analogous to facts, which most forcibly suggest to the reader the parallel between his state and that described, and most strongly excite his desire to act as the feigned personages act. These incidents must be so arranged as to inspire, at once, curiosity and belief, to fasten the attention, and thrill the heart. This scheme was executed in the life of "Olivo Ronsica."

Engel's principles inevitably led him to select, as the scene and period of his narrative, that in which those who should read it, should exist. Every day removed the reader farther from the period, but its immediate readers would perpetually recognize the objects, and persons, and events, with which they were familiar.

Olivo is a rustic youth, whom domestic equality, personal independence, agricultural occupations, and studious habits, had endowed with a strong mind, pure taste, and unaffected integrity. Domestic revolutions oblige him to leave his father's house in search of subsistence. He is destitute of property, of friends, and of knowledge of the world. These are to be acquired by his own exertions, and virtue and sagacity are to guide him in the choice and the use of suitable means.

Ignorance subjects us to temptation, and poverty shackles our beneficence. Olivo's conduct shows us how temptation may be baffled, in spite of ignorance, and benefits conferred in spite of poverty.

He bends his way to Weimar. He is involved, by the artifices of others, and, in consequence of his ignorance of mankind, in many perils and perplexities. He forms a connection with a man of a great and mixed, but, on the whole, a vicious character. Semlits is introduced to furnish a contrast to the simplicity and rectitude of Olivo, to exemplify the misery of sensuality and fraud, and the influence which, in the present system of society, vice possesses over the reputation and external fortune of the good.

Men hold external goods, the pleasures of the senses, of health, liberty, reputation, competence, friendship, and life, partly by virtue of their own wisdom and activity. This, however, is not the only source of their possession. It is likewise dependent on physical accidents, which human foresight cannot anticipate, or human power prevent. It is also influenced by the conduct and opinions of others.

There is no external good, of which the errors and wickedness of others may not deprive us. So far as happiness depends upon the retention of these goods, it is held at the option of another. The perfection of our character is evinced by the transient or slight influence which privations and evils have upon our happiness, on the skillfulness of those exertions which we make to avoid or repair disasters, on the diligence and success with which we improve those instruments of pleasure to ourselves and to others which fortune has left in our possession.

Richardson has exhibited in *Clarissa*, a being of uncommon virtue, bereaved of many external benefits by the vices of others. Her parents and lover conspire to destroy her fortune, liberty, reputation, and personal sanctity. More talents and address cannot be easily conceived, than those which are displayed by her to preserve and to regain these goods. Her efforts are vain. The cunning and malignity with which she had to contend, triumphed in the contest.

Those evils and privations she was unable to endure. The loss of fame took away all activity and happiness, and she died a victim to errors, scarcely less opprobrious and pernicious, than those of her tyrants and oppressors. She misapprehended the value of parental approbation and a fair fame. She depreciated the means of usefulness and pleasure of which fortune was unable to deprive her.

Olivo is a different personage. His talents are exerted to reform the vices of others, to defeat their malice when exerted to his injury, to endure, without diminution of his usefulness or happiness, the injuries which he cannot shun.

Semlits is led, by successive accidents, to unfold his story to Olivo, after which they separate. Semlits is supposed to destroy himself, and Olivo returns into the country. A pestilential disease, prevalent throughout the north of Europe, at that time (1630), appears in the city. To ascertain the fate of one connected, by the ties of kindred and love, with the family in which Olivo resides, and whose life is endangered by residence in the city, he repairs thither, encounters the utmost perils, is seized with the reigning malady, meets, in extraordinary circumstances, with Semlits, and is finally received into the house of a physician, by whose skill he is restored to health, and to whom he relates his previous adventures.

He resolves to become a physician, but is prompted by benevolence to return, for a time, to the farm which he had lately left. The series of ensuing events, are long, intricate, and congruous, and exhibit the hero of the tale in circumstances that task his fortitude, his courage, and his disinterestedness.

Engel has certainly succeeded in producing a tale, in which are powerful displays of fortitude and magnanimity; a work whose influence must be endlessly varied by varieties of character and situation of the reader, but, from which, it is not possible for any one to rise without some degree of moral benefit, and much of that pleasure which always attends the emotions of curiosity and sympathy.

2. Charles Brockden Brown, "The Difference between History and Romance." *The Monthly Magazine and American Review* 2:4 (April 1800).

Together with "Walstein's School of History," and appearing just a few months after it, this essay outlines the basic interrelation of history and fiction writing that Brown assumes in his novels and later historical writings, and helps explain how the novels are intended to educate readers and move them to greater awareness of their social surroundings. Likening the social relations investigated by historians and romancers to the physical relations studied by key early modern scientists such as Isaac Newton (astronomer and physicist who first outlined the theory of gravity), Carl Linnaeus (founder of modern biological taxonomy and ecology), and William Herschel (astronomer who discovered infrared radiation and pioneered advanced telescope technologies such as interferometry), Brown argues that novelists and historians alike are, or should be, social scientists who use narrative to explore their social order and its history and to educate their readers about it. Note that Haller and Linnaeus, two of the landmark scientists mentioned in the essay, are part of the reading that Arthur Mervyn undertakes during his medical studies in the novel's Second Part.

The essay rejects the common notion that history and fiction are different because one deals with factual and the other with fictional materials. Rather, Brown argues, history and fiction are best understood as two sides of one coin: history describes and documents the results of actions, while fiction investigates the possible conditions and motives that cause these actions. Whereas the historian establishes facts about events and behaviors, the "romancer" is more concerned with asking why and how the events and behaviors took place. Thus the writing of romance (Brown's kind of novel) deals in conjecture about the causes and consequences of social actions and events. This imaginative conjecture is useful because it helps clarify the ways in which seemingly unique or personal events and acts (such as individual experiences and responses to the yellow fever epidemic in Arthur Mervyn) are actually conditioned, although not narrowly determined, by larger social forces.

The difference between history as documentation and romance as interpretation also allows Brown to develop an implicit distinction between "romance" and "novel." Brown's definition here situates romance as the kind of narrative that educates readers and helps them grasp the social processes in which they are embedded. Unlike the nineteenth century's contrast between realism and romance, where romance allows the imaginative flight of fancy from the mundane world (this is the way romance is understood in Nathaniel Hawthorne's prefaces of the 1850s, for example), Brown situates the "novel" as a fiction that seeks to amuse a passive reader and "romance" as a fiction that seeks to train the reader as an active interpreter and interrogator of society. When Brown writes in this novel's preface that his fiction dramatizes a social crisis and responds to it "in the spirit of salutary emulation," he is indicating that he has designed the work as a romance, not a novel.

Most basically, then, Brown's ideas about "the difference between history and romance" imply that Arthur Mervyn's tale should be read as an exploration of the causes of contem-

2. Charles Brockden Brown "The Difference between History and Romance."

porary events and behaviors, rather than simply as a "terrific" tale of sensational wonder (see the excerpt from "Terrific Novels" for Brown's definition of that variety of narrative).

HISTORY and romance are terms that have never been very clearly distinguished from each other. It should seem that one dealt in fiction, and the other in truth; that one is a picture of the *probable* and certain, and the other a tissue of untruths; that one describes what *might* have happened, and what has *actually* happened, and the other what never had existence.

These distinctions seem to be just; but we shall find ourselves somewhat perplexed, when we attempt to reduce them to practice, and to ascertain, by their assistance, to what class this or that performance belongs.

Narratives, whether fictitious or true, may relate to the processes of nature, or the actions of men. The former, if not impenetrable by human faculties, must be acknowledged to be, hitherto, very imperfectly known. Curiosity is not satisfied with viewing facts in their disconnected state and natural order, but is prone to arrange them anew, and to deviate from present and sensible objects, into speculations on the past or future; it is eager to infer from the present state of things, their former or future condition.

The observer or experimentalist, therefore, who carefully watches, and faithfully enumerates the appearances which occur, may claim the appellation of historian. He who adorns these appearances with cause and effect, and traces resemblances between the past, distant, and future, with the present, performs a different part. He is a dealer, not in certainties, but probabilities, and is therefore a romancer.

An historian will relate the noises, the sights, and the smells that attend an eruption of Vesuvius. A romancer will describe, in the first place, the *contemporary* ebullitions and inflations, the combustion and decomposition that take place in the bowels of the earth. Next he will go to the origin of things, and describe the central, primary, and secondary orbs composing the universe, as masses thrown out of an immense volcano called *chaos*. Thirdly, he will paint the universal dissolution that is hereafter to be produced by the influence of volcanic or internal fire.

An historian will form catalogues of stars, and mark their positions at given times. A romancer will arrange them in *clusters* and dispose them in *strata*, and inform you by what influences the orbs have been drawn into sociable knots and circles.

An electrical historian will describe appearances that happen when hollow cylinders of glass and metal are placed near each other, and the former is rubbed with a cloth. The romancer will replenish the space that exists between the sun and its train of planetary orbs, with a fluid called electrical; and describe the modes in which this fluid finds its way to the surface of these orbs through the intervenient atmosphere.

Historians can only differ in degrees of diligence and accuracy, but romancers may have more or less probability in their narrations. The same man is frequently both historian and romancer in the compass of the same work. Buffon, Linnaeus, and Herschel, are examples of this union. Their observations are as diligent as their theories

are adventurous. Among the historians of nature, Haller was, perhaps, the most diligent; among romancers, he that came nearest to the truth was Newton.

It must not be denied that, though history be a term commonly applied to a catalogue of natural appearances, as well as to the recital of human actions, romance is chiefly limited to the latter. Some reluctance may be felt in calling Buffon and Herschel romancers, but that name will be readily conferred on Quintus Curtius and Sir Thomas More. There is a sufficient analogy, however, between objects and modes, in the physical and intellectual world, to justify the use of these distinctions in both cases.

Physical objects and appearances sometimes fall directly beneath our observation, and may be truly described. The duty of the *natural* historian is limited to this description. *Human* actions may likewise be observed, and be truly described. In this respect, the actions of *voluntary* and *involuntary* agents, are alike, but in other momentous respects they differ.

Curiosity is not content with noting and recording the *actions* of men. It likewise seeks to know the *motives* by which the agent is impelled to the performance of these actions; but motives are modifications of thought which cannot be subjected to the senses. They cannot be certainly known. They are merely topics of conjecture. Conjecture is the weighing of probabilities; the classification of probable events, according to the measure of probability possessed by each.

Actions of different men or, performed at different times, may be alike; but the motives leading to these actions must necessarily vary. In guessing at these motives, the knowing and sagacious will, of course, approach nearer to the truth than the ignorant and stupid; but the wise and the ignorant, the sagacious and stupid, when busy in assigning motives to actions, are not *historians* but *romancers*.

The motive is the cause, and therefore the antecedent of the action; but the action is likewise the cause of subsequent actions. Two contemporary and (so to speak) adjacent actions may both be faithfully described, because both may be witnessed; but the connection between them, that quality which constitutes one the effect of the other, is mere matter of conjecture, and comes with the province, not of *history*, but *romance*.

The description of human actions is of moment merely as they are connected with motives and tendencies. The delineation of tendencies and motives implies a description of the action; but the action is describable without the accompaniment of tendencies and motives.

An action may be simply described, but such descriptions, though they alone be historical, are of no use as they stand singly and disjointed from tendencies and motives, in the page of the historian or the mind of the reader. The writer, therefore, who does not blend the two characters, is essentially defective. It is true, that facts simply described, may be connected and explained by the reader; and that the describer may, at least, claim the merit of supplying the builder with materials. The merit of him who drags stones together, must not be depreciated; but must not be compared with him who hews these stones into just proportions, and piles them up into convenient and magnificent fabrics.

That which is done beneath my own inspection, it is possible for me certainly to know and exactly to record; but that which is performed at a distance, either in time or place, is the theme of foreign testimony. If it be related by me, I relate not what I have witnessed, but what I derived from others who were witnesses. The subject of my senses is merely the existence of the record, and not the deed itself which is recorded. The truth of the action can be weighed in no scales but those of probability.

A voluntary action is not only connected with cause and effect, but is itself a series of motives and incidents subordinate and successive to each other. Every action differs from every other in the number and complexity of its parts, but the most simple and brief is capable of being analyzed into a thousand subdivisions. If it be witnessed by others, probabilities are lessened in proportion as the narrative is circumstantial.

These principles may be employed to illustrate the distinction between history and romance. If history relate what is true, its relations must be limited to what is known by the testimony of our senses. Its sphere, therefore, is extremely narrow: The facts to which we are immediate witnesses, are, indeed, numerous; but time and place merely connect them. Useful narratives must comprise facts linked together by some other circumstance. They must, commonly, consist of events, for a knowledge of which the narrator is indebted to the evidence of others. This evidence, though accompanied with different degrees of probability, can never give birth to certainty. How wide, then, if romance be the narrative of mere probabilities, is the empire of romance? This empire is absolute and undivided over the motives and tendencies of human actions. Over actions themselves, its dominion, though not unlimited, is yet very extensive.

X

3. Two Statements on the Modern Novel:

a) Charles Brockden Brown, "Romances." *The Literary Magazine and American Register* 3:16 (January 1805).

In this article on "romances," which in this case means the novel-like narratives that flourished from the Middle Ages to the 1600s, Brown reiterates the need for contemporary forms of art to focus on themes that are relevant for contemporary audiences. Works of the past may have been tremendous achievements, but their usefulness for the modern reader is limited because new historical conditions demand new ideas and modes of behavior. Brown's argument here suggests that there is no unchanging or eternal, transhistorical standard for values, ideas, or behaviors. The lessons of one age may not be useful for another. Like his contemporaries William Godwin and Thomas Paine, Brown remains skeptical about worshipping past forms of art, society, and government.

A TALE, agreeable to truth and nature or, more properly speaking, agreeable to our own conceptions of truth and nature, may be long, but cannot be tedious. Cleopatra

and Cassandra by no means referred to an ideal world; they referred to the manners and habits of the age in which they were written; names and general incidents only were taken from the age of Alexander and Caesar. In that age, therefore, they were not tedious, but the more delighted was the reader the longer the banquet was protracted. In after times, when taste and manners were changed, the tale became tedious, because it was deemed unnatural and absurd, and it would have been condemned as tedious, and treated with neglect, whether it filled ten pages or ten volumes.

Cleopatra and Cassandra are no greater violations of historical veracity and probability, and no more drawn from an ideal world, than Johnson's Rasselas, Hawkesworth's Almorán and Hamet, or Fenelon's Telemachus. In all these, names and incidents, and some machinery, are taken from a remote age and nation, but the manners and sentiments are modeled upon those of the age in which the works were written, as those of the Scuderis were fashioned upon the habits of their own age. The present unpopularity of the romances of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is not owing to the satires of Cervantes or of Boileau, but to the gradual revolution of human manners and national taste.

The "Arabian Nights" delight us in childhood, and so do the chivalrous romances; but, in riper age, if enlightened by education, we despise what we formerly revered. Individuals, whose minds have been uncultivated, continue still their attachment to those marvelous stories. And yet, must it not be ascribed rather to change of manners than to any other cause, that we neglect and disrelish works which gave infinite delight to Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Sir Thomas More, to Sully and Daubigne: men whose knowledge of Augustan models, and delight in them, was never exceeded, and the general vigor and capacity of whose minds has never been surpassed.

The works that suited former ages are now exploded by us. The works that are now produced, and which accommodate themselves to our habits and taste, would have been utterly neglected by our ancestors: and what is there to hinder the belief, that they, in their turn, will fall into oblivion and contempt at some future time. We naturally conceive our own habits and opinions the standard of rectitude; but their rectitude, admitting our claim to be just, will not hinder them from giving way to others, and being exploded in their turn.

b) Charles Brockden Brown, excerpt from "Terrific Novels." *The Literary Magazine and American Register* 3:19 (April 1805).

This passage illustrates Brown's criticism of conventional gothic style and helps explain, by contrast, how his own use of the gothic is oriented toward the representation of modern life. Today the term "gothic" generally describes narratives that use the supernatural to excite fear and suspense in their audience. But in this essay, Brown judges such narratives by their motivation rather than by their form, themes, or effect on their audience. Brown calls novels that use sensational devices of mystery simply to create suspense "terrific" only because they are intended to generate sensations of terror, rather than a sense of excitement.

In keeping with his general emphasis on the development of modern forms suited to modern social conditions, Brown criticizes conventional gothic's emphasis on premodern situations rather than the anxieties and stresses of contemporary life. As opposed to castles, monks, and superstitions, Brown's version of the gothic, in Arthur Mervyn and his other novels, highlights scenarios and themes that his readers might actually experience: bankruptcy, impoverishment, vulnerability to illnesses like yellow fever, psychological symptoms of extreme anxiety and stress such as somnambulism, the threat of rape, and so on.

THE Castle of Otranto laid the foundation of a style of writing, which was carried to perfection by Mrs. Radcliff, and which may be called the *terrific style*. The great talents of Mrs. Radcliff made some atonement for the folly of this mode of composition, and gave some importance to exploded fables and childish fears, by the charms of sentiment and description; but the multitude of her imitators seem to have thought that description and sentiment were impertinent intruders, and by lowering the mind somewhat to its ordinary state, marred and counteracted those awful feelings, which true genius was properly employed in raising. They endeavour to keep the reader in a constant state of tumult and horror, by the powerful engines of trapdoors, back stairs, black robes, and pale faces; but the solution of the enigma is ever too near at hand, to permit the indulgence of supernatural appearances. A well-written scene of a party at snap-dragon would exceed all the fearful images of these books. There is, besides, no *keeping* in the author's design: fright succeeds to fright, and danger to danger, without permitting the unhappy reader to draw his breath, or to repose for a moment on subjects of character or sentiment.

4. Charles Brockden Brown, "The Man at Home.—No. XI." *The Weekly Magazine of Original Essays, Fugitive Pieces, and Interesting Intelligence* 1:11 (April 14, 1798).

Brown used yellow fever, as both a motif underlining social corruption and a setting for dramatizing social behaviors, in a group of related fictions and essays published in the year leading up to Arthur Mervyn's first part. Yellow fever figures centrally in his novel Otranto; or, The Secret Witness, published in January 1799, two or three months before the first part of Arthur Mervyn, and in the following short sketch, which first appeared as one installment of Brown's 1798 essay series "The Man at Home." Brown republished the same piece in 1806 with minor changes and a new, more suggestive title, "Residence and Bad Government Compared" (Literary Magazine 6:39, December 1806).

Given the way this sketch ends by prefiguring what in Arthur Mervyn would have been a marriage between Mervyn and an Eliza Hadwin who successfully inherits her father's fortune (which was in fact Brown's original plan for Second Part, as Brown noted in a letter to his brother James), it seems to be an experimental draft or outline for aspects of the

later romance. As the sketch highlights the historical contexts and conditions that structure the lovers' meeting, it emphasizes Brown's point that a personal tale has to be read in the context of its sociopolitical environment. An additional contrast suggests other shifts in Brown's later thinking about the design of the novel. The later work divides the sketch's single character Wallace into two figures, Arthur and Wallace, and, similarly, the sketch's single female object splits into Eliza Hadwin and Achsa Fielding. This doubling of characters suggests that Brown felt that using only domestic characters, as he does in this sketch, would fail to convey the novel's larger international concerns.

In Arthur Mervyn the fever's primary sociopolitical parallel is the mercantile corruption based on Atlantic slavery, which spreads a deadly poison through that novel's collective body politic. In this sketch, the sociopolitical parallel is state terrorism, manifested in a politically motivated doctrine of "security," which in reality amounts to a calculated abandonment of legal restraints and suppression of civil liberties allowing partisan proscriptions and executions. The story also prefigures Brown's closely related and more spectacular tale of governmental force, "Thessalonica, A Roman Story" (May 1799). The parallel between the dangers of yellow fever and state terrorism perpetrated in the name of "security" can clearly be read in terms of France's 1793–1794 "Reign of Terror" (referenced in Achsa Fielding's backstory), in which Jacobin political leaders guillotined those accused of being enemies to the French people, who were in reality simply the political opposition to the current government. But Brown's narrative echoes more closely to home in its implicit references to the U.S. revolutionary proscriptions of Tories and neutrals in 1777–1778 (these were important to Brown personally because they resulted in the internment of his own father) and to the better-known 1798–1801 abandonment of constitutional civil liberties in the U.S. Alien and Sedition Acts, which were enacted as repressive, partisan measures during the same years Brown was writing his novels.

The sketch begins by describing the negative effects of unregulated sympathy, when the sights of misery prompts a sentimental response of suicide. The piece ends, though, by suggesting that we are not doomed to repeat the traumas of history if we rationally overcome unreasonable prejudices and bigotry. The sketch encourages the reader to weigh the similarities and differences between the medical damage of malignant fevers and the political-social damage of "malignant passions"—the parallel effects of "Pestilence and Bad Government," as the later title has it—and implicitly enacts the kind of ethical, socially engaged use of narrative to provoke awareness of contemporary social conditions and their implications that Brown outlines in his essays "Walstein's School of History" and "The Difference between History and Romance."

WHAT a series of calamities is the thread of human existence? I have heard of men who, though free themselves from any uncommon distress, were driven to suicide by reflecting on the misery of others. They employed their imagination in running over the catalogue of human woes, and were so affected by the spectacle, that they willingly resorted to death to shut it from their view. No doubt their minds were constituted after a singular manner. We are generally prone, when objects chance to

present to us their gloomy side, to change their position, till we hit upon the bright-ness of its aspects.

I was lately perusing, in company with my friends Harrington and Wallace, the history of intestine commotions, in one of the ancient republics. It was one of the colonies of Magna Græcia.¹ The nation comprehended a commercial city, peopled by eighty thousand persons, with a small territory annexed. Two factions were for a long time contending for the sovereignty. On one occasion, the party that had hitherto been undermost, obtained the upper place. The maxims by which they intended to deport themselves were, for some time, unknown. That they would revenge themselves on their adversaries, in any signal or atrocious way, was by no means, expected. Time, however, soon unfolded their characters and views.

The annalist proceeds to describe the subsequent events with great exactness of time, place, and number; but exhibits none of those general views which fill the reader's imagination, and translate him to the scene of action. His details, however, are, on that account, the more valuable, since the duller reader, when possessed of these materials, will stand in no need of foreign aid to *circumstantialize* the picture.

The ordinary course and instruments of judicature were esteemed inadequate to their purposes, for these would not allow them to select their victims in sufficient numbers, and with sufficient dispatch. They therefore erected a secret tribunal, and formed a band of three hundred persons, who should execute, implicitly, the decrees of this tribunal. These judges were charged with the punishment of those who had been guilty of crimes against the state. They set themselves to the vigorous performance of their office.

On other occasions it has been usual to subject to some appearance of trial the objects of persecution; to furnish them with an intelligible statement of their offences; to summon them to an audience of their judges; and to found their sentence on some evidence real or pretended; but these rulers were actuated by no other impulse than vengeance. The members of the tribunal were convened, daily, for no other purpose than to form a catalogue of those who should be forthwith sacrificed.

The avenues to the hall where they were assembled were guarded by the troop before mentioned. Having executed this business of the day, the officers of the band of executioners were summoned, and the fatal list was put into their hands. The work of death began at night-fall. This season was adopted to render their proceedings more terrible. For this end, likewise, it was ordered that no warning should be given to the men whose names were inscribed upon this roll, but by the arrival of the messengers at their door.

These, dressed in peculiar uniform, marched by night to the sounds of harsh and lamentable music, through the streets of the mute and affrighted city. They stopped

¹Latin for "Greater Greece," the area at the southernmost part of the Italian peninsula that was colonized by Greek settlers in the eighth century BCE and absorbed into the Roman Republic at the time of the Pyrrhic War (280–275 BCE).

at the appointed door, and admission being gained, peaceably or by violence, they proceeded, in silence, to the performance of their commission. The bow-string was displayed; the victim torn from his bed, from the arms of his wife, from the embraces of his children, was strangled in an instant; and the breathless corpse, left upon the spot where it had fallen. They retired, without any interruption to their silence, and ended not their circuit till the catalogue was finished.

To inflict punishment was the intention of these judges, but they considered that our own death is not, in all instances, the greatest evil that we can suffer. We would sometimes willingly purchase the safety of others at the price of our own existence. The tribunal therefore conducted itself by a knowledge of the characters of those whom its malice had selected. Sometimes the criminal remained untouched, but he was compelled to witness the destruction of some of his family. Sometimes his wife, sometimes his children were strangled before his eyes. Sometimes, after witnessing the agonies of all that he loved, the sentence was executed on himself.

The nature of this calamity was adapted to inspire the utmost terror. No one was apprized of his fate. The list was inscrutable to every eye but that of the tribunal. The adherents to the ruling faction composed about one-third of the inhabitants. These of course were secure. If they did not triumph in the confusion of their foes, they regarded it with unconcern.

The rage and despair which accompanied the midnight progress of the executions, scarcely excited their attention. Their revels and their mirth suffered no abatement.

It was asked in vain, by the sufferers, when the power which thus scattered death and dismay was to end. No answer was returned. They were left to form their judgment on the events that arose. Night succeeded night; but the murders, instead of lessening, increased in number. Many admitted the persuasion that a total extermination of the fallen party was intended. For a considerable period every circumstance contributed to heighten this persuasion. It was observed that the list continued gradually to swell, till the number of executions in a single night amounted to no less than two hundred.

It were worthy of some eloquent pen to describe this state of things. Surely never did the depravity of human passions more conspicuously display itself than on this stage. The most vigorous efforts were made to shake off this dreadful yoke, but the tyrants had previously armed their adherents, and guarded every avenue to a revolution, with the utmost care. The city-walls and gates served to stop the fugitives, and none but the members of the triumphant faction were suffered to go out. Policy required that those who furnished the city with provisions should be unmolested in their entrances and exits. In no variation of circumstances, indeed, had the wretched helots any thing to fear. No change in their condition could possibly be for the worse.

It will hardly be believed that this state of things continued for so long a period as four months. During this time, vengeance did not pause for a single night. At the expiration of this period, suddenly, and without warning, the nightly visitations ceased, and the tribunal was dissolved. The world were permitted to discover what limits had

been assigned to the destruction. On counting up the slain, it appeared that six thousand persons had perished, and, consequently, that the purpose of the tyrants had been, not the indiscriminate massacre, but, merely the decimation of their adversaries.

Having finished the perusal of this tale, I could not forbear expatiating to my friends on the enormity of these evils, and thanking the destiny that had reserved us for a milder system of manners—"Not so fast," said Harrington. "You forget that the very city of which we are inhabitants, no longer ago than 1793, suffered evils nearly parallel to those that are here described. In some respects the resemblance is manifest and exact. In the inscrutability of the causes that produced death; the duration of the calamity; and the proportional number of the slain, the cases are parallel. Our condition was worse inasmuch as the lingerings and agonies of fever are worse than the expeditious operation of the bow-string. We had to encounter the miseries of neglect and want. The cessation of all lucrative business, and the sealing up of most of the sources of subsistence, were disadvantages peculiar to ourselves. Against these may be put in the balance the misery which haunts the oppressors, and those aggravations of distress flowing from a knowledge that the authors of our calamities are men like ourselves, whom, perhaps, our own folly has armed against us. The evils which infest human society flow either from causes beyond our power to scrutinize, or from the license of malignant passions. It would require a delicate hand to adjust truly the balance between these opposite kinds of evil. Suppose tyranny and plague, as in these cases, to destroy the same numbers in the same time, which has produced the greatest quantity of suffering? It is not easy to decide, but I am apt to think that the miseries of plague must be allowed to preponderate."

"The cases," said Wallace, "seem to me to have very little resemblance. If I had been an inhabitant of the Greek colony, I see not how I should have been benefited by this state of affairs, whereas the yellow fever was, to me, the most fortunate event that could have happened. I kept a store, as you know, in Water Street. I am young, and then was then so poor that my stock, small as it was, was obtained upon credit. I was obliged to exert the most unremitting industry to procure myself the means of living, and the very means by which I sought to live, had like to have destroyed me. My frail constitution could not support the inconveniences of inactivity and bad air. My health was rapidly declining, and I could not afford to relinquish my business. The yellow fever, however, compelled to me relinquish it for a while.

"I took cheap lodgings in the neighbourhood of Lancaster. Country air and exercise completely reinstated me in the possession of health, but this was not all, for I formed an acquaintance with a young lady, who added three hundred pounds a year to my youth, beauty, and virtue. This acquaintance soon ripened into love, and now you see me one of the happiest of men. A lovely wife, a plentiful fortune, health, and leisure are the ingredients of my present lot, and for all these am I indebted to the yellow fever."

5. Charles Brockden Brown, "Portrait of an Emigrant. Extracted from a Letter." *The Monthly Magazine and American Review* 1:3 (June 1799).

Despite its brevity, "Portrait of an Emigrant" brings together a complex set of positions on progressive politics and social history, especially concerning race. The immediate context for Brown's sketch is the 1793 flood of French refugees who arrived in U.S. port cities, notably Philadelphia, after fleeing the increasingly violent black slave revolution in Haiti. White French Creole (colony-born) refugees in this group, along with native-born French political exiles arriving from France to escape Jacobin rule, had an immediate impact on American culture far out of proportion to their relatively small numbers as an emigrant group. Unlike the mainly agricultural and laboring-class background of earlier and larger northern European emigrant groups such as the Germans and Scots-Irish, these Francophone exiles of the 1790s belonged largely to the middle class and planter elites and consequently tended to be more literate, financially comfortable, and less familiar with manual labor than other groups. With little experience in crafts, the refugees scrambled to survive by helping to establish a market for consumer pleasures—often involving the commercialization of physical appearance and behavior—as hairdressers, dressmakers, cooks, dance instructors, booksellers, and music and theater performers.

As they brought a new code of manners and personal dress styles to the plainer, predominately Protestant cultures of American cities, the French strangers were arguably important catalysts or accelerators in this period's shift from self-sufficient, agrarian, household economies toward more modern patterns in which individuals fashion their identity, not by adherence to family or village origins but through consumer choices in clothes, books, and other cultural commodities. Not only did these French immigrants make new kinds of consumer objects and behaviors available to Americans, they also embodied and modeled for locals a radically new mentality involving comfort with lifestyles based on a consumer economy, an orientation that is dramatically different from Puritan ideals of asceticism or Quaker moderation. Brown's "Portrait" begins by highlighting the experience of this transformation and then turns to an implicit claim for the abolition of slavery and the affirmation of a postslavery society based on miscegenation and a "mulatto" culture of racial mixture.

The narrator opens the sketch by emphasizing that social experience is contingent on the changing historical environment, highlighting the Woldwinite claim that we are determined more by cultural environment than by the accident of birth into a particular family and location. Explaining that he has been asked to speak with Mrs. K, the narrator claims that while the undereducated might not know history and political debates, their familiarity with the world around them nevertheless makes them insightful commentators on the shifts in everyday social history, what Brown calls "the romance of real life." While the woman's tales of her urban neighborhood might seem trivial, the narrator suggests that as an example of the opinions and attitudes of a newly urbanized population (like Arthur Mervyn himself), her thinking ought to be viewed as an index to historical transformation and a model for virtuous activity more important than the writings and legislation of political elites. By respectfully listening to and learning from the uneducated female

observer, the narrator affirms the need for a more socially inclusive, egalitarian history from the bottom up.

Mrs. K discusses the everyday behavior of a white Haitian refugee, M. de Lisle (de l'isle = "from the island"; Lisle is also a Brown family name on the maternal side), who is openly and unashamedly living with a mixed-race (or mulatto) woman from the French colony. Such a coupling was common in Haiti, where an increasingly wealthy segment of mixed-race property owners would marry their daughters to white men so that their grandchildren would gain the privileges of whiteness in the colonies. The black slave uprising, however, has forced them to flee, losing their wealth in the process. But instead of holding a revenge grudge against unruly blacks after arriving in 1793, they show benevolence by adopting what is, as indicated by her dialect speech, a black child orphaned possibly by yellow fever. Rather than wallowing in self-pity for their lost status, the couple instead enjoys life, taking pleasure in each other's spirited conversation, and live what appears to be a purely consumer-oriented lifestyle, ordering all their meals in and avoiding manual labor by paying for washing and ignoring housecleaning. Contrary to conventional readerly expectations that Mrs. K will condemn the couple's behavior as shiftless and unacceptable, she instead envies their *joie de vivre* and insists that "the French are the only people that know how to live." Instead of being shocked by their foreignness and different sexual morality (there is a hint that the woman may be a kept mistress who occasionally dabbles in prostitution), Mrs. K is comfortable with these "exiles and strangers." The implied purpose of the conversation, then, is not so much to document the cultural otherness and racial intermixture of the French, as to record and amplify the affirmative response of the common American. It is Mrs. K's newly emergent cosmopolitanism that the narrator wants to highlight, as she provides evidence of a larger historical shift of mentalities that makes the case for a peaceful and in fact desirable move toward a mixed-race, postslavery society.

As in many of Brown's writings, seemingly random details and references work together to reinforce the surface meaning of the sketch. The de Lisles order their food from Etienne ("Chretien") Simonet, a French émigré from Montargis who had a patisserie and catering business on South Second Street near Lombard. Simonet belonged to St. John's Masonic Lodge, which was presided over by Dr. Jean Devèze, a Creole physician who played a leading role at Bush-Hill hospital during the 1793 yellow fever epidemic and is referred to in Arthur Mervyn.

The mention of Madame de Lisle's acting in Laitson's circus seemingly dates the conversation to April–July 1797. In 1797–1798, French immigrants Philip Laitson established the city's largest circus at Fifth and Prune Streets (across from the debtor's prison described in Arthur Mervyn) and staged shows that combined equestrian tricks, burlesque, ballet, pantomimes, and plays. In May 1797, Brown's close friends William Dunlap, Elisha Hubbard Smith, and Samuel Latham Mitchill came to Philadelphia to participate in a convention of state abolition societies. With Brown they attended Laitson's circus during the period when it staged plays, and they may well have seen a piece called *The American Heroine* featuring actors such as Madame de Lisle.

This was an adaptation of George Coleman's tremendously successful *Inkle and Yarico* (1787), a tale about an English merchant, Inkle, who is shipwrecked on a Caribbean is-

Related Texts

land and saved by the beautiful aborigine Yarico, who shields him from her people's anger. They exchange marriage vows, but Inkle later decides to sell his Indian wife into slavery, raising the price when he learns she is pregnant. Coleman's play was widely received as an abolitionist attack on mercantile greed and is now recognized as a significant part of the cultural push toward the successful British campaign to abolish slavery. Coleman was also familiar to Brown and his friends as the author of *The Iron Chest* (1796), a stage version of William Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams* (1793), a primary model for Arthur Mervyn. As she acts in Lailson's productions, then, *Madame de Lisle* may be employed in more than simply frivolous entertainment; she may be contributing to a popular art form that conveys progressive political messages to a wide audience. This cultural strategy follows Brown's own as outlined in "Walstein's School of History," a Related Text here.

The sketch may also involve one further allusion and intervention. During *Lailson's* short run, Susanna Rowson, author of the Francophobic *Charlotte Temple*, a Tale of Truth (U.K. publication 1791, U.S. republication 1794), was in the last stages of her acting career and appeared at Lailson's, to somewhat bad reviews, in a play titled *The Harlequin Mariner*. Critic Steven Epley has recently argued that the great success of *Charlotte Temple* was based on Rowson's repackaging of Inkle and Yarico's thematic elements in ways that stripped the source narrative of its abolitionist political purpose. Thus Brown's affirmative characterization of the de Lisles may signal an oblique criticism of Rowson's brand of xenophobic entertainment and declining career as an actor; for at this time Brown and Smith were interested participants in their friend William Dunlap's rival career and (at that time) successful management of the *New Park Theatre* in New York.

I CALLED, as you desired, on Mrs. K——. We had considerable conversation. Knowing, as you do, my character and her's, you may be somewhat inquisitive as to the subject of our conversation. You may readily suppose that my inquiries were limited to domestic and every-day incidents. The state of her own family, and her servants and children being discussed, I proceeded to inquire into the condition of her neighbours. It is not in large cities as it is in villages. Those whose education does not enable and accustom them to look abroad, to investigate the character and actions of beings of a distant age and country, are generally attentive to what is passing under their own eye. Mrs. K—— never reads, not even a newspaper. She is unacquainted with what happened before she was born. She is equally a stranger to the events that are passing in distant nations, and to those which ingross the attention and shake the passions of the statesmen and politicians of her own country; but her mind, nevertheless, is far from being torpid or inactive. She speculates curiously and even justly on the objects that occur within her narrow sphere.

Were she the inhabitant of a village, she would be mistress of the history and character of every family within its precincts; but being in a large city,* her knowledge is

* Philadelphia.

5. Charles Brockden Brown, "Portrait of an Emigrant."

confined chiefly to her immediate neighbours; to those who occupy the house on each side and opposite. I will not stop to inquire into the reason of this difference in the manners of villagers and citizens. The fact has often been remarked, though seldom satisfactorily explained. I shall merely repeat the dialogue which took place on my inquiry into the state of the family inhabiting the house on the right hand and next to her's.

"M'Cauley," said she, "who used to live there, is gone."

"Indeed! and who has taken his place?"

"A Frenchman and his wife. His wife, I suppose her to be, though he is a man of fair complexion, well formed, and of genteel appearance; and the woman is half negro. I suppose they would call her a mestee. They came last winter from the West-Indies, and miserably poor I believe; for when they came into this house they had scarcely any furniture besides a bed, and a chair or two, and a pine table. They shut up the lower rooms, and lived altogether in the two rooms in the second story."

"Of whom does the family consist?"

"The man and woman, and a young girl, whom I first took for their daughter, but afterwards found she was an orphan child, whom, shortly after their coming here, they found wandering in the streets; and, though poor enough themselves, took her under their care."

"How do they support themselves?"

"The man is employed in the counting-house of a French merchant of this city. What is the exact sort of employment, I do not know, but it allows him to spend a great deal of his time at home. The woman is an actress in Lailson's pantomimes. In the winter she scarcely ever went out in the day-time, but now that the weather is mild and good she walks out a great deal."

"Can you describe their mode of life, what they eat and drink, and how they spend their time?"

"I believe I can. Most that they do can be seen from our windows and yard, and all that they say can be heard. In the morning every thing is still till about ten o'clock. Till that hour they lie a-bed. The first sign that they exist, is given by the man, who comes half dressed, to the back window; and lolling out of it, smokes two or three pipes, and sometimes talks to a dog that lies on the out-side of the kitchen door. After sometime passed in this manner he goes into the room over the kitchen, takes a loaf of bread from the closet, and pours out a tumbler of wine; with these he returns to the front room, but begins as soon as he has hold of them, to gnaw at one and sip from the other. This constitutes their breakfast. In half an hour they both appear at the window. They throw out crumbs of bread to the dog, who stands below with open mouth to receive it; and talk sometimes to him and sometimes to each other. Their tongues run incessantly; frequently they talk together in the loudest and shrillest tone imaginable. I thought, at first, they were quarrelsome; but every now and then they burst into laughter, and it was plain that they were in perfect good humour with each other."

"About twelve o'clock the man is dressed, and goes out upon his business. He returns at three. In the mean time the lady employs herself in washing every part of her

body, and putting on a muslin dress, perfectly brilliant and clean. Then she either lolls at the window, and sings without intermission, or plays on a guitar. She is certainly a capital performer and singer. No attention is paid to house or furniture. As to rubbing tables, and sweeping and washing floors, these are never thought of. Their house is in a sad condition, but she spares no pains to make her person and dress clean.

"The man has scarcely entered the house, when he is followed by a black fellow, with bare head and shirt tucked up at his elbows, carrying on his head a tray covered with a white napkin. This is their dinner, and is brought from *Simonet's*. After dinner the man takes his flute, on which he is very skilful; and the woman either sings or plays in concert till evening approaches: some visitants then arrive, and they all go out together to walk. We hear no more of them till next morning."

"What becomes of the girl all this time?"

"She eats, sings, dresses, and walks with them. She often comes into our house, generally at meal times; if she spies any thing she likes, she never conceals her approbation. 'O my, how good *dat* must be! Me wish me had some: will you *gif* me some?' She is a pretty harmless little thing, and one cannot refuse what she asks."

"Next day after they came into this house, the girl, in the morning, while our servant was preparing breakfast, entered the kitchen—'O my!' said she to me, 'what you call dem tings?'"

'Buckwheat cakes.'

'Ahah! buckawit cake! O my! how good dey must be! Me likes—will you give me one?'"

"Next morning she came again, and we happened to be making *muffins*: 'O my!' cried she, 'you be always baking and baking! What you call dem dere?'"

'Muffins.'

'Mofeen? O my! me wish for some, me do.'

"Afterwards she was pretty regular in her visits. She was modest, notwithstanding; and, seeming to be half-starved, we gave her entertainment as often as she claimed it."

"Are not these people very happy?"

"Very happy. When together they are for ever chattering and laughing, or playing and singing in concert. How the man is employed when separate we do not certainly know; but the woman, it seems, is continually singing, and her hands, if not employed in adorning her own person, are playing the guitar. I am apt to think the French are the only people that know how to live. These people, though exiles and strangers, and subsisting on scanty and precarious funds, move on smoothly and at ease. Household cares they know not. They breakfast upon bread and wine, without the ceremony of laying table, and arranging platters and cups. From the trouble of watching and directing servants they are equally exempt. Their cookery is performed abroad. Their clothes are washed in the same way. The lady knows no manual employment but the grateful one of purifying and embellishing her own person. The intervals are consumed in the highest as well as purest sensual enjoyments, in music, in which she appears to be an adept, and of which she is passionately enamoured. When the air is serene and bland, she repairs to the public walks, with muslin handkerchief in one hand, and parti-coloured *parasol* in the other. She is always accompanied by

was anxious to please her, busy in supplying her with amusing topics, and listening with complacency and applause to her gay effusions and her ceaseless volubility.

"I have since taken some pains to discover the real situation of this family. I find that the lady was the heiress of a large estate in St. Domingo, that she spent her youth in France, where she received a polished education, and where she married her present companion, who was then in possession of rank and fortune, but whom the revolution has reduced to indigence. The insurrection in St. Domingo destroyed their property in that island. They escaped with difficulty to these shores in 1793, and have since subsisted in various modes and places, frequently pinched by extreme poverty; and sometimes obliged to solicit public charity; but retaining, in every fortune, and undiminished, their propensity to talk, laugh and sing—their flute and their guitar."

Nothing is more ambiguous than the motives that stimulate men to action. These people's enjoyments are unquestionably great. They are innocent: they are compatible, at least, with probity and wisdom, if they are not the immediate fruits of it. Conventional gaiety may account for these appearances; but as they may flow, in one case, from the absence of reflection and foresight, they may likewise, in another instance, be the product of justice and benevolence.

It is our duty to make the best of our condition; to snatch the good that is within our reach, and to nourish no repinings on account of what is unattainable. The gratifications of sense, of conjugal union, and of social intercourse, are among the highest in the scale; and these are as much in the possession of *de Lisle* and his wife, as of the most opulent and luxuriant members of the community.

As to mean habitation and scanty furniture, their temper or their reason enables them to look upon these things as trifles. They are not among those who witnessed their former prosperity, and their friends and associates are unfortunate like themselves. Instead of humiliation and contempt, adversity has probably given birth to sympathy and mutual respect.

His profession is not laborious; and her's, though not respectable according to our notions, is easy and amusing. Her life scarcely produces any intermission of recreation and enjoyment. Few instances of more unmingled and uninterrupted felicity can be found; and yet these people have endured, and continue to endure, most of the evils which the imagination is accustomed to regard with most horror; and which would create ceaseless anguish in beings fashioned on the model of my character, or of yours. Let you and I grow wise by the contemplation of their example.

B.

6. Charles Brockden Brown, "What Is a Jew?" *The Monthly Magazine and American Review* 3:5 (November 1800).

Published two months after Brown ended *Arthur Mervyn* with the dramatic revelation of *Abner Fielding's* Jewish ethnicity and preparations for *Arthur* and *Achsa's* implicitly interracial union, this short piece is another example of the way Brown frames questions

about social history and race in ways that are decidedly antisensationalist or critical of exclusionary ethno-racial categories and stereotyping. Additionally, and typically for Brown, the piece approaches religion as a negative social and historical institution, implicitly rejecting orientation to scriptural authority as superstition.

The primarily Sephardic Jewish communities in 1790s North America were small, but the question of Jewish identity during these years had a philosophical and political importance far out of proportion to the actual size of the period's Jewish populations. In revolutionary France and throughout the British and Dutch-Portuguese Atlantic world, discussions of Jewish identity and emancipation (1791 in France, 1796 in the Netherlands) often inaugurated and rehearsed subsequent debates about the category of citizenship and its applicability to nondominant groups, that is, women and nonwhites. Brown's character Achsa is designed to be an innovative "citizen" in both categories. Jewish identity was thus an important and widely rehearsed topic in this period, at a time when ethno-racial categories were, on the one hand, being revised in terms of Enlightenment and revolutionary ideals concerning a more pluralistic and tolerant social order and, on the other, becoming hardened and transformed into essentialist cages as nineteenth-century codes of biological, parascientific racialism began to emerge as a dominant discourse.

Brown writes the article as an editorial voice at the *Monthly Magazine*, responding to a possibly fictional letter titled "Queries Concerning the Jews," by "Biblicus," in the magazine's September issue. Whereas that query, perhaps written by Brown in order to stage his reply, frames Jewish identity as an essentialist and transhistorical category assumed by those who would use the Bible as their authority for categorizing other social groups, Brown's response rejects such an understanding, approaching the notion of Jewishness with a series of analytical questions that dissolve Biblicus' problematic assumptions, transforming an essentialist category into a historical name and question that will require critical-historical investigation to be adequately understood.

Brown pointedly does not even attempt to answer the titular query "What is a Jew?" implying that Biblicus' effort to define identity in this way is basically a question wrongly posed. Note how the first paragraph instead suggests that historical and political questions concerning "the present state of the Jews," that is, their civil emancipation in republics and historical status as a persecuted ethno-racial group in monarchies, are actually more worthy of consideration. Refusing to answer Biblicus, Brown asks his readers to think critically about how their own unexamined assumptions and reliance on the claims of traditional institutions frame their common sense.

Additionally, Brown writes this article in the wake of the August 1800 Benjamin Nones statement on politicized anti-Semitism, also included in this volume's Related Texts. Nones' statement is likely part of the immediate context for Brown's decision to make Achsa's character Jewish and undertake an article like this one, but both Nones and Brown are also responding to a wider and well-documented pattern of politicized attacks on Jews in the partisan infighting of the 1790s. Brown frequently returned to related treatments of Jewish identity and history during the 1803–1807 years of his *Literary Magazine* and his posthumously published *Historical Sketches*.

To the Editor of the *Monthly Magazine*.

Sir,
In addition to the queries inserted in your former number, concerning the present state of the Jews, and which are well worth consideration, I beg leave to propose one which seems to be of no small importance, and which, perhaps, it is requisite to decide on the first place. This question is—

What is a Jew?

Suppose a man and his wife, whose parents respectively were of the Hebrew nation and opinions, to be convinced of the truth of the Christian faith, and to throw off all the rules and practices that usually distinguish the followers of Moses, are such persons and their immediate posterity, trained up in their father's new religion, Jews?

Suppose a man, a Delaware Indian, for instance, to adopt the law of Moses and the prophets, in exclusion of the New Testament, does such a man become a Jew?

Or is this appellation confined to those who can trace their genealogy somewhat backward, and find it to be unmixed with the blood of the *aboriginal* inhabitants of any country but Palestine, and *likewise* who conform to the ritual of Moses, in exclusion of any later system?

If his claim to this appellation arise from his *opinions*, it may seem that a Jew may be distinguished from another man with tolerable precision. Any man, in this case, is a Jew who believes and practices (exclusively) the law of Moses. But it is an obvious inquiry—what is the law, and the prophets? What interpretation of the Hebrew writings is the true one?

While *opinion* is the standard, it is obvious that no man is either Jew or Christian in a strict and proper sense, who finds in the scriptures what is not there; who ascribes to Moses and Christ doctrines and practices which they never approved.

A rational Christian must believe that his *own* construction of the Hebrew writings is the only true one; that every reputed Jew is merely a Jew in name; that he totally mistakes the meaning of the sacred books, and is as far from being a genuine worshipper of the God of Israel, as a Mahometan or Hindoo. In embracing christianity, the rational man believes that he is fulfilling the law and the prophets, and is conforming strictly to the directions of Jehovah and his servant Moses.

But admitting that the creed of a proper Jew must *exclude* a belief in Christ, that negative alone does not make a Jew. Unless we admit a man to be what he chooses to call himself, we must confer the name of Jew only on him whose positive constructions of the law are true.

There are three sects of reputed or nominal Jews. One confines its faith to the pentateuch; another adheres exclusively to the *mishna*, or body of Rabbinical traditions; a third sect embraces, at once, the *mishna* and the pentateuch. Now, which of these is the Jew? Does the rejector of the books of Moses deserve this name? Among those whose guide is Moses, there is as great a variety of sects, in proportion to their number, as among Christians. Which of these sects contains the pure, unadulterated Jew?

These remarks show the difficulties which attend the subject, if we make opinion the criterion of *Jewism*.

If, on the contrary, we consider this as a national distinction, we shall be obliged to load, with all the obligations and penalties of *Jewism*, thousands and millions who are descended from Jewish proselytes to the Christian faith. This people are, in reality, a miserable remnant, who owe the present fewness of their numbers to wide and incessant desertions. The miracle connected with the separate existence of the Jews, does not consist in the number having never been *impaired* by desertions, but that the persecution and contempt pursuing them for so many ages, have not occasioned the conversion, and consequent disappearance, of the *whole*.

The Inquisition has had wonderful influence in lessening the number of reputed Jews, not by executions, but by forced or feigned conversions. A great number of the Portuguese nobility are descendants, in the fourth or fifth generation, from Jews, proselyted by the fear of exile, fire, and the wheel, and bear the tokens of their origin in their features.

If we confine this appellation to one who is at once of the Hebrew nation and the Hebrew faith, we shall still be involved in considerable difficulty; for how shall a Jew's genealogy be ascertained? How shall we discover that some reputed Jew is not descended from a Christian proselyte to Judaism, who has been incorporated, by marriage or adoption, at some time or another, with the nation? If descent be the standard, then the convert of St. Paul, and all his posterity, are Jews, as well as he whose father abandoned the fraternity last year; and the reputed Jew, whose ancestor three centuries ago become a proselyte to Judaism, is no Jew.

If opinion be the standard, then a convert to any form of Christianity ceases to be a Jew; and an aboriginal American becomes a Jew by circumcision or profession.

If opinion and descent together make a Jew, then it is impossible to ascertain the genuineness of a Jew. If indefinite pedigree be not necessary to make a Jew, what number of generations must pass before he acquires all the penalties and privileges annexed to this people? Are they five, ten, fifteen, or twenty generations? And where is to be found the tree of any Jew's pedigree?

In short, Mr. Editor, before I answer any of your correspondent's queries, I should be glad to know what a Jew is.

QUERIST.

7. Charles Brockden Brown, excerpts from "On the Consequences of Abolishing the Slave Trade to the West Indian Colonies." *The Literary Magazine and American Register* 4:26 (November 1805).

In this essay, Brown rejects the idea that Africans are intrinsically inferior to Europeans and rejects as nonsensical racialist physiognomic claims that differences in physical appearances between ethnic groups can be used to hierarchize them. Throughout the piece he

Charles Brockden Brown excerpts from, "On the Consequences of . . . the Slave Trade."

... extrapolates the arguments of 1790s abolitionists in his circle; see "Three Abolitionist ... in Related Texts. Drawing on early sociological conventions developed in the ... *Scottish Enlightenment* in works such as Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History and Progress of Civil Society* (1767). Brown argues for the progressive amelioration of conditions and opportunities for ex-slaves, which would produce their empowering self-control and integration into American society (rather than repatriation to Africa) by means that include interracial marriage.

Brown's repeated claim that African slaves exist in a lower state of civilization sounds more ominous than it ought to contemporary readers because we hear the term "civilization" as evaluating the behavior of ethnic or national groups. For eighteenth-century writers like Brown, however, "civilization" is not an essential, permanent characteristic or achievement of certain groups, but rather a stage (or mode) of social organization that is historically mutable. In this sense, Brown does consider some civilizations as better than others in that enlightened and egalitarian societies are better than feudal ones run by warrior and priestly castes. In this tradition, the creation of a "civil society" is a historical process of "civil-ization." This contrast between civilizations has nothing to do with place or ethno-racial origins. If African slaves act badly, this is because, as Brown and Godwin insist, humans are products of their social environment and the conditions of slavery are inherently degrading. In Arthur Mervyn, Mervyn himself considers that he is in need of civilization through greater experience with different societies.

Throughout the piece, Brown labors to compare the current state of African slavery to that of medieval Europe with its serf labor. Just as Europeans could only create the Enlightenment after their mass emancipation from conditions of bound labor, Africans will also be transformed by the abolition of slavery, a point proven by the almost spontaneous ability of independent Haiti to challenge European military and social technologies. The point of Brown's comparison is to remind his readers that their own not-so-distant ancestors were more similar to than different from Africans. Indeed, Brown emphasizes that even in Africa, the farther away we go from the coastlines of Atlantic slavery and its brutalizing mercantile flesh trade, the more we see evidence of (Muslim) civilization. By the second half of the eighteenth-century, English and French explorers were slowly making their way into Africa's interior, where they reported on its complex societies. It was one of the dubious achievements of later, nineteenth-century European writers to erase the prior (century) recognition of African achievements and reverse the prior progressive definition of civilization into its more commonly understood quasiaristocratic and racist sense.

THE probable fate of the negro race in the American colonies, is an interesting subject at all times, in a merely speculative view. It comprehends various questions of high importance in the philosophy of man; it touches on the destinies of a large portion of the species, on the event to be expected from the grandest and most cruel experiment that ever was tried upon human nature; the sudden and violent transportation of immense multitudes of savages to distant regions and new climates, and their forcible and instantaneous exposure to a state of comparative civilization. [. . .]

[...] Till the slave trade is at once boldly and totally abolished (for in the present circumstances delay is not prudence; it is rashness, in fact, though it may result, like many other kinds of temerity, from real cowardice); till the root of all the evil is hardly struck at, and the main, universal cause of all danger destroyed, an hour's quiet cannot be expected in the slave colonies, nor any sensible alleviation of the manifold evils which crowd the picture of West Indian society.[...]

That the bad qualities ascribed to the negroes, often with great justice, belong rather to their habits than to their nature, and are derived either from the low state of civilization in which the whole race at present is placed, or from the manifold hardships of their situation in the colonies, is not only consistent with analogy, but is deducible from facts. The travellers who have visited interior Africa, where the influence of the slave-trade is much less felt than on the west coast, assure us, that the natural dispositions of the negro race are mild, gentle, and amiable in a high degree; that, far from wanting ingenuity, they have made no contemptible progress in the arts; and have even united into political societies of great extent and complicated structure, notwithstanding the obstacles arising from their remote situation, and their want of water-carriage: that their disposition to voluntary and continued exertions of body and mind, their capacity of industry, the great promoter of all human improvement, is not inferior to the same principle in other tribes, in similar situations: in fine, that they have the same propensity to improve both their condition, their faculties, and their virtues, conspicuous in the human character over all the rest of the world. Let us compare the general circumstances of any European nation; the character, both for talents and virtues of its inhabitants, at two distant periods. How remarkable is the contrast between them! Little more than a century ago, Russia was covered with hordes of barbarians; cheating, drinking, brutal lust, and ferocious rage, were as well known, and as little blamed, among the nobles of the czar's court, as the more polished and mitigated forms of the same vices are at this day in Petersburg; literature never appeared among its inhabitants; and you might travel several days journey, without meeting a man, even among the higher classes, qualified for one moment's rational conversation. . . . Though the various circumstances of external improvement will not totally conceal, even at this day, and among the first classes, the "vestigia ruris,"¹ yet no one can deny that the stuff of which Russians are made has been greatly and fundamentally improved; that their capacities and virtues rapidly unfolding, as their habits have been changed, and their communication with the rest of mankind extended. A century ago, it would have been just as miraculous to read a tolerable Russian poem, or find a society of Boyars² where a rational person could spend his time with satisfaction, as it would be at this day, to find the same

¹ "Vestigia ruris": vestiges or traces of the rustic past. From Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.160: *Sed in longum tamen avum Manserunt, hodieque manent vestigia ruris* "... yet for many a year lived on, and still live on, traces of our rustic past" (Loeb tr. H. R. Fairclough). The phrase from Horace was well known to Brown's Latinate readership and a way of saying something like "primitive cultural origins."

² "Boyars": the highest rank of the Russian aristocracy in the early modern period.

privileges at Houssa or Tombuctoo;³ and those who argue about races, and despise the effect of circumstances, would have had the same right to decide upon the fate of all the Russias, from an inspection of the Calmuc skull,⁴ as they now have to condemn all Africa to everlasting barbarism, from the craniums, colour, and wool of its inhabitants. If we allow that there will always be a sensible difference between the negro and the European, yet why should we suppose that this disparity will be greater than between the Sclavonian and Gothic nations?⁵ No one denies that all the families of mankind are capable of great improvement. And though, after all, some tribes should remain inferior to others, it would be ridiculous on that account to deny the possibility of greatly civilizing even the most untoward tribe, or the importance of any race of men, or of the whole species, in the various branches of virtue and power, must be infinite, was never maintained by sound reasoners. But that this progress is indefinite; that no limit can be assigned to its extent or acceleration, is beyond all reasonable controversy.

The superiority of a negro in the interior of Africa to one on the Slave Coast⁶ is not the enemies of the slave-trade reasonably impute the degeneracy of the maritime tribes to that baneful commerce. Its friends have, on the other hand, deduced from thence an argument against the negro character, which, say they, is not improved by intercourse with civilized nations. But the fact is admitted. Mr. Park observed it in the north, and Mr. Barrow in the tribes south of the line, who increase in civilization as you leave the Slave Coast.⁷ Compare the accounts given by these travellers, of the skill, the industry, the excellent moral qualities of the Africans in Houssa and Tombuctoo, &c., with the pictures that have been drawn of the same race, living in all the barbarity which the supply of slave ships requires; you will be convinced that the negro is as much improved by a change of circumstances as the white. The state of slavery is in no case favourable to improvement; yet, compare the Creole negro with the imported slave, and you will find that even the most debasing form of

³ "Houssa . . . Tombuctoo": African cities that are Gao and Timbuktu, Mali. Both were important Muslim trading cities.

⁴ "Calmuc skull": now spelled Kalmyk, from Kalmykia, an area near the Caspian Sea, as of the 2000s a part of the Russian Federation bordering Georgia and Azerbaijan. Brown seems to be lampooning the physiognomical work of Johan Caspar Lavater (1741–1801), which he knew from the 1794 American edition of Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* . . . abridged from Mr. Holcroft's translation (Boston). There Lavater sequentially compares the skull shapes of a Dutchman (as normative European), a Calmuc (as Eurasian), and an Ethiopian (as African).

⁵ "Sclavonian and Gothic nations": immediately referring to the Slavic and Germanic peoples but, more broadly, the difference between Western and Eastern Europe.

⁶ "Slave Coast": the coastal region of current Togo, Benin, and Nigeria.

⁷ "Mr. Park . . . and Mr. Barrow": Mungo Park (1771–1806), Scottish explorer of interior Africa (1795); John Barrow (1764–1848), a British diplomat who served during the late 1790s in what is today South Africa; author of *Travels into the Interior of South Africa* (London, 1802).

servitude, though it necessarily eradicates most of the moral qualities of the African, has not prevented him from profiting intellectually by the intercourse of more civilized men. The war of St. Domingo reads us a memorable lesson; negroes organizing immense armies; laying plans of campaigns and sieges, which, if not scientific, have at least been successful against the finest European troops; arranging forms of government, and even proceeding some length in executing the most difficult of human enterprizes; entering into commercial relations with foreigners, and conceiving the idea of alliances; acquiring something like a maritime force, and, at any rate, navigating vessels in the tropical seas, with as much skill and foresight as that complicated operation requires.

This spectacle ought to teach us the effects of circumstances upon the human faculties, and prescribe bounds to that arrogance, which would confine to one race, the characteristics of the species. We have torn those men from their country, on the vain pretence, that their nature is radically inferior to our own. We have treated them so as to stunt the natural growth of their virtues and their reason. Our efforts have partly succeeded; for the West Indian, like all other slaves, has copied some of the tyrant's vices. But their ingenuity has advanced apace, under all disadvantages; and the negroes are already so much improved, that, while we madly continue to despise them, and to justify the crimes which have transplanted them, it has really become doubtful how long they will suffer us to exist in the islands.

[. . .] There is nothing in the physical or moral constitution of the negro, which renders him an exception to the general character of the species, and prevents him from improving in all estimable qualities, when placed in favourable circumstances. Nay, under all possible disadvantages, we see the progress he is capable of making, whether insulated by the deserts of Africa, or surrounded by the slave factories of Europeans, or groaning under the cruelties of the West Indian system. This progress will be accelerated in proportion as those impediments are removed; while Africa is civilized by legitimate commerce with the more polished nations of the world, the negroes already in the West Indies will rapidly improve, as soon as the abolition shall begin to ameliorate their treatment.

It will not be long before milder treatment will increase the productive powers of negro labour. [. . .] The history of all Europe demonstrates the effects which the mild treatment of the labouring orders naturally produces on the value of their industry.

The proprietors of Hungary, almost immediately after the reform of Maria Theresa,⁸ began to feel the salutary consequences of the limitations of the *corvées*⁹ due from their peasants. When, instead of full power over the whole of the serf's

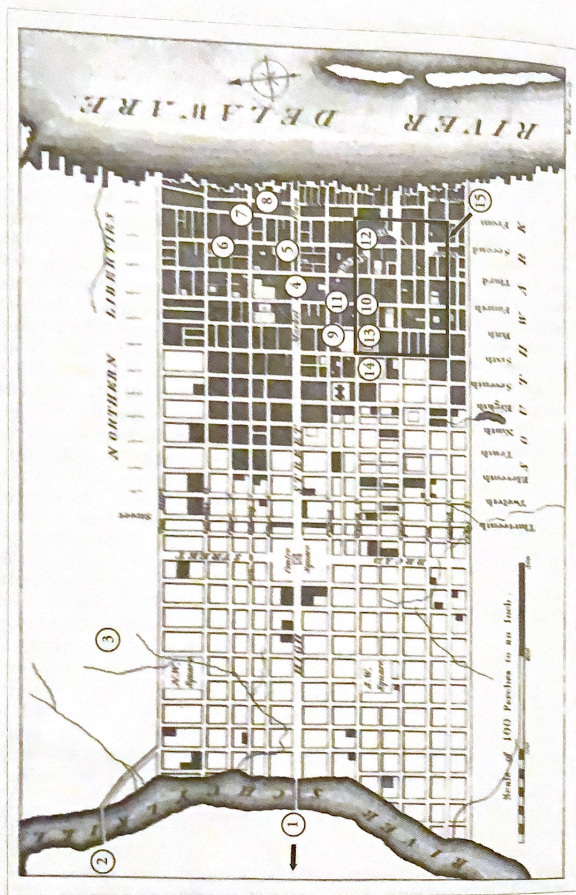
⁸ "Reform of Maria Theresa": the enlightened Habsburg Queen of Hungary and Bohemia 1740–1780. In 1771 Maria Theresa gave peasants land tenure and abolished the "Robot Patent," an oppressive feudal peasant rent that allowed nobles to monopolize land.

⁹ "Corvées": unpaid mass labor; the *corvée* was a feudal institution, an annual tax paid through labor (by serfs or villeins) for the landowner to whom they were bound. By extension the word is used to describe the mass forced labor used in prefeudal eras to build immense projects like the great pyramids of Egypt or the Great Wall of China.

labour, the lord could only take two days in each week, he found those two worth much more than all the seven had been before; though at the same time, he lost the right of retaining the peasant on his ground against his will. If such mitigations are favourable to the master, still more advantageous must they be to the slave. [. . .] The new mode of treatment would render *universal* task-work, not only an easy, but a necessary improvement. And when these changes shall have been effected slowly, and with the consent of all proprietors, not taken by vote, but freely given by each individual, will not the lower orders in the islands be exactly in the state of the *ascripti glebae*¹⁰ under the milder feudal governments of the old world? It is but one step to make them *coloni partiarum*,¹¹ or serf tenants paying a proportion of their crops to the lord. Such they are already in some parts of Spanish and Portuguese America, where the richest ores and pearls are obtained, by means of this very contract between the master and his slave. Nor does it much signify in what form the last change of all shall then be effected by the total emancipation of the negro. He will, by this natural gradation, have become civilized to a certain degree, and fully capable of enjoying the station of a free man, for which all are fitted by nature. In the course of time, we may hope to see the same relaxation of prejudice against him among the whites, which has made the European baron cease to look down upon his serf as an inferior animal. The mixture even of the races, is a thing by no means impossible, and will remove the only pretext that can remain for supposing the West Indian society, as new-modelled by the abolition, to be in the smallest degree different from the society in Europe, after the successors of the Romans ceased to procure slaves in commerce.

¹⁰ "*Ascripti glebae*": in Latin literally those "bound to the soil" or earth, the lowest class of serf laborers in the feudal system; "villeins" with no property of their own.

¹¹ "*Coloni partiarum*": a class of serf laborers (literally "sharers in the plantation" or share farmers) in late Roman and medieval feudalism who could own property themselves and were thus one step better off than villinage workers. Sometimes glossed with the old French derived "*meisage*" or as "sharecroppers." Adam Smith discusses the transition to *coloni partiarum* status in *Wealth of Nations* III.2. (1776), in a passage on slavery that also mentions the Quaker-driven abolition of slavery in Pennsylvania. Friedrich Engels discusses this transition with similar side comparisons to modern and U.S. race slavery in Chapter 8 of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884).



Map courtesy the Library Company of Philadelphia.

1. Chase's Courthouse (Ch. 2)
2. Upper bridge across the Schuylkill (Ch. 3)
3. Bush-Hill Emergency Hospital (Ch. 17)
4. High Street Market Houses (Ch. 3, also site of "Jersey Market" in Ch. II.2)
5. Christ Church (just above North Second and Market Chapter II.2)
6. Lesh's Tavern (94 North Second, between Arch and Race, Ch. 3)
7. Front Street (Ch. 3)
8. Water Street (Ch. II.3)
9. City Hall (Ch. 19)
10. South Fourth Street (Mrs. Wentworth's residence; Ch. 7)
11. Indian Queen Inn (on South Fourth, likely the Inn mentioned in Ch. 17)
12. Fish Market (on South Second, between Arch and Race, Ch. 3)
13. Prison Street Dehor's Prison (Ch. II.6)
14. Washington Square, known as George Square, a meeting place for slaves, and a burial field for laboring-class yellow fever victims.
15. Society Hill neighborhood (homes of Welbeck, Thetford, and Mrs. Wentworth)

8. William Birch, "Plan of the City of Philadelphia" (1800).

The map reproduced here was originally printed in *William Birch & Sons: The City of Philadelphia*... as it appeared in the Year 1800, a book of etchings or urban "views" that was published at the same moment as Arthur Mervyn. Birch's book was an important visual representation of Philadelphia's self-consciously "modern" urban space and provides many points of comparison with Brown's literary depictions. Birch's plates are available for viewing on websites and may provide an interesting accompaniment to the novel; see, for example, Birch's views from within the market houses on Market Street that are described with quotations from *Milton* in the novel's Chapter 3.

Birch's views idealize the city and its urban space as an orderly, hygienic realm that is notably free of crowds and the poor, somewhat like the promotional views that accompany today's urban development and architectural projects. Whereas Birch visualizes a tranquil and "improved" metropolis whose visible prosperity is based on an implicitly uplifting commerce, Brown's novel articulates the city's social spaces and commercial links to the Atlantic world in very different terms. The version of Birch's map provided here gives the reader a basic idea of the city's situation between the Schuylkill and Delaware rivers and indicates how the urbanized area as of the 1790s was roughly a triangle with its base along the Delaware River and its peak at about Eighth and Market Streets; streets were projected all the way to the Schuylkill but as yet remained undeveloped west of this urbanized core. This version of the map is additionally coded to indicate other locales that figure in Arthur Mervyn, such as the Bush-Hill hospital, the Upper crossing of the Schuylkill, or the Society Hill neighborhood in which much of the novel's urban action takes place.

The Birch map is scaled at "100 Perches to an Inch." A "perch" or "rod" was a unit of measurement standardized in the eighteenth century to five and one-half yards, or five and three-tenths meters. The distance along High (Market) Street between the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers is approximately two miles.

9. William Godwin, excerpts from *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness* (1793).

William Godwin (1756–1836) was at the center of British progressive politics in the 1790s. His Enquiry Concerning Political Justice is a key work of the Woldwinite circle, the most complete articulation of its social principles and program. Along with Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Paine, Godwin was tremendously popular and influential among the college-educated young men who formed the core of Brown's associates. These writings operate as the common sense and moral compass for Brown's group, who corresponded with Godwin as early as 1796.

Brown had access to Political Justice in several editions. These excerpts follow the second (1796) edition in the Philadelphia printing by Bioren and Madan, the edition Brown probably used during his novelistic years. The excerpts insist on the social degradation and psychic damage caused by inequalities of wealth, the obligation to struggle for social reform through rational improvements, the power of benevolence as it acts through associative sentiment, and the importance of intimate conversation and transparency of personal motivation in setting the stage for larger social and historical transformations.

Book I (*Of the Powers of Man Considered in His Social Capacity*), Chapter III: *Spirit of Political Institutions*

Two of the greatest abuses relative to the interior policy of nations, which at this time prevail in the world, consist in the irregular transfer of property, either first by violence, or secondly by fraud. If among the inhabitants of any country there existed no desire in one individual to possess himself of the substance of another, or no desire so vehement and restless as to prompt him to acquire it by means inconsistent with order and justice, undoubtedly in that country guilt could scarcely be known but by report. If every man could with perfect facility obtain the necessaries of life, and, obtaining them, feel no uneasy craving after its superfluities, temptation would lose its power. Private interest would visibly accord with public good; and civil society become what poetry has feigned of the golden age. Let us enquire into the principles to which these abuses are indebted for their existence.

First then it is to be observed that, in the most refined states of Europe, the inequality of property has risen to an alarming height. Vast numbers of their inhabitants are deprived of almost every accommodation that can render life tolerable or secure. Their utmost industry scarcely suffices for their support. The women and children lean with an insupportable weight upon the efforts of the man, so that a large family has in the lower orders of life become a proverbial expression for an uncommon degree of poverty and wretchedness. If sickness, or some of those casualties which are perpetually incident to an active and laborious life, be added to these burdens, the distress is yet greater.

It seems to be agreed that in England there is less wretchedness and distress than in most of the kingdoms of the continent. In England the poor's rates amount to the sum of two millions sterling per annum. It has been calculated that one person in seven of the inhabitants of this country derives at some period of his life assistance from this fund. If to this we add the persons who, from pride, a spirit of independence, or the want of a legal settlement, though in equal distress receive no such assistance, the proportion will be considerably increased.

I lay no stress upon the accuracy of this calculation; the general fact is sufficient to give us an idea of the greatness of the abuse. The consequences that result are placed beyond the reach of contradiction. A perpetual struggle with the evils of poverty, if frequently ineffectual, must necessarily render many of the sufferers desperate. A painful feeling of their oppressed situation will itself deprive them of the power of surmounting it. The superiority of the rich, being thus unmercifully exercised, must inevitably expose them to reprisals; and the poor man will be induced to regard the state of society as a state of war, an unjust combination, not for protecting every man in his rights and securing to him the means of existence, but for engrossing all its advantages to a few favoured individuals, and reserving for the portion of the rest want, dependence and misery.

A second source of those destructive passions by which the peace of society is interrupted is to be found in the luxury, the pageantry and magnificence with which enormous wealth is usually accompanied. Human beings are capable of encountering with cheerfulness considerable hardships when those hardships are impartially shared with the rest of the society, and they are not insulted with the spectacle of indolence and ease in others, no way deserving of greater advantages than themselves. But it is a bitter aggravation of their own calamity, to have the privileges of others forced on their observation, and, while they are perpetually and vainly endeavouring to secure for themselves and their families the poorest conveniences, to find others revelling in the fruits of their labours. This aggravation is assiduously administered to them under most of the political establishments at present in existence. There is a numerous class of individuals who, though rich, have neither brilliant talents nor sublime virtues; and, however highly they may prize their education, their affability, their superior polish and the elegance of their manners, have a secret consciousness that they possess nothing by which they can so securely assert their pre-eminence and keep their inferiors at a distance as the splendour of their equipage, the magnificence of their retinue and the sumptuousness of their entertainments. The poor man is struck with this exhibition; he feels his own miseries; he knows how unwearied are his efforts to obtain a slender pittance of this prodigal waste; and he mistakes opulence for felicity. He cannot persuade himself that an embroidered garment may frequently cover an aching heart.

A third disadvantage that is apt to connect poverty with discontent consists in the insolence and usurpation of the rich. If the poor man would in other respects compare himself in philosophic indifference, and, conscious that he possesses every thing that is truly honourable to man as fully as his rich neighbour, would look upon the rest as beneath his envy, his neighbour will not permit him to do so. He seems as if

he could never be satisfied with his possessions unless he can make the spectacle of them grating to others; and that honest self-esteem, by which his inferior might otherwise attain to tranquillity, is rendered the instrument of galling him with oppression and injustice. In many countries justice is avowedly made a subject of solicitation, and the man of the highest rank and most splendid connections almost infallibly carries his cause against the unprotected and friendless. In countries where this shameless practice is not established, justice is frequently a matter of expensive purchase, and the man with the longest purse is proverbially victorious. A consciousness of these facts must be expected to render the rich little cautious of offence in his dealings with the poor, and to inspire him with a temper overbearing, dictatorial and tyrannical. Nor does this indirect oppression satisfy his despotism. The rich are in all such countries directly or indirectly the legislators of the state; and of consequence are perpetually reducing oppression into a system, and depriving the poor of that little commonage of nature which might otherwise still have remained to them.

Book I, Chapter IV: *The Characters of Men Originate in Their External Circumstances*

Under this branch of the subject I shall attempt to prove two things: first, that the actions and dispositions of mankind are the offspring of circumstances and events, and not of any original determination that they bring into the world; and, secondly, that the great stream of our voluntary actions essentially depends, not upon the direct and immediate impulses of sense, but upon the decisions of the understanding.

Book I, Chapter V: *The Voluntary Actions of Men Originate in Their Opinions*

The corollaries respecting political truth, deducible from the simple proposition, which seems clearly established by the reasonings of the present chapter, that the voluntary actions of men are in all instances conformable to the deductions of their understanding, are of the highest importance. Hence we may infer what are the hopes and prospects of human improvement. The doctrine which may be founded upon these principles may perhaps best be expressed in the five following propositions: sound reasoning and truth, when adequately communicated, must always be victorious over error; sound reasoning and truth are capable of being so communicated: truth is omnipotent: the vices and moral weakness of man are not invincible: man is perfectible, or in other words susceptible of perpetual improvement.

Book II (*Principals of Society*), Chapter IV: *Of Personal Virtue and Duty*

In the first sense I would define virtue to be any action or actions of an intelligent being proceeding from kind and benevolent intention, and having a tendency to contribute to general happiness. Thus defined, it distributes itself under two heads; and, in whatever instance either the tendency or the intention is wanting, the virtue is incomplete. An action, however pure may be the intention of the agent, the tendency of which is mischievous, or which shall merely be nugatory and useless in its character, is not a virtuous action. Were it otherwise, we should be obliged to concede the appellation of virtue to the most nefarious deeds of bigots, persecutors and religious assassins, and to the weakest observances of a deluded superstition. Still less does an action, the consequences of which shall be supposed to be in the highest degree beneficial, but which proceeds from a mean, corrupt and degrading motive, deserve the appellation of virtue. A virtuous action is that, of which both the motive and the tendency concur to excite our approbation.

Book IV (*Of the Operation of Opinion in Societies and Individuals*), Chapter I: *Of Resistance*

The strong hold of government has appeared hitherto to have consisted in seduction. However imperfect might be the political constitution under which they lived, mankind have ordinarily been persuaded to regard it with a sort of reverential and implicit respect. The privileges of Englishmen, and the liberties of Germany, the splendour of the most Christian, and the solemn gravity of the Catholic king, have each afforded a subject of exultation to the individuals who shared, or thought they shared, in the advantages these terms were conceived to describe. Each man was accustomed to deem it a mark of the peculiar kindness of providence that he was born in the country, whatever it was, to which he happened to belong. The time may come which shall subvert these prejudices. The time may come when men shall exercise the piercing search of truth upon the mysteries of government, and view without prepossession the defects and abuses of the constitution of their country. Out of this new order of things a new series of duties will arise. When a spirit of impartiality shall prevail, and loyalty shall decay, it will become us to enquire into the conduct which such a state of thinking shall make necessary. We shall then be called upon to maintain a true medium between blindness to injustice and calamity on the one hand, and an acrimonious spirit of violence and resentment on the other. It will be the duty of such as shall see these subjects in the pure light of truth to exert themselves for the effectual demolition of monopolies and usurpation; but effectual demolition is not the offspring of crude projects and precipitate measures. He who dedicates himself to these may be suspected to be under the domination of passion, rather than benevolence. The true friend of equality will do nothing unthinkingly, will cherish no wild

schemes of uproar and confusion, and will endeavour to discover the mode in which his faculties may be laid out to the greatest and most permanent advantage.

The whole of this question is intimately connected with the enquiry which has necessarily occupied a share in the disquisitions of all writers on the subject of government, concerning the propriety and measures of resistance. "Are the worst government and best equally entitled to the toleration and forbearance of their subjects? Is there no case of political oppression that will authorize the persons who suffer it to take up arms against their oppressors? Or, if there be, what is the quantity of oppression at the measure of which insurrections begin to be justifiable? Abuses will always exist, for man will always be imperfect; what is the nature of the abuse which it would be pusillanimous to oppose by words only, and which true courage would instruct us was to be endured no longer?"

No question can be conceived more important than this. In the examination of it philosophy almost forgets its nature; it ceases to be speculation, and becomes an actor. Upon the decision, according as it shall be decided in the minds of a bold and resolute party, the existence of thousands may be suspended. The speculative enquirer, if he live in a state where abuse is notorious and grievances frequent, knows not, while he weighs the case in the balance of reason, how far that which he attempts to describe is already realized in the apprehension of numbers of his countrymen. Let us enter upon the question with the seriousness which so critical an inquiry demands.

Resistance may have its source in the emergencies either of the public or the individual. "A nation," it has commonly been said, "has a right to shake off any authority that is usurped over it." This is a proposition that has generally passed without question, and certainly no proposition can appear more plausible. But, if we examine it minutely, we shall find that it is attended with equivocal circumstances. What do we mean by a nation? Is the whole people concerned in this resistance, or only a part? If the whole be prepared to resist, the whole is persuaded of the injustice of the usurpation. What sort of usurpation is that which can be exercised by one or a few persons over a whole nation universally disapproving of it? Government is founded in opinion. Bad government deceives us first, before it fastens itself upon us like an incubus, oppressing all our efforts. A nation in general must have learned to respect a king and a house of lords, before a king and a house of lords can exercise any authority over them. If a man or a set of men, unsanctioned by any previous prejudice in their favour, pretend to exercise sovereignty in a country, they will become objects of derision rather than of serious resistance. Destroy the existing prejudice in favour of any of our present institutions, and they will fall into similar disuse and contempt.

Book IV, Chapter III: *Of Political Associations*

Books have by their very nature but a limited operation; though, on account of their permanence, their methodical disquisition, and their easiness of access, they are entitled to the foremost place. The number of those who almost wholly abstain from

reading is exceedingly great. Books, to those by whom they are read, have a sort of constitutional coldness. We review the arguments of an "insolent innovator" with dullness, and are unwilling to expand our minds to take in their force. It is with difficulty that we obtain the courage to strike into untrodden paths, and question tenets that have been generally received. But conversation accustoms us to hear a variety of sentiments, obliges us to exercise patience and attention, and gives freedom and elasticity to our disquisitions. A thinking man, if he will recollect his intellectual history, will find that he has derived inestimable benefit from the stimulus and surprise of colloquial suggestions; and, if he review the history of literature, will perceive that minds of great acuteness and ability have commonly existed in a cluster.

It follows that the promoting the best interests of mankind eminently depends upon the freedom of social communication. Let us figure to ourselves a number of individuals who, having stored their minds with reading and reflection, are accustomed, in candid and unreserved conversation, to compare their ideas, suggest their doubts, examine their mutual difficulties and cultivate a perspicuous and animated manner of delivering their sentiments. Let us suppose that their intercourse is not confined to the society of each other, but that they are desirous extensively to communicate the truths with which they are acquainted. Let us suppose their illustrations to be not more distinguished by impartiality and demonstrative clearness than by the mildness of their temper, and a spirit of comprehensive benevolence. We shall then have an idea of knowledge as perpetually gaining ground, unaccompanied with peril in the means of its diffusion. Their hearers will be instigated to impart their acquisitions to still other hearers, and the circle of instruction will perpetually increase. Reason will spread, and not a brute and unintelligent sympathy.

Book IV, Chapter VI: *Of Sincerity*

The powerful recommendations attendant upon sincerity are obvious. It is intimately connected with the general dissemination of innocence, energy, intellectual improvement, and philanthropy.

Did every man impose this law upon himself, did he regard himself as not authorized to conceal any part of his character and conduct, this circumstance alone would prevent millions of actions from being perpetrated in which we are now induced to engage by the prospect of secrecy and impunity. We have only to suppose men obliged to consider, before they determined upon an equivocal action, whether they chose to be their own historians, the future narrators of the scene in which they were acting a part, and the most ordinary imagination will instantly suggest how essential a variation would be introduced into human affairs. It has been justly observed that the popish practice of confession is attended with some salutary effects. How much better would it be if, instead of an institution thus equivocal, and which has been made so dangerous an instrument of ecclesiastical despotism, every man were to make the world his confessional, and the human species the keeper of his conscience?

There is a further benefit that would result to me from the habit of telling every man the truth, regardless of the dictates of worldly prudence and custom. I should acquire a clear, ingenuous and unembarrassed air. According to the established modes of society, whenever I have a circumstance to state which would require some effort of mind and discrimination to enable me to do it justice, and state it with the proper effect, I fly from the talk, and take refuge in silence or equivocation. But the principle which forbade me concealment would keep my mind for ever awake, and for ever warm. I should always be obliged to exert my attention, lest, in pretending to tell the truth, I should tell it in so imperfect and mangled a way as to produce the effect of falsehood. If I spoke to a man of my own faults or those of his neighbour, I should be anxious not to suffer them to come distorted or exaggerated to his mind, or to permit what at first was fact to degenerate into satire. If I spoke to him of the errors he had himself committed, I should carefully avoid those inconsiderate expressions which might convert what was in itself beneficent into offence; and my thoughts would be full of that kindness, and generous concern for his welfare, which such a talk necessarily brings along with it. Sincerity would liberate my mind, and make the eulogiums I had occasion to pronounce, clear, copious and appropriate. Conversation would speedily exchange its present character of listlessness and insignificance, for a Roman boldness and fervour; and, accustomed, at first by the fortuitous operation of circumstances, to tell men of things it was useful for them to know, I should speedily learn to study their advantage, and never rest satisfied with my conduct till I had discovered how to spend the hours I was in their company in the way which was most rational and improving.

Book IV, Chapter X: *Of Self-Love And Benevolence*

The system of disinterested benevolence proves to us that it is possible to be virtuous, and not merely to talk of virtue; that all which has been said by philosophers and moralists respecting impartial justice is not an unmeaning rant; and that, when we call upon mankind to divest themselves of selfish and personal considerations, we call upon them for something they are able to practise. An idea like this reconciles us to our species; teaches us to regard, with enlightened admiration, the men who have appeared to lose the feeling of their personal existence, in the pursuit of general advantage; and gives us reason to expect that, as men collectively advance in science and useful institution, they will proceed more and more to consolidate their private judgement, and their individual will, with abstract justice, and the unmixed approbation of general happiness.

10. Mary Wollstonecraft, excerpts from *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796).

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) was a major radical voice of the revolutionary age, remembered today primarily as a path-breaking feminist. Her ideas and writings on gender and revolutionary cultural politics were central, formative references for Brown and his circle, who frequently discussed her books. Brown's *Alcuin* (1798), published before he wrote his longer fictions, rehearses many of the arguments in Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) about the social factors that disempower women. Although less well known than her *Vindication*, the *Letters Written during a Short Residence* is regarded by some scholars today as the most important Anglophone travel narrative after Lawrence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1768; see the excerpt in *Related Texts*). Certainly they had an impact on Wollstonecraft's future husband, William Godwin, who wanted to meet their author after reading them.

These excerpts from the narrative's Letters 19 and 23, concerning the prevalence of commercial fraud and the mercantile culture of the German city of Hamburg, provide suggestive parallels with Arthur Mervyn's views of the mercantile city and its corruption as well as with Brown's characteristic, Wollstonecraft-derived emphasis on the domination of women as a structural feature of the social order. Wollstonecraft's sketch of Hamburg additionally dramatizes the impact of French elite refugees on Protestant urban culture, similar to the effects of the Caribbean Francophone refugees in Arthur Mervyn and the "Portrait of an Emigrant" sketch also in this volume's *Related Texts*.

Wollstonecraft's dysfunctional relationship with U.S. adventurer Gilbert Imlay seems to be referenced in the backstory of *Achsa Fielding* in Brown's novel. Despite her rejection by Imlay and following her suicide attempt in response to this rejection (all recounted in Godwin's 1798 *Memoirs of Wollstonecraft*), Mary agreed to undertake this extraordinary voyage as an unaccompanied woman vested with important business authorizations and traveled through northern Europe in a difficult attempt to rescue Imlay's speculative investment and possibly renew his affection. Her impatience with Imlay's involvement in mercantile speculation and fraud is clearly expressed in Letter 23, where the narrator addresses Imlay directly as "you." Overall, Wollstonecraft's travel narrative involves numerous precedents for the depiction of mercantile corruption in the context of revolutionary shipping and smuggling that plays such an important role in the background of Arthur Mervyn.

LETTER XIX.

[...] It moves my gall to discover some of the commercial frauds practiced during the present war. In short, under whatever point of view I consider society, it appears to me that an adoration of property is the root of all evil. Here it does not render the

people enterprising, as in America, but thrifty and cautious. I never, therefore, was in a capital where there was so little appearance of active industry; and as for gaiety, I looked in vain for the sprightly gait of the Norwegians, who in every respect appear to me to have got the start of them. This difference I attribute to their having more liberty: a liberty which they think their right by inheritance, whilst the Danes, when they boast of their negative happiness, always mention it as the boon of the Prince Royal, under the superintending wisdom of Count Bernstorff. Vassalage is nevertheless ceasing throughout the kingdom, and with it will pass away that sordid avarice which every modification of slavery is calculated to produce.

If the chief use of property be power, in the shape of the respect it procures, is it not among the inconsistencies of human nature most incomprehensible, that men should find a pleasure in hoarding up property which they steal from their necessities, even when they are convinced that it would be dangerous to display such an enviable superiority? Is not this the situation of serfs in every country? Yet a rapacity to accumulate money seems to become stronger in proportion as it is allowed to be useless.

Wealth does not appear to be sought for amongst the Danes, to obtain the excellent luxuries of life, for a want of taste is very conspicuous at Copenhagen; so much so that I am not surprised to hear that poor Mauida offended the rigid Lutherans by aiming to refine their pleasures. The elegance which she wished to introduce was termed lasciviousness; yet I do not find that the absence of gallantry renders the wives more chaste, or the husbands more constant. Love here seems to corrupt the morals without polishing the manners, by banishing confidence and truth, the charm as well as cement of domestic life. A gentleman, who has resided in this city some time, assures me that he could not find language to give me an idea of the gross debaucheries into which the lower order of people fall; and the promiscuous amours of the men of the middling class with their female servants debase both beyond measure, weakening every species of family affection.

I have everywhere been struck by one characteristic difference in the conduct of the two sexes; women, in general, are seduced by their superiors, and men jilted by their inferiors: rank and manners awe the one, and cunning and wantonness subjugate the other; ambition creeping into the woman's passion, and tyranny giving force to the man's, for most men treat their mistresses as kings do their favourites: *ergo* is not man then the tyrant of the creation?

[...] I have before mentioned that the men are domestic tyrants, considering them as fathers, brothers, or husbands; but there is a kind of interregnum between the reign of the father and husband which is the only period of freedom and pleasure that the women enjoy. Young people who are attached to each other, with the consent of their friends, exchange rings, and are permitted to enjoy a degree of liberty together which I have never noticed in any other country. The days of courtship are, therefore, prolonged till it be perfectly convenient to marry: the intimacy often becomes very tender; and if the lover obtain the privilege of a husband, it can only be termed half by stealth, because the family is willfully blind. It happens very rarely that these honorary engagements are dissolved or disregarded, a stigma being at-

ached to a breach of faith which is thought more disgraceful, if not so criminal, as the violation of the marriage-vow.

Do not forget that, in my general observations, I do not pretend to sketch a national character, but merely to note the present state of morals and manners as I trace the progress of the world's improvement. Because, during my residence in different countries, my principal object has been to take such a dispassionate view of men as will lead me to form a just idea of the nature of man. And, to deal ingenuously with you, I believe I should have been less severe in the remarks I have made on the vanity and depravity of the french, had I travelled towards the north before I visited France.

LETTER XXIII.

[...] Hamburg is an ill, close-built town, swarming with inhabitants; and, from what I could learn, like all the other free towns, governed in a manner which bears hard on the poor, whilst narrowing the minds of the rich; the character of the man is lost in the Hamburger. Always afraid of the encroachments of their Danish neighbours, that is, anxiously apprehensive of their sharing the golden harvest of commerce with them, or taking a little of the trade off their hands—though they have more than they know what to do with—they are ever on the watch, till their very eyes lose all expression, excepting the prying glance of suspicion.

The gates of Hamburg are shut at seven, in the winter, and nine in the summer, lest some strangers, who come to traffic in Hamburg, should prefer living, and consequently—so exactly do they calculate—spend their money out of the walls of the Hamburger's world. Immense fortunes have been acquired by the *per-cent* arising from commissions nominally only two and a half; but mounted to eight or ten at least, by the secret *manoeuvres* of trade, not to include the advantage of purchasing goods wholesale, in common with contractors, and that of having so much money left in their hands—not to play with, I can assure you. Mushroom fortunes have started up during the war; the men, indeed, seem of the species of the fungus; and the insolent vulgarity which a sudden influx of wealth usually produces in common minds is here very conspicuous, which contrasts with the distresses of many of the emigrants, "fallen, fallen from their high estate," such are the ups and downs of fortune's wheel. Many emigrants have met, with fortitude, such a total change of circumstances as scarcely can be paralleled, retiring from a palace to an obscure lodging with dignity; but the greater number glide about, the ghosts of greatness, with the *croix de St. Louis* ostentatiously displayed, determined to hope, "though heaven and earth their wishes crossed." Still good breeding points out the gentleman; and sentiments of honour and delicacy appear the offspring of greatness of soul when compared with the groveling views of the sordid accumulators of *cent per cent*.

Situation seems to be the mould in which men's characters are formed: so much so, inferring from what I have lately seen, that I mean not to be severe when I add—previously asking why priests are in general cunning and statesmen false?—that men entirely devoted to commerce never acquire or lose all taste and greatness of mind. An ostentatious display of wealth without elegance, and a greedy enjoyment of pleasure without sentiment, embrutes them till they term all virtue of an heroic cast, romantic attempts at something above our nature, and anxiety about the welfare of others, a search after misery in which we have no concern. But you will say that I am growing bitter, perhaps personal. Ah! shall I whisper to you, that you yourself are strangely altered since you have entered deeply into commerce—more than you are aware of; never allowing yourself to reflect, and keeping your mind, or rather passions, in a continual state of agitation? Nature has given you talents which lie dormant, or are wasted in ignoble pursuits. You will rouse yourself and shake off the vile dust that obscures you, or my understanding, as well as my heart, deceives me egregiously—only tell me when. But to go farther a-field.

[. . .] At Altona, a president of one of the *ci-devant* parliaments keeps an ordinary, in the French style; and his wife with cheerful dignity submits to her fate, though she is arrived at an age when people seldom relinquish their prejudices. A girl who waits there brought a dozen *double louis d'or* concealed in her clothes, at the risk of her life, from France, which she preserves lest sickness or any other distress should overtake her mistress, "who," she observed, "was not accustomed to hardships." This house was particularly recommended to me by an acquaintance of yours, the author of the *American Farmer's Letters*.¹ I generally dine in company with him; and the gentleman whom I have already mentioned is often diverted by our declamations against commerce, when we compare notes respecting the characteristics of the Hamburgers. "Why, madam," said he to me one day, "you will not meet with a man who has any calf to his leg; body and soul, muscles and heart, are equally shrivelled up by a thirst of gain. There is nothing generous even in their youthful passions; profit is their only stimulus, and calculations the sole employment of their faculties, unless we except some gross animal gratifications which, snatched at spare moments, tend still more to debase the character, because, though touched by his tricking wand, they have all the arts, without the wit, of the wing-footed god."

Perhaps you may also think us too severe; but I must add that the more I saw of the manners of Hamburg, the more was I confirmed in my opinion relative to the baleful effect of extensive speculations on the moral character. Men are strange machines; and their whole system of morality is in general held together by one grand principle which loses its force the moment they allow themselves to break with impunity over the bounds which secured their self-respect. A man ceases to love humanity, and then

¹ "Author of the *American Farmer's Letters*": John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania: To the Inhabitants of the British Colonies* (Philadelphia and London, 1774).

individuals, as he advances in the chase after wealth; as one clashes with his interest, the other with his pleasures: to business, as it is termed, everything must give way; may, is sacrificed, and all the endearing charities of citizen, husband, father, brother, become empty names. But—but what? Why, to snap the chain of thought, I must say farewell. Cassandra was not the only prophetess whose warning voice has been disregarded. How much easier it is to meet with love in the world than affection!

11. Laurence Sterne, excerpt from *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768).

Scholars have noted that Arthur Mervyn's stagecoach scene, set during a ride through the slave state of Maryland to Baltimore in Chapter II.17, is intended to provoke reflections on slavery and race. It is also important to note, in this connection, that the passage draws on the then well-known starling scene and stagecoach ambience of Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, invoking Sterne's influential mobilization of sensibility and associative sentiment for abolitionist discourses. Brown's stylistic allusions to Sterne, in Mervyn's "sentimentalized" outbursts in the novel's last section, arguably link this Sternean reflection to Mervyn's own voice as it takes over the narrative from Dr. Stevens and organizes the romance's conclusion after Chapter II.16.

Laurence Sterne (1713–1768) was a key reference for writers of the revolutionary period. His novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759–1769) became a standard source for the prose stylistics of enlightened sensibility that are frequently emulated and referenced by Brown's Woldwinite models. *A Sentimental Journey*, Sterne's final narrative, is a sequel to *Tristram Shandy* that follows that novel's character Yorick on a voyage to the continent and was primarily understood as a showcase for the representation of sensibility and its progressive cultural implications. The excerpt here provides most of the episode concerning the pet starling, an emblem of slavery that provides the precedent for the pet monkey named "Dominique" in Brown's novel. The passage begins with the starling's appearance as a literalization of the narrator Yorick's anxieties about being imprisoned in the Bastille and develops into a polemic on slavery as the imprisoned black bird is shifted from owner to owner as a token of social domination, without ever being freed. As critic Markman Ellis has noted, Sterne's engagement with issues concerning slavery and abolition stem from his acquaintance and correspondence with black writer Ignatius Sancho and became a familiar reference point for abolitionists in the 1790s.

THE PASSPORT.

The Hotel at Paris.

[...] I was interrupted in the hey-day of this soliloquy, with a voice which I took to be of a child, which complained "it could not get out."—I look'd up and down the passage, and seeing neither man, woman, nor child, I went out without farther attention.

In my return back through the passage, I heard the same words repeated twice over; and, looking up, I saw it was a starling hung in a little cage.—"I can't get out,—I can't get out," said the starling.

I stood looking at the bird: and to every person who came through the passage it ran fluttering to the side towards which they approach'd it, with the same lamentation of its captivity—"I can't get out," said the starling—God help thee! said I, but I'll let thee out, cost what it will; so I turned about the cage to get to the door; it was twisted and double twisted so fast with wire, there was no getting it open without pulling the cage to pieces—I took both hands to it.

The bird flew to the place where I was attempting his deliverance, and thrusting his head through the trellis press'd his breast against it as if impatient—I fear, poor creature! said I, I cannot set thee at liberty—"No," said the starling—"I can't get out—I can't get out," said the starling.

I vow, I never had my affections more tenderly awakened; nor do I remember an incident in my life, where the dissipated spirits, to which my reason had been a bubble, were so suddenly call'd home. Mechanical as the notes were, yet so true in tune to nature were they chanted, that in one moment they overthrew all my systematic reasonings upon the Bastile; and I heavily walk'd upstairs, unsaying every word I had said in going down them.

Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still, slavery! said I—still thou art a bitter draught; and though thousands in all ages have been made to drink of thee, thou art no less bitter on that account.—'tis thou, thrice sweet and gracious goddess, addressing myself to LIBERTY, whom all in public or in private worship, whose taste is grateful, and ever wilt be so, till NATURE herself shall change—no *trint* of words can spot thy snowy mantle, or chymic power turn thy sceptre into iron—with thee to smile upon him as he eats his crust, the swain is happier than his monarch from whose court thou art exiled—Gracious Heaven! cried I, kneeling down upon the last step but one in my ascent—grant me but health, thou great Bestower of it, and give me but this fair goddess as my companion—and shower down thy mitres, if it seems good unto thy divine providence, upon those heads which are aching for them.

THE CAPTIVE.

PARIS.

THE bird in his cage pursued me into my room; I sat down close to my table, and leaning my head upon my hand, I began to figure to myself the miseries of confinement. I was in a right frame for it, and so I gave full scope to my imagination.

I was going to begin with the millions of my fellow-creatures born to no inheritance but slavery; but finding, however affecting the picture was, that I could not bring it near me and that the multitude of sad groups in it did but distract me.—

—I took a single captive, and having first shut him up in his dungeon, I then look'd through the twilight of his grated door to take his picture.

I beheld his body half wasted away with long expectation and confinement, and felt what kind of sickness of the heart it was which arises from hope deferr'd. Upon looking nearer I saw him pale and feverish: in thirty years the western breeze had not once fann'd his blood—he had seen no sun, no moon, in all that time—nor had the voice of friend or kinsman breathed through his lattice—his children—

—But here my heart began to bleed—and I was forced to go on with another part of the portrait.

He was sitting upon the ground upon a little straw, in the furthest corner of his dungeon, which was alternately his chair and bed: a little calendar of small sticks were laid at the head, notch'd all over with the dismal days and nights he had pass'd there—he had one of these little sticks in his hand, and with a rusty nail he was etching another day of misery to add to the heap. As I darkened the little light he had, he lifted up a hopeless eye towards the door, then cast it down—shook his head, and went on with his work of affliction. I heard his chains upon his legs, as he turn'd his body to lay his little stick upon the bundle—He gave a deep sigh—I saw the iron enter into his soul—I burst into tears—I could not sustain the picture of confinement which my fancy had drawn—I started up from my chair, and calling La Fleur, I bid him bespeak me a *remise*, and have it ready at the door of the hotel by nine in the morning.

—I'll go directly, said I, myself to Monsieur Le Duke de Choiseul. La Fleur would have put me to bed; but not willing he should see anything upon my cheek, which would cost the honest fellow a heart ache—I told him I would go to bed by myself—and bid him go do the same.

THE STARLING.

ROAD TO VERSAILLES.

I GOT into my *remise* the hour I proposed; La Fleur got up behind, and I bid the coachman make the best of his way to Versailles.

As there was nothing in this road, or rather nothing which I look for in travelling, I cannot fill up the blank better than with a short history of this self-same bird, which became the subject of the last chapter.

Whilst the Honourable Mr. **** was waiting for a wind at Dover it had been caught upon the cliffs, before it could well fly, by an English lad who was his groom; who not caring to destroy it, had taken it in his breast into the packet—and by course of feeding it, and taking it once under his protection, in a day or two grew fond of it, and got it safe along with him to Paris.

At Paris the lad had laid out a *livre* in a little cage for the starling, and as he had little to do better the five months his master stay'd there, he taught it, in his mother's tongue, the four simple words—and no more—to which I own'd myself so much it's debtor.

Upon his master's going on for Italy—the lad had given it to the master of the hotel—But his little song for liberty, being in an *unknown* language at Paris—the bird had little or no store set by him—so La Fleur bought both him and his cage for me for a bottle of Burgundy.

In my return from Italy I brought him with me to the country in whose language he had learn'd his notes—and telling the story of him to Lord A—Lord A begg'd the bird of me—in a week Lord A gave him to Lord B—Lord B made a present of him to Lord C—and Lord C's gentleman sold him to Lord D's for a shilling—Lord D gave him to Lord E—and so on—half round the alphabet—From that rank he pass'd into the lower house, and pass'd the hands of as many commoners—But as all these wanted to *get in*—and my bird wanted to get out—he had almost as little store set by him in London as in Paris.

12. Mathew Carey, excerpts from *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia: with a statement of the Proceedings that took place on the subject, in different parts of the United States*. By Mathew Carey. Third Edition, Improved. Philadelphia: Printed by the Author. (November 30, 1793).

Carey's Short Account was a tremendously popular overview of the yellow fever epidemic. Published immediately after the epidemic ended, it went through four editions in the space of a few months in late 1793 and early 1794. Mathew Carey (1760–1839) was an enterprising Irish-Catholic émigré writer and successful, influential printer-bookseller. He left Ireland as a young man to avoid prosecution for criticizing the Irish penal code and

worked with Benjamin Franklin in Paris before arriving in Philadelphia in 1784. As present, the Short Account is most often discussed in light of Absalom Jones and Richard Allen's rebuttal of Carey's accusations, added to the third edition, against black laborers who were the earliest volunteers to organize a response to the epidemic after the breakdown of civil order in September 1793. After Jones and Allen's pamphlet, Carey changed the fourth (February 1794) and later editions slightly by adding an apologetic footnote, included here in square brackets.

The excerpts printed here (from the third edition to which Jones and Allen responded) highlight Carey's comments on themes and concerns that are noted in different ways in Arthur Mervyn, above all the instability of the city's mercantile and financial institutions at a time when waves of refugees from the Haitian revolution were beginning to arrive and the overwhelming challenges posed by the breakdown of civic and moral order at the height of the fever in September–October. Carey remains noncommittal on a theory that Brown and his friends rejected, the then-common notion, with obvious xenophobic implications, that Africans and the French had some intrinsic immunity to the disease. For more on this theory, see the Introduction and the discussion of Jones and Allen in Related Text 13. Like Brown, and Jones and Allen, Carey places great emphasis on the destructive effects of fear, anxiety, and panic, which do much to amplify the biological and social damage of the crisis. In later editions that appeared up to 1830, Carey comments that Arthur Mervyn's depiction of the epidemic in Chapters 15–23 "gives a vivid and terrifying picture, probably not too highly coloured, of the horrors of that period."

CHAR. I State of Philadelphia previous to the appearance of the malignant fever—with a few observations on some of the probable consequences of that calamity.

BEFORE I enter on the consideration of this disorder, it may not be improper to offer a few introductory remarks on the situation of Philadelphia previous to its commencement, which will reflect the light on some of the circumstances mentioned in the course of the narrative.

The manufactures, trade, and commerce of this city, had, for a considerable time, been improving and extending with great rapidity. From the period of the adoption of the federal government, at which time America was at the lowest ebb of distress, her situation had progressively become more and more prosperous. Confidence, formerly banished, was universally restored. Property of every kind, rose to, and in some instances beyond, its real value: and a few revolving years exhibited the interesting spectacle of a young country, with a new form of government, emerging from a state which approached very near to, anarchy, and acquiring all the flexibility and nerve of the best-toned and oldest nations.

In this prosperity, which revived almost-extinguished hopes of four millions of people, Philadelphia participated in an eminent degree. Numbers of new houses, almost every street, built in a very neat, elegant style, adorned, at the same time that