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Demystifying Democratic Autonomy in Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland*

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[Abstract]

The purpose of this essay is to decode Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland, or, The Transformation: An American Tale* to shed new light on the author's profound insights into the politico-ontological paradox of American democracy in the era of nation building. Political readings of *Wieland* have focused on how Brown criticizes either Federalists or Democratic-Republicans by opting one to criticize the other. This dichotomous interpretation overlooks Brown's keen awareness of the absence of a key democratic principle: autonomous agency that is presumed to constitute both self-government and national unity. This essay proposes that Brown rejects the two competing political ideologies so as to disclose their common inherent dilemma—the inverted logic of causality, which demystifies the notion of democratic autonomy. For Brown, both the Democratic-Republican adherence to self-governing personhood and the Federalist pursuit of national unity are coupled with a fantastical logic which transforms an absent entity into a substantial one by means of believing a given belief in it. This logic, for Brown, serves to reinforce the interlocking notions of selfhood and nationhood in the building process of American Republic in a

fantasmatical way.

Key Words: Charles Brockden Brown, Wieland, Federalism, Democratic-Republicanism, Causality

I. Introduction

Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "The Hall of Fantasy" published in 1843 features a narrator who describes himself walking in the titular edifice located in the "mystic region, which lies above, below, or beyond the actual." Stopping at a spot, he takes a look at "the statues or busts of men, who, in every age, have been rulers and demi-gods in the realms of imagination, and its kindred regions," who are "Aesop," "Dante," "Ariosto," "Rabelais," "Cervantes," "Shakespeare," "Spenser," "Milton," "Bunyan," "Fielding," "Richardson," and "Scott." Then he recognizes an American author beside them: "[i]n an obscure and shadowy niche" he finds "the bust of our country man, the author of Arthur Mervyn" (173-74). The only American author Hawthorne approves to be enshrined in the glorious pantheon of literature is Charles Brockden Brown. Critics have valorized the ironic, significant chiaroscuro between the progressive Enlightenment ideals Brown openly endorses in his political writings and the "intensification of shadow" (Levin 21) that he creates in his fictional writings. Over the past decades, what Hawthorne regards as Brown's incomparable achievement in the genealogy of American literture has been examined particularly in terms of his multifarious career as a historian, essayist, journalist, and editor wresting with the pressing political and cultural concerns of the early American Republic.

Accordingly, for scholars and critics the political Brown has been reconsidered an important author for comprehending the complex historical, political, social, economic, and cultural contours of the early Republic.

In what follows, I direct attention to Brown's implicit yet ascute political insight into the political significance of the 1790s, particularly revealed in his romance, *Wieland or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798). The work has been construed in terms of two mutually exclusive interpretations of the author's intent to represent his contemporary politics. One recognies Brown as an ardent Federalist supportive of a social order free from the turmoil and seductive politics of demagogues, thereby viewing the novel's eponymous character's tragedy caused by his solipsistic religious zealotry and the stranger Carwin's deceptive and destructive influence as "a plea for the restoration of civic authority in a post-Revolutionary age" (Tompkins 61). It is in in the same vein that Wieland is regarded as "offer[ing] a direct refutation of the Republican faith in men's capacity to govern themselves without the supports and constraints of an established social order" (Looby 202). On the other hand, there has been a critical tendency to align Brown with contemporary Democratic-Republicans preferring personal autonomy and democratic diversities rather than a stable social system and unity that cannot but circumscribe individual freedom and local liberty. From this perspective, Wieland's tragic story is identified to center on his fanatic religiosity and self-destructive zealotry as "a tragedy caused by the relentless search for unity of identity, and more particularly, a tragedy played out in the quest for a unified voice" (Wolfe 452). There is also an eclectic reading that combines the two opposite readings. For example, Robert S. Levine suggests that readers can identify in *Wieland* "Brown's 'Federalist' concerns about the threat posed by expedient seducers" and an "ironic critique of the foundationalism implicit ... in the idea of America as a reified national entity." Yet Levin's reading is lopsided

toward recognizing Brown's political affiliation with Federalists (30).

The two readings seem to contradict each other, and yet they are predicated upon the same assumption that Brown writes *Wieland* in order to stress that the political idea and identity he denounces—whether Democratic-Republican or Federalist—is the substantial threat to the historical progress of American democracy. A new reading of *Wieland* which I suggest in this essay challenges and complicates them. Redirecting attention to Brown's critical insight into the ideological presupposition which substantiates both the Democratic-Republican and Federalist causes in a delusivel fashion, I unveil his profound concerns regarding the logic constitutive of peculiarly American political fantasy that renders such delusive substantiation tangible. For Brown, I argue, both the Democratic-Republican call for self-government and the Federalist urge for the unity of naiton are misplaced and misleading in fantasmatical registers, in that what each political ideology argues for actually does not exist in reality. In Brown's keen view, the notion of democratic autonomy on an individual (Democratic-Republican) level or a national (Federalist) level is nothing but a fantastically substantiated belief. To what follows I first investigate the significance of the politically unstable decade of the 1790s that witnessed an unbridgeable gulf between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans. During the period President George Washington's announcement of his retirement in September 1796 and the following presidential election in December 1796 made evident the irreconcilable antagonism between the two conflicting parties, with the scandalous XYZ Affair in July 1797 and the heated controversy about the passing of the Alien and Sedition Acts in July 1798 deepening the inter-party hostilities. Furthermore, the decade also saw the increasing political tensions and diplomatic crises between the U.S. and France, which resulted in the intensified hostilities. I then suggest that the nature of ventriloquism—projecting one's voice to make it seem to come from another source—

thematized in *Wieland* is an allegory for delusive democratic autonomy. The radical political Brown I restore poses a question with regard to the contemporary political conflicts built on the delusion.

II. Conflicting Ideologies and Characters

On September 19, 1796, George Washington published his farewell statement in *The American Daily Advertiser* after forty five years of dedicated military and political service. The departing president asked his fellow Americans in the "Farewell Address" to keep their political identity as "sacred ties." Contrary to his hopes. But his decision was to lead to a contentious election that would divide politicians and their followers into two opposing political factions—Democratic-Republicans supported by Thomas Jefferson and Federalists led by Alexander Hamilton and John Adams. Both sides organized campaigns for the upcoming presidential election on the national scale, disregarding Washington's warning of political partisanship. During the heated presidential race between Jefferson and Adams, the Democratic-Republicans denounced Federalist elitism and their call for national economic policies such as a regulative federal government, a national bank, heavy governmental subsidies, and tariffs that they censured as a lethal threat to *the* American political idea of liberty and autonomy. Meanwhile, the Federalists blamed the Democratic-Republicans for bringing down the central government so as to thwart the progress of the young American Republic.

The controversial election's result was that it was Adams who narrowly defeated Jefferson in the electoral college with a final vote of 71-68. According to the U.S. Constitution, however, the runner-up was to be elected Adams's vice president, a rule

which would undermine the stability of the national body politic. Another unexpected crisis was brought about by Adams himself during his presidency. Many Federalists, loyal to Hamilton, thinking of Adams as too moderate to accomplish the Federalist vision of America; they were lukewarm or hostile to Adams's leadership. As a consequence, Adams's presidency was confronted with a series of political confrontations and challenges from his own party and the opposition party whose leader was none but his vice president. In such political divisions and party rivalries, Adams disagreed with the Federalists as much as he did with the Democratic-Republicans (Chernow 647). One significant instance was his determination to put an end to the Quasi-War with France and endeavor for peace although the Federalists preferring to make peace with Britain and continuing to remain diplomatically hostile to France. Hamilton favored this choice to the aim of establishing a closer tie with Britain for commercial interests. "Reconciliation if practicable and Peach if attainable, you very well know would be as agreeable to my Inclinations and as advantageous to my Interest, as to any Man's," as recorded in John Adams's letter to Abigail Adams on 18 February 1776. At the sacrifice of the party's support, his popularity, and the possibility to win the next presidential election, Adams obstinately turned his fact against the Federalist choice and resolved the conflict with France.

However, the infamous XYZ Affair, an international scandal which would be a fatal blow to Adams' presidency, happened during the process of negotiation. In 1797 Adams dispatched three American envoys to Paris in order to secure a peace treaty with the French government. Yet the American envoys received nothing but insulting demands from the French counterpart: the government's public apology of the American government, granting a loan, and paying a bribe of $250,000 to the French government. When the insulting news reached America, a number of citizens

got furious and demanded war. Despite the displomatic an d political ignominy, Adams continued to reach an agreement with France, which resulted in a spate of public attacks and denunciations directed at him, especially harsh ones from Democratic-Republicans. To make matters worse, in an effort to check the Federalist opposition, Adams signed the notorious Alien and Sedition Acts into law in June and July of 1798. The purpose of the laws was to take control of the hostile activities of French-sympathizing foreigners in the U.S. during a time of the impending war, but they put a gag upon the journalists and writers expressing opposition to the Adams administration. As a matter of fact, after the passing of the Acts anti-Federalist newspaper publishers and journalists were actually arrested and convicted. Hence Jefferson lamented, "I know not which mortifies me most, that I should fear to write what I think, or my country bear such a state of things" (Thomas Jefferson to John Tylor, 26 November 1798, 259).

It was during this political crisis that Brown published his four major romances: *Wieland* (1798), *Ormond, or, The Secret Witness* (1799), *Arthur Mervyn, or, Memoirs of the Year 1793* (*Volume 1* in 1799 and *Volume II* in 1800), and *Edgar Huntly, or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker* (1799). This brief explosion of Brown's imaginative power was characterized by his invention of a new form of American romance, a particular genre and form characterized by enigmatic characters, their unresolved problems and dilemmas, and a narrative voice concerning the complicated issues of the early American Republic. As the portico to the "obscure and shadowy"—as Hawthorne calls it—sanctum of dark romance, *Wieland* explores the complicated dimensions and functions of the human psyche. And the particularly suggestive subtitle of *Wieland*—"*The Transformation: An American Tale*"—indicates that such complexity is located in the historical context of the nation-building period. For instance, one striking transformation the early American Republic experienced was

the increasing diversification of the American populace. For Brown and his contemporaries, the late 18th-century America was reeling from the important leading principle of national unity that directed the Revolutionary War. Americans began to face and fear increasing sociopolitical and cultural differences in their own demos or population. *Wieland* captures the very tension and anxiety about differences that would threat the national unity of the nascent republic.

It is thus notable that the novel's villaineous charater, Carwin, is an alien; he is originally an Englishman but he has abandoned his birth country's faith, culture, and identity to be a Spaniard. He learned the Spanish language and accordingly he came to identify with its cultural norms; later he converted to Roman Catholicism. Therefore Brown's contemporaries would have regarded Carwin's heterogeneous national and cultural identity as a real threat to the formation of American unity. Jay Fliegelman and Eric A Wolfe regard the overwheliming influence of Carwin's ventriloquism upon Wieland as a significant allusion to the specific political incidents that incited the national chauvinism blatantly expressed in the XYZ Affair and the Alien and Sedition Acts. They collectively claim that Brown's representation of ventriloquism takes on a political significance as he provides a description of the ventriloquist Carwin disrupting Wieland's fantasy of the identity of corporeal agency. Their reading proposes that *Wieland* not only channels Brown's inmost anxiety about the volatile dynamic of the American body politic but also highlights his firm conviction of the possibility of a genuine democracy to encompass a variety of unauthorized voices of people. But they fail to unveil Brown's indication that divorcing voice from body, identity from authority, and choice from will is in effect impossible. This threefold impossibility is indicative of the essential improbability of what is assumed to be a genuine selfhood that is a key component of democratic autonomy.

III. Inverted Logic of Believing

In *Wieland*, Brown leads readers to pay attention to the evident fact that Wieland under the influence of Carwin's ventriloquism is unable to dissociate himself from the fantasized identification of selfhood and authority. It is then noteworthy that the narrator ascribes his gullibility to their father. In her recollection of the latter narrated in the beginning of *Wieland*, he is depicted as the source of Wieland's religious belief. She details how the father gradually transforms into "a fanatic and a dreamer" with "invincible candor and invariable integrity" (13):

> A Bible was easily procured, and he ardently entered on the study of it. His understanding had received a particular direction. All his reveries were fashioned in the same mould. His progress towards the formation of his creed was rapid. Every fact and sentiment in this book was viewed through a medium which the writings of the Camisard apostle had suggested. His constructions of the text were hasty, and formed on a narrow scale. Everything was viewed in a disconnected position. One action and one percept were not employed to illustrate and restrict the meaning of another. Hence arose a thousand scruples to which he had hitherto been a stranger. He was alternately agitated by fear and by ecstasy. He imagined himself beset by the snares of a spiritual foe, and that his security lay in ceaseless watchfulness and prayer. (9-10)

Here Clara stresses the problematic foundation of her father's religious belief constituted and intensified in an impetuous ("rapid," "hasty"), parochial ("a particular direction," "on a narrow scale"), illusory ("reveries"), self-contradictory ("by fear and by ecstasy"), and a subjugated and submissive ("beset by the snare of a spiritual foe") way. These negative properties of his extraordinary creed are formative of the essential groundwork for his belief, which justifies the significance of his existence:

"[t]he empire of religious duty extended itself to his looks, gestures, and phrases" (10). By informing readers of her father, Clara suggests the fact that his belief lacks in substance. It is ironical that what constitutes his belief is its form and procedure—i.e., the way in which he believes what he believes in, not the true content of his belief. The problematic nature and function of his religious apprenticeship suggest that the very act of belief justifies and reinforces the validity of what he believes in.

Another notable episode that demonstrates the inherent paradox of piety is the way in which the father decides to come to America. When seeking a new habitation, he sensed "there was another of the most imperious and irresistible necessity":

> He imbibed an opinion that it was his duty to disseminate the truths of the gospel among the unbelieving nations. He was terrified at first by the perils and hardships to which the life of a missionary is exposed. This cowardice made him diligent in the invention of objections and excuses; but he found it impossible wholly to shake off the belief that such was the injunction of his duty. This belief, after every new conflict with his passions, acquired new strength; and, at length, he formed a resolution of complying with what he deemed the will of heaven. (10-11)

Clara's account evidences that the religious belief of hers father is in effect dependent on an inverted logic of causality. In other word,s the cause is retroactively created by the effect. Moreover, the cause of his religious belief is reckoned by himself as the substantial "injunction of his duty." This recognition results from his experience of the terrifying effect of such belief; it is the very act of his believing and its consequential effect alike that impel him to put faith in the imperative, solid cause of his belief. It is thus notable that despite the haunting anxiety and fear about his determination to move to America, it is his self-imposed "belief" that forces him to conform to what he believes to be "the will of heaven." His decision led by the

self-imposed logic of his believing calls for no confidence or confirmation of the truth of his belief itself. What is necessary is only the act of believing itself. By means of believing in the substance of what he believes in, he confirms the validity of the substance of his faith without any doubt.

According to Slavoy Žižek, the inverted logic of belief is what Louis Althusser brings to the theory of ideology. He examines Althusser's example of ideology that "interpellates individuals into subjects": the example of a police officer shouting out "Hey, you there!" in public. As soon as an individual hears the exclamation, (s)he cannot but quickly turn around and "by this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject" (174). In Althusser's analysis, the act of acknowledging that it should be he who is addressed enables the individual to recognize his subjectivity. Althusser's point is the double formation of the subjectivity—although the individual is recognized as a social subject by the law, he is also subjugated to the law. Thus, he views ideology functioning not as an illusion but as an imaginary yet generative mediator between systems and the institutions of power and agency; he complicates the perceived relationship between domination and subordination by means of the notion of ideological interpellation process which subjectivizes an individual subject through ideology. This formula illustrates how subjects are complicit in and subject to their own domination, but fails to explain why they come to believe in the substance of the ideological injunction.

What concerns Žižek in the Althusserian formula of ideology is the veiled logic of the paradoxical subjectivization. For him, it "designates the retroactive illusion of "always-already" … when the subject recognizes himself in an ideological call, he automatically overlooks the fact that this very formal act of recognition creates the content one recognizes oneself in" (73). He explains the way in which the act of perception retroactively renders the perceived object a substantial content by

unveiling the structureof affective belief immanent in the process of ideological recognition. According to him, "[m]embers of a community who partake in a given "way of life" believe in their Thing, where this belief has a reflexive structure proper to the intersubjective space," for example: "I believe in the (national) Thing" equals "I believe that others (members of my community) believe in the Thing" [italics in the original]. This clearly accounts for why the interpellated individual instantly responds to the police officer's call; as soon as he hears it, he believes that others would also turn around instantly in the same situation. Hence the conclusion that "[t]his paradoxical existence of an entity which "is" only insofar as subjects believe (in the other's belief) in its existence is the mode of being proper to ideological causes: the "normal" order of causality is here inverted, since it is the Cause itself which is produced by its effects (the ideological practices it animates)" (201-202). The example of The Holy Spirit Žižek gives makes his point clear: "The Holy Spirit is the community of believers in which Christ lives after his death: to believe in Him equals believing in belief itself, i.e., believing that I'm not alone, that I'm a member of the community of believers. I do not need any external proof or conformation of the truth of my belief: by the mere act of my belief in others' belief, the Holy Spirit is here. In other words, the whole meaning of the Thing turns on the fact that "it means something" to people" (201-202).

Žižek owes his reformulation of Althusserian ideology to Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic notion of fantasy. For Lacan, fantasy is the essential structure (*Anxiety* 3) of the human psyche—"essential" in that it works unconsciously as the condition of human agency. The "unconscious fantasy," as he calls it, is "an image set to work in the signifying structure," which is "the means by which the subject maintains himself at the level of his vanishing desire, vanishing inasmuch as the very satisfaction of demand deprives him of his object," or what he calls the "original

possibility" (*Écrits* 532). Lacan redefines desire as a psychological force that is not to be satisfied or fulfilled; it is always to evade the subject, triggering the subject's continuous pursuit of it. Žižek is indebted to Lacan's proposition that fantasy clarifies and confirms the substance of what seems to be originally possible in the world of the subject, thereby constituting a sense of proper subjectivity and seamless reality; by illustrating the original possibility, fantasy 1) conceals the essential inconsistency, gap, or lack—i.e., impossibility—of the subject and the world, and thus sutures our ontological incompletion, "provid[ing] us with firm foundations" of our existence (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 31) 2) creates a hologram of the originally possible as a perceivable and pursuable entity, thereby "protect[ing]" what is impossible in reality, or "the real" in Lacan's terminology; this function of fantasy is " the support of desire; it is not the object that is the support of desire" (*Écrits* 185). Whether concealment or creation, fantasy tends to transpose the effect of our recognition of the lack or the whole into its cause so as to provide us with a plausible scenario of consistency, identity, unity, and plenitude of our subjectivity and society. It is due to the inverted logic of fantasy, as Lacan asserts, that "the empty spaces are as signifying as the full ones" (*Écrits* 327) and thus "the impossible is not … a negative form, [nor] necessarily the contrary of the possible" (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 167). As Lacan sums up, ""*the effects are successful only in the absence of cause*" (128) [italics in the original].

What these fantastical effects offers in reality is, as Žižek stresses, more than "a hallucinatory realization of desire" in that "fantasy is the realization of desire, however, not 'realization' in the sense of fulfilling it, but rather 'realization' in the sense of bringing it forth, of providing its coordinates." In this sense, "it is not the case that the subject knows in advance what he wants and then, when he cannot get it in reality, proceeds to obtain a hallucinatory satisfaction in fantasy. Rather, the

subject originally doesn't know what he wants, and it is the role of fantasy to tell him that, to 'teach' him to desire" (*Interrogating the Real* 279-280). It is due to this essential ignorance that "fantasy guarantees the consistency of a socio ideological edifice" (*Enjoy Your Symptom!* 103).

In *Wieland*, when Clara's father moves to Philadelphia, he first purchases a farm and begins to cultivate the wilderness around it, still holding that he should induce native Americans to convert to his religious faith. Yet his faith slackens as he comes to be caught up in hard work in the New World, which leads him to return to a theological study and take up the missionary mantle again, but in vain. It is a harsh reality—not his belief—that thwarts his intent to convert the savage tribes in America. Deeply despondent, he engrosses himself in building a temple for meditation. Building the temple shows his desperate efforts to keep his belief since the belief is what substantiates and sustains his own sense of being and reality. Without it, his ontic substance fails to exist. That is to say, he leads a life devoid of substance with no knowledge of the ontological paradox. Therefore his sudden death, though its cause is inexplicably mysterious, is hardly surprising. Rather, the putative cause of his death, the spontaneous combustion whose source or cause is never to be explained, indicates his life lacking the proper substance of his belief. In short, his life and belief without cause is the equivalent of his death devoid of cause.

After describing the death of her father, Clara's narration redirects focus to the story of a circle comprised of herself, her brother Theodore Wieland, his wife, Catharine Pleyel Wieland, their four children, and Wieland's brother-in-law, Henry Pleyel, who reside in a relatively isolated rural community outside Philadelphia. Their insular intimacy and happiness in a close-knit circle of families and relatives/friends begin to falter as they hear a series of unidentified and disembodied voices, some of which are later revealed to be the work of Francis Carwin, a strange visitor to the

Wieland circle. Carwin has the peculiar ability to throw his voice and therefore seems to be fully responsible for the mysterious voices, though he denies it. Whether by means of Carwin's vocal manipulations or not, Wieland, who has inherited his father's stubborn and heightened religiosity, comes to be firmly convinced that he hears the voice of God, an order that demands the sacrifice of his family to prove his faith. At last in order to accomplish the order of his God Wieland murders his wife and all their children. He also tried to kill Clara, and yet she is saved by Carwin's ventriloquized command from God to stop Wieland. It is in his last moments that Wieland comes to suspect the truth of the divine sanction. But now he has nothing left to do but lamenting and terminating his falsely guided and thus toally ruined life.

No event in *Wieland* is more traumatic for the Wieland familly and Pleyel than the tragedy brought about by Wieland's religious fanaticism, which seems to be inherited from his father. In fact, in Clara's reminiscence, though "[t]here was an obvious resemblance between him and my father, in their conceptions of the importance of certain topics, and in the light in which the vicissitudes of human life were accustomed to be viewed … the mind of the son was enriched by science, and embellished with literature" (26). Thus "[h]uman life, in his opinion, was made up of changeable elements, and the principles of duty were not easily unfolded" (25). Unlike his religiously obsessed father, Wieland seems to be susceptible to the reality of variability and objectivity through his interests in literature and science; thus, he views human life in terms of its relativity as well as rationality. But the dissimilarity between the father and the son becomes a striking similarity as the son also comes to be a religious fanatic influenced by a mysterious voice. Wieland's wild transformation is derailed by the logic of inverted causality; like his father he comes to convince himself of the substance of the religious cause by means of

substantiating the visionary effect of the act of believing in his religious faith.

What causes his transformation is the mysterious voice. One evening, Wieland, Catharine, Pleyel, and Clara gather in the temple Theodore Wieland built on a hill for his religious rituals. The women practice needlepoint while the men argue a particular point of Cicero. Then a storm arrives and they retire to the house. When Wieland returns to the temple for a letter he had left in it, he suddenly hears his wife's voice at the bottom of the hill. It is however impossible since he thinks she must be at home at the moment. Later Clara and Wieland have an opportunity to talk regarding the extraordinary event, when he expresses his opinion of it for the first time: "There is no determinate way in which the subject can be viewed. Here is an effect, but the cause is utterly inscrutable. To suppose a deception will not do. Such is possible, but there are twenty other suppositions more probable" (40-41). Given this comment, Wieland's later transformation to a religious fanatic is especially shocking. At that moment, he seems to clearly understand what is central to the problem of his religious belief—"Here is an effect, but the cause is utterly inscrutable." He is aware of the fact that central to the real problem with determinism is the very presence of an "effect" of which "cause is utterly inscrutable." The paradox is not an epistemological problem of "deception"; it is a much deeper ontological dilemma with regard to why one is compelled to seek for the "probable"—not "possible"—"suppositions." This pursuit is brought about by believing in the "probable" "suppositions." That is to say, the act of believing in what is supposed to be the probable, whether "inscrutable" or not, is enough for believing the substance of the cause—though the latter remains still "inscrutable." In other word,s the logical "effect" of believing. But Wieland's awareness of such a logical problem is to be overshadowed by the dominant logic of his religious belief—the logic of inverted causality.

The unidentified voices, which haunt the imagination of Wieland, also comes to influence Clara, and she records the mysterious operation of the inverted logic of causality in her own mind, making her a case study to lead the reader to comprehend the veiled stories of the case of Wieland. As she hears the mysterious voices, she says that "[t]he words uttered by the person without, affected me as somewhat singular, but what chiefly rendered them remarkable, was the tone that accompanied them. It was wholly new." In this scene she attributes the irresistible attractive power of the voice to the new and remarkable singularity of the tone. The tone is an affective mode of voice, which is not necessarily germane to the content the voice conveys. In other words, the tone is nothing but an affective effect and therefore cannot be the actual substance of what voice intends to deliver. The problem, however, is that the particular effect, df its affective and infectious tonality, sounds like a fresh singular entity, which attracts any individual who hears it. This attraction of the voice works like gravitational force because of its inherent affectivity: "a heart of stone could not fail of being moved by it" because "[i]t imparted to me an emotion altogether involuntary and incontrollable" (59). In *Wieland* Brown especially stresses the fact that this powerful—"involuntary and incontrollable"—affective effect is so irresistible that one cannot be subject to its psychological working and influence.

Pleyel also falls prey to the overwhelming power of the effect. Misconceiving the strange voices as evidence of Clara's affair with Carwin, he leaves her. Verifying the substance of an incident does not matter to him anymore. Pleyel's problem in (mis)understanding and (mis)judging Clara indicates the essential dilemma of the Enlightenment model of epistemological agency. Under the influence of the Enlightenment, Brown's contemporary Americans had a tendency to believe that one's senses serve as the conduits to accumulating and processing knowledge;

individuals should trust their senses more than the authority of religion. Yet, In *Wieland*, the agentive senses are depicted as not only faulty but misleading just like misplaced and misleading religious faith. In fact, it is Pleyel who is the ardent advocate of the power and truth of sensory perception. Without questioning, he accepts all the voices he hears. Wieland is also convinced that he hears the voice of God command him to murder his family. In the absence of Pleyel, as Clara later depicts, the "power" whose "might" is "irresistible" "disarmed" Wieland "of all his purposes" and forced him to kill his wife and children (261). In his later confession he admits that "[w]ith regard to myself, I had acted with a phrenzy that surpassed belief" (241). But this confession is erroneous, since it is his act of believing in the voice's truth that allows him to commit familicide;, his state of "phrenzy" cannot account for his own problem fully. The deep irony Brown shows is the agent's utter ignorance of the essential question of the structure and mechanism of his belief. In fact, this lasting ignorance is what makes possible the persistence of belief; only without any doubt or knowledge of its problematic logic can the belief keep operating on the level of human agency. When called upon to testify in his own defense during his trial, before "judges, advocates, and auditors," he begins his testimony by posing a question with regard to his identity:

> It is strange; I am known to my judges and my auditors. Who is there present a stranger to the character of Wieland? Who knows him not as a husband—as a father—as a friend? Yet here am I arraigned as criminal. I am charged with diabolical malice; I am accused of the murder of my wife and my children! … You know whom it is that you thus charge. The habits of his life are known to you; his treatment of his wife and his offspring is known to you; the soundness of his integrity, and the unchangeableness of his principles, are familiar to your apprehension; yet you persist in this charge! (186-87)

Wieland never negates the fact that he has murdered his family. Nor does he renounce the "integrity" of his self-convinced identity, As he explains in his courtroom statement, "God is the object of my supreme passion. I have cherished, in his presence, a single and upright heart. I have thirsted for the knowledge of his will. I have burnt with ardour to approve my faith and my obedience." In the continuing confession, he also contends that "[m]y purposes have been pure; my wishes indefatigable." His particular sense of purity evidences to his ignorance of what is wrong about the structure of his belief. The belief, can be "fully gratified" only by the act of killing his family (187). That he sees this murder as "divine command," or the inevitable act of sacrifice which would "set myself forever beyond the reach of selfishness" (195), or a "duty" (the word he emphatically repeats three times) confirms again that he never suspects the substance of his belief.

For Wieland the horrendous tragedy he is responsible for is nothing but a necessary consequence of "searching for the revelation of that will [of God]." As he acknowledges, he realizes that "I have not been wholly uninformed; but my knowledge has always stopped short of certainty." What fills in the lacuna in his knowledge is a self-convinced belief built on his unnoticed misrecognition and misjudgment. Therefore, he underscores that "If I erred, it was not my judgment that deceived me, but my sense" (256). This justification results in his approval of purity, both for his "purposes" and for his being itself. "I am still pure. Still will I look for my reward in thy [God's] justice!" says him (256). This conviction indicates that the logic of inverted causality askes him to firmly believe in an ideal state of ontological plenitude by veiling what is not present in his selfhood. "Wast thou the agent?" (250) is the question Wieland asks Carwin to confirm if he was the actual perpetrator of the unidentified voices. However, the question regarding the real agent no longer matters to Wieland, as he is haunted by the inverted logic of causality without the

knowledge of its working and influence. This fatal ignorance, which precludes him from penetrating dilemmatic nature and function of his own agency, enables him to keep a holistic vision of his God.

What Brown dramatizes in *Wieland* Brown is the inevitable consequence of the inverted logic of causality brought about by a character who believes in the existence of his own God—a necessary condition for autonomous agency—and then kills his family and destorys his community because he convinces himself that God orders him to do so. The way in which Wieland is convinced of the ontological entity of his God and its omnipotence is confirmed by the inverted causality; it is a series of his actions that make the object of his belief—the existence of God he believes in—remain meaningful to him and thus sustains his system of belief. Then the confirmed—i.e., believed—existence of God justifies Wieland's idea of the supreme authority. This logical fallcy, Brown suggests, is inherent in the interlocking ideologies of Federalism and Democratic-Republicanism. For Brown, the two competing political ideologies are no different from each other in that they both are fantasmatically predicated upon the ideal notion of democratic autonomy central to the principle of American democracy despite its inherent improbability.

The ideal conception of self-government supported Jefferson's visionary plan of the American Republic as an "Empire for Liberty." The new republic, he believes, was supposed to be "such an empire for liberty as the world has never surveyed since the creation; and I am persuaded no constitution was ever before so well calculated as ours for extensive empire and self-government," as expressed in Jefferson's letter to James Madison on 27 April in 1809 (444). He intended to realize the political idea of self-government built on the principle of autonomus agency, holding that the form of government corresponds to the agentive form of its citizen and the self-government gains its authority from the democratic autonomy. Whereas

Jefferson's political vision of the foundation for a young American Republic highlights the self-evident and proper liberal individualism at its core, Brown unveils in *Wieland* the fantasized notion of autonomy is doubly delusional; its substance is absent, which however causes the inverted logic of causality, a necessary condition of sustaining a fantasized vision of democratic autonomy.

Wieland is, as Brown puts in its prefatory "Advertisement," set in "between the conclusion of the French and the beginning of the revolution war" (4). The text isinextricably intertwined with the contemporary context of American democracy. Brown's criticism of the self-imposed, self-endorsed logic of inversed causality, which forms a key political cause and accordingly pursues and validates a series of steps to accomplish it, is indicative of the same logic's service for constructing the American republic. Notably the logic of Jefferson's vision of "Empire for Liberty" resembles that of Wieland's religious fanaticism. They chrish a belief in the substance of their belief itself. As Wieland's act of believing retroactively creates and validates the substance of his own pseudo-Christianity, Jefferson's belief in American democracy transforms the object of fantasy into a pursuable object. The utter paradox is that Jefferson adamantly argues for "building a wall of separation between church and State" in order that the "expression of the supreme will of the nation" should be "in behalf of the rights of conscience," not religious "faith" or "worship" as expressed in his letter to the Banbury Baptists on 1 January in 1802 (397). For Brown what is formative of Wieland's pathological enthusiasm and devotion are also cnstitutive of *the* American passion for a new democratic republic since they are contingent on the logic of inverted causality inherent in the essentially affective and imaginative belief.

By representing this particular political analogy in *Wieland*, Brown disproves the politicized notion of personal autonomy and any political fantasy of a national unity.

Therefore, he criticizes both the Democratic-Republican and Federalist belief in terms of the lacking substance of their respective political ideology and thus reveals his disbelief in the possibility of a genuine democracy. Brown's concern is directed towards not so much which to choose between Federalism and Democratic-Republicanism as what enables each to ideologize their respective conception of American democracy. For him both Federalism and Democratic-Republicanism are improbable in real political conditions; self-government of political agency is ideologically possible but not probable in reality given the modern democratic social realities that implicate individual citizens in a set of complex social connections and relations, and a solid identity or a national unity is also an impossibility owing to the increasingly diverse, heterogeneous, and comflictual fabric of American reality as well as the established two-party system in American politics. Leading Federalists such as James Madison endorsed the significance of political objection expressed by the Constitution. Madison argued that the "political truth" "on which the objection is founded" has great "intrinsic value" and the authority of "enlightened patrons of liberty." In this regard, he claimed that "[t]he accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny" (qtd. in Epstein 126).

IV. Conclusion

There is more subversive vision Brown reveals in his acerbic critique of the fantasmatical logic working in the political ideologies of American democracy. His

intent to compose *Wieland* is not simply to reject the competing ideologies of Democratic-Republicans and Federalists. Rather, he wants to direct attention to the essential national myth coupled with social practices whichc serves to delusively substantiate the fantasies of self-government and national unity. For Brown it is the American political ideologies that fortify the haunting idea of American democracy. Indeed, "America has opened uew views to the naturalist and politician, but has seldom furnished themes to the moral painter," writes Brown in the preface of *Edgar Huntly*. A new theme of moral philosophy America can provide for a moralist is "[t]hat new springs of action and new motives to curiosity should operate; that the field of investigation opened to us by our own country should differ essentially from those which exist in Europe, may be readily conceived." What are "peculiar to ourselves" are, Brown underscores, "[t]he sources of amusement to the fancy and instruction to the heart." The centrality of "fancy" and "heart"—rather than rationality and reason—to the operation of *the* American agency and *the* American sense of the logic of causality (especially "new springs of action and new motives to curiosity") indicates the practical working of particularly American affective imagination and its underlying logic of inverted causality in the way Americans believe and confirm the political conceptualization of their existence.

In proposing a new political ontology Jacques Derrida highlights the aporia that "the specter is a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other" (5) and deploys the concept of spectrality to challenge the premises of traditional ontology. According to him, the idea that a ghost is "someone other that we will not hasten to determine as self, subject, person, consciousness, spirit, and so forth" (6) negates the very notion of autonomy central to such entities. This new problematic leads him to propose what he terms "hauntology," a new subversive ontology that

suggest both democracy and communism have "always been and will remain spectral; [they are] always still to come and [are] distiguished ... from every living present understood as plenitude of a presence-to-itself, as totality of a presence effectively identical to itself" (123). In *Specters of Marx* Derrida explains that hauntology leads us to recognize the in-between and porous modalities of being veiled and repressed by the predominant logic of ontological binarism predicated on and reducible to the interlocking premises of ontic identity, certainty, and plenitude. As democracy is nothing but an ongoing process in which a diversity of competing ideologies can haunt its perceived locus. In a similar vein Claude Lefort claims that democracy requires "an institutionalization of conflict" since "[t]he locus of power is an empty place, it cannot be occupied—it is such that no individual and no group can be consubstantial with it—and it is cannot be represented" (17). Brown's insight into his contemporary democracy foreshadows Derrida's hautology; like Derrida, he demystifies American democracy as a precarious polity devoid of "plenitude of a presence-to-itself" and "totality of a presence effectively identical to itself." For him, as thematized in *Wieland*, American democracy is not an entity for any political ideologies to compete for, but an essential absence for them to fill in vain.

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국문초록

찰스 브락든 브라운의 『위랜드』에서의 민주적 자율성 개념 비판

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본 논문의 목적은 찰스 브락든 브라운의 『위랜드』에 나타난 미국 건국기 민주주의의 환상적 모순에 대한 통찰을 조명하는 것이다. 『위랜드』에 대한 기존의 정치적 읽기에서는 브라운이 연방주의자들이나 민주공화주의자들 중 한쪽의 이데올로기를 선호하여 다른 쪽을 비판하는 방식에 초점을 맞추어 왔다. 하지만 이러한 이분법적인 해석은 민주공화주의자들이 강조하는 자치와 연방주의자들의 강조하는 국가적 통합의 핵심개념인 자율성의 현실적 불가능성에 대한 브라운의 예리한 인식을 간과한다. 이를 통해 브라운은 서로 치열하게 경쟁했던 연방주의와 민주공화주의가 자신의 가치를 개념화하는 과정에 내재된 역치된 인과성을 밝힘으로써 미국 민주주의의 개념적 토대인 민주적 자율성이라는 개념의 허위성을 비판한다. 그는 민주공화주의와 연방주의의 정치적 이데올로기가 현실에서 부재하는 실체를 믿음을 통해 실재화하는 환상적 논리에 기반하고 있음을 재현함으로써 미국 건국기의 사상적 기반을 구성하는 근본적인 환상성을 폭로한다.

주제어: 찰스 브락든 브라운, 위랜드, 연방주의, 민주공화주의, 인과성

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