

Fears of Our Fathers

Ideology in America's founding Period

By Jessi Pressley

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Jessi Pressley

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To my family, who has listened to me ramble about my project for hours, although they would be hard-pressed to tell you what it is about, and to Pat, for his patience.

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Abstract

This thesis studies the presence and function of ideology in the early American Republic through an examination of George Washington's Farewell Address (1796) and Charles Brockden Brown's novel, *Wieland, or The Transformation, and American Tale* (1798). These two texts were written in a crucial era of America's history, when American citizenship was still largely undefined. I will argue that "the dominant republican ideology of the time" was in fact giving way to a new republican ideology that harmonized with the recently ratified U.S. Constitution (Howe 152).

The first chapter claims that George Washington's use of rhetoric in The Farewell Address introduced the people to a new political ideology that Washington believed would unify the citizens of the disparate states, quell the violent factions in Congress, and stabilize the nation. I argue that Washington labeled this ideology as "American" in an attempt to eclipse the fractured political theories of time: classical republican ideology, as well as the federalist and anti-federalist ideology. Although Washington was a federalist, I argue that his rhetoric encouraged and affected the widespread acceptance of an ideology that was not merely federalism painted American colors, but one that integrated habits and beliefs from all of these competing sources and tied them not to a party appellation, but to the United States Constitution. Washington grounded the new "American" identity and ideology in the Constitution, because he believed it to be a stable locus for the people's faith. Washington was attempting to transfer the allegiance of the people from their various beliefs to one that would create a unified, and therefore more peaceful and obedient citizenry.

The second chapter uses Charles Brockden Brown's novel *Wieland* to explore individual interaction with an ideology like the one that Washington promoted in the Farewell Address. Brown was born in 1771 in Philadelphia and grew up amidst the chaos and turmoil of the Revolutionary war, and for him, ideology was something to be feared as much as disunity. *Wieland* is an exploration of the ideology that governs individuals' lives, and in this novel, the tragedy results as an attempt on the main character's part to create a unified, uncomplicated ideology that gives makes sense of the world and his role in it.

I argue that the horror of *Wieland* reflects on The Farewell Address, exposing the threat that ideology may pose to society. This thesis reveals a little-studied conflict of the critical period of the American republic: not a conflict between ideologies, but a conflict about the propriety of using ideology in nation building. In this way, both works are meta-ideological, because while they display ideology, they also question, reflect upon, and discuss the role, positive and negative, of ideology in the precarious years of America's 'founding' period.

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Introduction

John Adams wrote his wife on July 3, 1776 to tell her of a historical event: “Yesterday, the greatest question was decided which ever was debated in America, and a greater, perhaps, never was nor will be decided among men. A Resolution was passed without one dissenting Colony ‘that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States’” (*Letters* 190). Pro-revolutionary Americans may have agreed with Adams in 1776 when he described July 2 as a “day of deliverance” from the tyranny of Great Britain, but two decades later, when the American dream seemed to be crumbling around them, deliverance from under the yoke of Great Britain looked to have been a deliverance from the proverbial frying pan into the fire (192). Historian Gordon Wood says that the decades after Independence were “a point at which the Revolution and the entire experiment in republicanism seemed to be in danger” (*The American Revolution* 139). This thesis explores the fears of two influential American leaders in the 1790s as they related to the creation of a stable republican nation and the accompanying political beliefs of its citizens.

When Adams spoke of independence as “the greatest question”¹ ever to be debated in America in 1776 he could not have known about the difficult questions that awaited the patriots after the Revolutionary War. Newly independent colonists were forced to make decisions in the 1780s and 90s that were arguably even more important than the decision to become independent had been in the 70s. While the Declaration of Independence is commonly cited as the beginning of the United States of America as a nation, I argue that the Constitution is the foundation of America and Americans as we recognize them today. The transformation from colonist to rebel

¹ Taken from the Adams quote above.

is well documented in the history books. What is often overlooked is the second transformation: from rebel into American citizen.

It is easy when we read history books to forget the fear and uncertainty that haunted the new citizens' every step after 1776 as they tried to make a stable political system out of the republican ideals that had prodded them to independence. After all, historian John Howe Jr. points out that "the men of the revolutionary generation were quite aware that history offered little promise of the success of their republican experiments. From their study of examples both ancient and modern, they knew that the life-span of most republics had been limited" (154). A long war for Independence, followed by the post-war economic crash, and Shay's Rebellion of 1787 were not indicative of the utopia that the colonists had hoped for when they drafted the Declaration. When the Constitutional Convention met in 1787, delegates knew that they needed to create a government that would ensure stability and longevity for the nation while still claiming the appellation of republican.

Unlike the Continental Congresses of the Revolution, which met to organize resistance to the British government, the Constitutional Convention met to establish national governmental power. Historian Bernard Bailyn summarizes this fundamental difference: "the central issue of 1787-88 was...diametrically opposite to the goals of the pre-Revolutionary years" (*Ideological Origins* 325). In the federalist movement, "the goal of the initiators of change was the creation, not the destruction, of national power" (325). The creation of national power came at the expense of state power, which had been practically sovereign in the 70s and 80s. In fact, Wood asserts that the Constitution embodied "a virtual revolution in American politics, promising a serious weakening, if not destruction, of the power of the states" (*Creation* 471). Wood describes this second "revolution" that brought about the creation of the U.S. Constitution as a

“desperate revolution, bred from despair and from the sense of impending failure of the earlier revolution” (472). This view of the Constitution as a counterrevolutionary document, although contested by recent scholarship, provides valuable insight into the volatility of the sentiments that characterized the decade following its ratification; fear and anxiety defined the times, because it was unclear whether the Constitution would provide the structure and stability that was so desperately needed. Bailyn says that in the founding period “Federalism was a possible, not a certain solution; its essence was not automatic harmony but an uncertain tension which statecraft alone could maintain” (*Ideological Origins* 378). The success of the Constitution depended, to a large extent on the people’s adaptation to its vision of republican government, citizenship, and virtue.

Numerous factors, including the desperate need for economic stability in the 1780s, as well as the influence of famous men like George Washington, had led to the eventual ratification of the Constitution (Holton 348). However, the political principles behind the making of the Constitution were slow to seep through the population, and “in the 1790’s, [sic] events at home and abroad brought...conflict to a brief climax” (May 181). This conflict was, as Howe interprets it, largely one of ideology, in which the real debate underlying the fierce party rivalry was over the meaning of *republican*, for “the concept of republicanism was obviously subject to a variety of readings when individuals as diverse as Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and John Taylor could each claim allegiance to it” (153). Howe states the importance of republican thought in the 1790s:

The revolutionary generation was profoundly dogmatic, was deeply fascinated with political ideology—the ideology of republicanism. This was a generation of Americans

which, perhaps more than any other, viewed the world about them very much through the lens of political ideology, and which found meaning in their own experience largely as republican theory explained it to them. (152)

In an era when everyone believed in “the ideology of republicanism”² but disagreed about what republicanism actually meant, and when the fate of the entire country seemed to be hanging in the balance of a proper definition, many people were suspicious of the federalist agenda, believing that it operated based on a monarchical ideology rather than a republican one. It is also important to understand that intellectual and political thought was intimately connected to the details of everyday life in the 18th century. Americans had not yet separated political and religious debate from the social sphere, and so any conflict was a conflict of one’s whole worldview, with material consequences. Every policy implementation was therefore critical, and “events were viewed in apocalyptic terms with the very survival of republican liberty riding in the balance” (150). The sheer enormity of the ideological and policy issues that were debated in this time created a feeling of looming disaster, as Howe describes it: “over the entire decade [of the 1790s] there hung an ominous sense of crisis, of continuing emergency, of life lived at a turning point when fateful decision were being made and enemies were poised to do the ultimate evil” (150). This historical context allows the reader to see how the violence of the political rhetoric at this time imbues the barely-suppressed hysteria of a citizenry that was still largely undefined.

The two works that receive the bulk of the close readings in this thesis are The Farewell Address (1796) by George Washington—known as the father of his country—and *Wieland or*

² Taken from Howe quote above.

the Transformation, an American Tale (1798) by Charles Brockden Brown, who is often cited as the father of the American novel. These are two works that focus on the role of political ideology in the formulation of a national identity, and I believe that they speak to each other because they draw opposite conclusions with respect to the benignity of ideology as a tool for influencing the masses. In the 1790s, an era of political and social instability, the splintered Republican ideology of the Revolution served both as provocation for Washington's Farewell Address, and as galvanization for a writer like Brown, the implications of whose novel reflect on the underlying purpose of Washington's Address.

I will argue that Washington dreaded the bitter partisan conflict in Congress as indicative of the state of the nation as a whole, and worried about the continuance of the nation after his retirement. His fear prompted his rhetoric in the Farewell Address; this rhetoric attempted to reduce philosophical problems and foster a single, cohesive, and unproblematic creed around which the entire nation could collect. Washington feared disunity more than anything else, and he combated this fear by introducing a new republican ideology that he believed would unify the country. I will then introduce Brockden Brown's novel as a work that exposes the working of ideology and voices the author's fear of its inherent dangers; in this way, I posit that Brown's piece functions not as a piece of literature as Americans narrowly define literature today—as something mainly valued for its aesthetic and imaginative properties—but as a work capable of, and indeed written with the purpose of responding to rhetoric like that in Washington's Farewell Address.

There are three key concepts that interact in this thesis: ideology, virtue, and unity. I will invoke Louis Althusser's theory of ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses as a backbone for

my discussion of these two pieces of literature because I believe that even though Althusser's collection *Essays on Ideology* was published in 1960, his treatise on the functioning of ideology in state operations provides innovative explanations for the work of both the Farewell Address and the trauma of *Wieland*. Althusser defines ideology in two ways. First, he says that it is "the system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group" (Althusser 32). Second, he speaks to the nature of this system by saying, "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence"³ (36). Althusser theorizes that the "distortion" of the real world in the mind is because ideology comes between a person or a group and the world, and creates a fictional or "imaginary" relationship (38). Ideology operates at a sub-conscious level, dominating the conscious thoughts, ideas, and behaviors of people so that they act in the way that ideology tells them is natural.

Althusser describes an ISA as the complement to the repressive State apparatus. The latter functions primarily through violence: an example is the National Guard, which is responsible for physically quelling civil unrest. The former operates primarily through ideology in order to suppress unrest by influencing citizens' beliefs so that they may accord with the repressive State apparatus. The two systems are symbiotic when they support the same beliefs. In fact, "it is the intermediation of the ruling ideology that ensures a (sometimes teeth-gritting) 'harmony' between the repressive State apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatus..." (24). I argue that the ratification of the Constitution established a new Repressive state apparatus when it instituted a powerful federal government, and legitimized the use of that federal power to control state activities. I also contend that federalist control over the Ideological State Apparatus

³ Leaving aside Althusser's Marxist discussion of conditions of existence, and the role they play in his theory, I am choosing to interpret "real conditions of existence" by its secondary synonym, which he calls the "real world" (38).

was weak in the 1790s, and that this interpretation explains the animosity in American politics in the 1790s. “The ruling ideology” that Althusser speaks of did not immediately dominant the Ideological State Apparatus with the advent of the Constitution. Instead it was fiercely, often violently, debated in the new branches of government.

The open and brutal hostility between the Federalist Party, headed by Alexander Hamilton, and the Republican Party, led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, can be interpreted as two groups struggling over control of the Ideological State Apparatus in the newly re-made United States of America. Althusser says that while the repressive State apparatus provides a “shield” behind which the ISA can operate, the ISA is the real site of power (24). He adds that because the ISA is maintained in the minds of the people, “the Ideological State Apparatus may be not only the stake, but also the site of class struggle, and often of bitter forms of class struggle” (20). I would like to modify this claim to propose that the struggle for control of the American Ideological State Apparatus was not a class struggle, but one in which competing definitions of republicanism were vying for dominance. The party split in Congress did not represent class interests as we understand them, instead each party viewed themselves as advocating for the ‘true’ republican principles that the other party had abandoned. Howe says, “In the eyes of the Jeffersonians, Federalists became monarchists or aristocrats bent upon destroying America’s republican experiment. And Jeffersonians became in Federalist minds social levelers and anarchists, proponents of mob rule” (150). The United State of America had been re-made in 1789 with the ratification of the Constitution, but the re-imagining of the citizenry under such a government was still hotly contested. The Farewell Address, I will argue, was Washington’s attempt to end some of the conflict by speaking of the debate as if it were

already settled in favor of an ideology that complemented the Constitutional definition of republicanism.⁴

Virtue and Unity are the other two concepts that will be important for this thesis because they are the two guiding themes of Washington's rhetoric, and the motivators of much of Brown's plot. The historical and contemporary status of these two characteristics in political thought at the time of the writing of the Farewell Address and *Wieland* is important to any discussion of them in my thesis, so I will give a brief summary of their changing significance in republican ideology. Bailyn says that according to 18th-century belief unity and virtue were foundational to the operation of a successful republic. He describes these beliefs in the following way: (1) "republics, necessarily delicate structures, could only survive in small units since they required uniformity of opinion" and (2) "the animating principle of republics was virtue" (Bailyn 344). These two statements had dominated the history of republican political theory all the way through the American Revolution, but in the aftermath of the war, with the advent of the Constitution, these two statements came under federalist criticism.

In the years following the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation, it became increasingly clear that Americans would never be able to live up to the classic republican ideal, one that imagined a republic as a country of peacefully unified, morally upright farmers who required little government bureaucracy. On the eve of the Constitutional Convention, John Adams bitterly wrote to Jefferson: "I have long been settled in my own

⁴ The Constitution "defined" republicanism not just in the way that it balanced the 'democratic' power of the people in the Legislative branch against the 'monarchical' voice of the President and the 'aristocratic' voice of the Judiciary branch, but also in the way it established proportional representation in the houses of Congress. At this point, Washington sounds like a Federalist trying to establish Federalist ideology, but I will show in Chapter One that it is not as straightforward as this.

opinion, that neither Philosophy, nor Religion, nor Morality, nor Wisdom, nor Interest, will ever govern nations or Parties, against their Vanity, their Pride, their Resentment or Revenge, or their Avarice or Ambition. Nothing but Force and Power and Strength can restrain them” (Cappon 202-203). Adams’ loss of faith in American exceptionalism was by no means an anomaly, and his fears mirrored the thoughts of many of America’s most notable revolutionary leaders. George Washington himself wrote in 1786, the year before the convention, that, “We have probably had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation” (qtd. in Wood, *Creation* 472). What was necessary, and what the federalists had to convince the people of, was that the Constitution would institute a government that would not be so naïve as to rely on individual virtue or social uniformity of interest for the continuance of the political system.

To that effect, Madison stated in *The Federalist* no. 51 that the new constitution would “divide and arrange the several offices in such a manner as that each may be a check to the other” thereby “supplying by opposite and rival interests, the defect of better motives” (257). If the people could not put the public good above their own interest, the solution, as Madison reasoned in *Federalist* no. 10, to this lack of disinterestedness “involves the spirit of party and faction in the necessary and ordinary operations of government” (50). The Constitution was sold to the people because it established a republic that claimed not to hold unrealistic expectations concerning the subjects of virtue and uniformity of opinion vis-à-vis its citizenry.

Both morality and unity play an important role in the messages of the two works that I will examine, although the resulting conclusions in each piece are conflicting. The first chapter will examine Washington’s Farewell Address as an attempt to calm state dissensions and factionalism by encouraging citizens to be moral in their private lives and unified in their loyalty

to the Constitution, despite the fact that this advice contradicted statements on the federalists' part prior to the Constitution's ratification. The second chapter of this thesis will analyze Charles Brockden Brown's tragic novel *Wieland: The Transformation, An American Tale* as a response to the ideological agenda of works like the Farewell Address by flipping the concept of virtue on its head. Within the context of the 1790s, which is noted for a "brutality both of expression and behavior" the events of the novel will be interpreted as a warning about the ideological path that the new 'unified' nation was treading (Howe 149).

During the Revolutionary war, the embattled colonists certainly no longer saw themselves as British subjects, but they also did not necessarily see themselves as Americans; in fact they were more inclined to view themselves as citizens of their respective states. Gordon Wood says that in the Revolutionary years 'The United States of America' "possessed a literal meaning that is hard to appreciate today. The Confederation resembled more an alliance among closely cooperating sovereign states than a single government" (*The American Revolution* 72). In fact, "when people in 1776 talked about their 'country' or even their 'nation,' they usually meant Virginia or Massachusetts or Pennsylvania" (70). Evidence for this can be seen in the wording of the Declaration of Independence which asserted that "these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States...and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do" (Urofsky 63). The plural reference to what citizens today refer to as the singular (and therefore single) entity is precisely what the federalists sought to change with the creation of the Constitution, but the change in consciousness was slow enough that nearly a decade later, prominent leaders of the country were still discussing the plausibility of such a union. I will show that Washington's Farewell Address

attempted to legitimize national power by encouraging a new ideology that would make republican citizens by redefining republican, and that Washington labeled this new ideology “American” to bond the people together. I will then analyze the message of Brown’s novel to reflect upon the ideological work that the Farewell Address typifies.

Ideology and the Making of Good Citizens

George Washington announced his intention to forgo a third term in the Presidential office in his Farewell Address to the Nation, which was first published in Philadelphia's newspaper *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser* issue no. 5444 in 1796 (Paltsits 55). The original version of his announcement was written four years earlier, when Washington had wished to retire after only one term, but, as he recalled in the address, "the then perplexed and critical posture of [America's] affairs with foreign Nations...impelled me to abandon the idea" (Washington 2). With the nation in such a fragile state, Washington was persuaded not to resign until the end of his second term, at which time he determined that "the state of [the nation's] concerns, both external and internal, no longer render[ed] the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty" (2). The Farewell Address contains more than Washington's intention to retire, however. It also contains "sentiments" which Washington said he considered "all important to the permanency of your felicity as a People" (5). Washington boldly yet humbly declares his intention to give advice that will benefit the people of the United States. I will argue that the rhetoric in his Farewell Address was calculated for its emotional effect on his audience, with the intention of fitting the citizens to whom it is addressed for their role in the system that the federalists had proposed in the Constitution, and built during Washington's administration.

While Washington's departing address is commonly cited for showcasing his foreign policy, I argue that the import of the Farewell Address resides in its ability to persuade its readers through rhetoric: an 'American' rhetoric so influential that it had power to transform the beliefs of its readers through its emotional power. Indeed, Matthew Spalding asserts that, "along with the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the *Federalist*, [the Farewell Address] was

judged by prominent Americans of earlier times to be one of the great documents of American history and a major contribution to our political thought” (66). I contend that Washington’s contribution to American political thought was emotional rather than intellectual, and that he sought to change his readers’ political thought on a sub-conscious level, through their sensibilities instead of through intellectual reasoning. I will show in this chapter that the rhetoric of The Farewell Address modified and shaped the political thought of its readers by creating a fictionalized relationship between the citizens of each state and the Constitution, a relationship that would unify them as Americans.

Karlyn Campbell, in a book dedicated to American presidential rhetoric, states that the genre of the farewell address is special due to the unique position of the person writing/delivering it: “the timing is fundamental and crucial. A farewell is delivered when the president is making the transition from president to citizen” (194). The temporal position of the outgoing president gives him rhetorical power, for while he “retains the authority of the institution,” the people are also reminded that soon he will be one of them again, and that a new man will assume the presidency (194). This realization makes them reflective, and more receptive of his words. As his power is waning, Campbell says that “the president can draw lessons, usually in the form of warnings, from the collective past. Implicit in these lessons are the criteria by which all presidents, including this one, ought to be judged. Hence, the accomplishments of an administration, the criteria by which it should be judged, and the lessons it offers for the future are interwoven to create the legacy” (195). Campbell notes that the president has the opportunity to influence the historical view of his time in office by framing his administration with lessons and warnings, and that he is enabled to do so by the emotional power contained in the ‘farewell’ moment.

I propose that for Washington, the rhetorical power contained in the ‘farewell’ moment was enhanced by a number of factors that increased the emotional response of his readers. One factor must certainly have been the upheaval that had plagued the new country during the 1790s. As stated earlier, Washington had considered resigning in 1793, but pressure from his cabinet members and advisors, who feared a rupture in the fragile nation, convinced him to run for re-election.⁵ Edmund Randolph, for example, had written him saying, “You alone can give them stability” (qtd. in Paltsits 235). I argue that Washington was trying to give the young country stability on the eve of his departure through the commentary, advice, and rhetorical tone of The Farewell Address. Howe says that “in the political rhetoric of the time...in the public press, in speeches, sermons, the private correspondence of individuals—there ran a spirit of intolerance and fearfulness that seems quite amazing” (148). Howe provides a general description of the cycle of fear that had trapped the people in this time period. Washington’s Address contrasts sharply with this description, because it has none of the hysteria that characterized the political rhetoric of the rest of the decade. The widespread predisposition toward panic enhanced the effectiveness of Washington’s rhetoric in the Farewell Address because the people, who were anxious about the continuation of the nation without him as president, were therefore more receptive of his commanding advice.

The most important factor enhancing the power of his rhetoric was Washington’s relationship to the people. Campbell observes that “saying farewell implies a relationship...Presidents say farewell to the presidency, taking leave of a relationship that has

⁵ For a review of the history behind the drafting of the Farewell Address and a discussion about the contributions of James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, see *Washington’s Farewell Address: In facsimile with transliterations of all the drafts of Washington, Madison, and Hamilton, together with their correspondence and other supporting documents* edited by Victor Hugo Paltsits (1935).

bound them to the people in a special way” (192). Washington was not just a president, however. He was the first president of the United States, the only one to be “elected with every possible electoral vote” (Wood, *Revolutionary Characters* 47). In fact, Washington’s participation in the Constitutional Convention of 1787 had secured that document’s eventual ratification because it was generally assumed that he would be President (46). Wood says, “Washington was the only American in 1789 who possessed the dignity, patience, restraint and reputation for republican virtue that the untried but potentially powerful office of the presidency needed at the outset” (49-50). The enormous popularity that had made him President was rooted in the Revolutionary war. He had been the commander-in-chief of the army that had beaten the greatest military power in the world at the time of the Revolution, thereby securing the Americans their independence. His popularity was so great that when he became president “many people...expected that Washington might be president for life, that he would be a kind of elective monarch” (50). In fact, John Adams worried about the “idolatry” of Washington being “so excessive as to endanger our liberties” (*Letters* 322). Washington was a hero to his fellow countrymen, even in his day, and his heroic reputation and legendary valor lent the weight of authority to everything he said.⁶

Washington’s legendary status was further enhanced by his decision to retire. When the constitution was created, there was no presidential term limit, so Washington’s announcement in the opening paragraph of his address surprised many: “The period for the new election of a Citizen, to administer the Executive Government of the United States, being not far distant...it appears to me proper...that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline

⁶ Washington’s popularity had not escaped unscathed in the tumultuous period of his terms in office, but Wood says that “he never entirely lost the respect of all the party leaders, and this respect allowed him to reconcile, resolve, and balance the clashing interests” (*Revolutionary Characters* 56).

being considered among the number of those, out of whom a choice is to be made” (1). The people, upon reading his decision, discovered that they were finally saying goodbye to the hero and father figure of their country. Washington’s willingness—and indeed eagerness—to relinquish power and return to the role of citizen after dedicating the better part of his life to public service cemented the rapport he had built with the people over a period of decades. Garry Wills says that throughout his life Washington “accrued power through his willingness to give it up” (qtd. in Wood 47). In this instance, the power he gained was translated into the effectiveness of his rhetoric and advice.

I propose that Washington used the emotion of the reflective moment that was created by The Farewell Address to instill beliefs and habits in his readers that would ensure the successful operation and continuation of the new and fragile government. He does not just encourage them to be good citizens however; he also shows them how to be, by displaying himself as an example worth emulating. Spalding remarks that “the opening carries such weight precisely because it explains more about the decisionmaker [sic] than the decision. It is a proof of Washington’s character, emphasizing modesty and duty as evidence of his republicanism” (67). For example, in the opening Washington assures the people, “this resolution [to retire] has not been taken, without a strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation, which binds a dutiful citizen to his country” (1). Washington tells the people that he has considered the best interests of the country, and determined that his retirement is not a dereliction of duty; in doing so he has shown himself to be an ideal citizen, willing to put the needs of his country ahead of his own best interest. In fact, he describes his past two terms in office as “a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty” (2). Washington’s admonitions to the people were preceded by an explanation of his decision-making process for a purpose. Washington wanted to bind his advice

to his own legendary example because he knew that that his status as a republican hero would act as an additional exhortation to his readers to follow that advice and embrace his views.

In The Farewell Address Washington encourages four habits that would, in his opinion, benefit his readers with the republican character necessary to sustain the new republic: loyalty to the constitution, obedience to the laws, avoidance of faction, and maintenance of morality. What is interesting about these four ‘pillars’ of the ‘American’ character that he is establishing by the very act of stating them, is that the last two held a particularly important place in the debates over the ratification of the Constitution in the late 1780s. As discussed in the introduction, the federalists prevailed in ratifying the Constitution by arguing that it would not rely on its citizens’ virtue or uniformity of opinion, as previous republican theory had postulated was necessary. So why then does Washington fervently encourage the people to unity and religion, citing them as “indispensible supports” of liberty and prosperity, contrary to the federalist arguments before the ratification of the Constitution? (19). At first glance Washington appears to be going back to a pre-Revolutionary view of the needs of a Republic.

The ostensible contradiction between Washington’s federalist allegiance and his commentary in The Farewell Address can be resolved by Althusser’s theory of the Ideological State Apparatus as described in his collection: *Essays on Ideology*. His theories offer an explanation as to how The Farewell Address fit into the ideological landscape of the time. Although Althusser wrote in the 1960s in response to fascist states, his thoughts on the functioning of ideology in state operation are a lens through which the apparent anachronism of the rhetoric of the Farewell Address can be rectified. I propose that Washington, instead of reverting to an old system of belief, encouraged the habits that he did as part of a new ideology which would unify the country and resolve some of the conflict that was threatening the stability

of the nation in the 1790s. Created through rhetoric, the new ideology built on and modified late-18th-century republican beliefs. I argue that the advice in The Farewell Address accomplishes the work of an Ideological State Apparatus⁷ in that it attempts to initiate the individuals who read it into this emerging modern American ideology, and in doing so, it created citizens that would act in a way beneficial to the state. These ideal citizens are, like Washington, moral, peaceable, willing to sacrifice for the common good, and, most importantly, obedient.

Washington's purpose in giving the advice that he did was to create citizens who would accord with the governmental system established by the Constitution. To understand how his rhetoric accomplished this goal it is important to first understand the political significance of the Constitutional system. The goal of the framers in drafting the Constitution was to centralize power in the federal government, away from the people. Max Elding describes Federalism, as this movement was named, as "an attempt to create a central government with the power to act"⁸ (8). This movement was viewed with much suspicion however, as the memory of a past government which had claimed in the Declaratory Act of 1766 "full power and authority to make laws and statues of sufficient force and vitality to bind the colonies and people of America...in all cases whatsoever" was very vivid (qtd. in Bailyn 202).

Knowing the people's deeply-rooted distrust of government, Elding says that the framers were careful to "create a national government that was both light and inconspicuous...*light* in the sense that its demands would not press too heavily on the people and...*inconspicuous* in the

⁷ Referenced from now on as ISA

⁸ Max Elding argues that a common view of federalism is based on Madisonian beliefs, without taking into account that Madison was not really the "archetypal Federalist" that many scholars believe him to be (7). Madison was concerned, Elding argues, with restraining government, which was an inherently anti-federalist concern, and in this way he stood "'almost equidistant' from Hamilton and Gouverneur Morris on the one hand, and from George Mason on the other" (7).

sense that its actual physical presence would be limited” (10). In order to get the Constitution ratified, “what the Federalists had to do, and what they did, in the debate over ratification, was to develop a conceptual framework that made it possible to accommodate the creation of a powerful national government to the strong anti-statist current in the American political tradition” (219). Elding argues that although the framers wanted to create a federal government with agency, it had to be fitted to the ideological climate of the time period. Conversely, I argue that what the Farewell Address did, among other things, was to make a dominate ideology to fit the new government by encouraging traits that would make the burden of the government on the people even lighter and more inconspicuous. Washington transferred the people into this “conceptual framework” by advising them to act in their private lives in a way that would accommodate them to their role in the public sphere and make them accept as natural the “demands” of the government (10).

This is where the ‘pillars’ of morality and uniformity of opinion enter Washington’s new ideology, not as remnants of an outdated republican theory that Washington had never discarded, but as supports to his ultimate goal of a nation obedient and loyal to the Constitution. Initially they may seem out of place given the federalists’ arguments against the need for virtue and uniformity of opinion in popular government during the debates prior to ratification. Take, for example Madison’s statements about the inherent depravity of man: “if the impulse and the opportunity” to act selfishly “be suffered to coincide ... neither moral nor religious motives can be relied on as an adequate control” (Madison 52). Reliance on these characteristics in the people was acknowledged to be too idealistic a foundation for a successful government during the ratification debate. Yet, in the Farewell Address Washington states that “’Tis substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government” (20). In fact, he goes

further, and admonishes the people, “let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion” (20). Why does Washington say that virtue as an outcome of religion is necessary to the functioning of the government?

If we persist in our belief that Washington was interested in creating a new political ideology to fit the workings of the Constitution, then his encouragement of morality and religion are not a merely residual belief from a past era. Althusser’s theory offers a potential explanation for this phenomenon. He says, “It is the intermediation of the ruling ideology that ensures a (sometimes teeth-gritting) ‘harmony’ between the repressive State apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses, *and between the different State Ideological Apparatuses*” (emphasis mine Althusser 24). Althusser says that the shared principles of the different ISAs bind them together, regardless of whether they are political ISAs, religious ISAs or educational ISAs. If the new political ideology aimed to induce obedience, what better way to encourage it than to promote other ideologies where obedience is required? Washington himself says, “Reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle” (20). National morality, Washington says, is the key to a successful government, and I argue that although he was ostensibly speaking of the people’s private lives, the de facto national morality is the obedience of its citizens. Washington advises the people to maintain morality in the form of religion because religious systems inculcate the habit of submission, which is useful for state operations.

Washington also encouraged unity: unity of thought, religious belief, and political belief. In The Farewell Address he says, “With slight shades of difference, you have the same Religion, Manners, Habits, and political Principles” (7). This statement as a description of the then-contemporary citizenry is blatantly false even if one only considers the “spirit of intolerance and

fearfulness” that ran through American political life in the 1790s without examining the differences in religion, manners, and habits of the time (Howe 148). It also seems outdated, given the context of the *Federalist Papers*, which encouraged the ratification of the Constitution by claiming that uniformity of opinion was not necessary to the government’s operation, as discussed in the introduction. Instead, I propose that Washington was trying to create a sense of unity by imagining that it already existed. Peter Coviello says that in the 18th-century “imaginings of the early republic’s fraught, fragile, and always rather speculative cohesion returned again and again to the idea of a far-reaching affective connectedness—an odd civic intimacy—that might transpire between the dispersed citizens of the republic, and thereby invest them with a kind of present-tense unity and deeply felt coherence” (443). This description of America’s cohesion as a connectedness between the “dispersed citizens of the republic” is exactly what Washington wanted his readers to believe when they read The Farewell Address because he could graft this belief unto a real, solid foundation.

The document that reified this imagining of the country as a whole was the United States Constitution, under which government all of the citizens were united by the same name. To this effect, Washington tells them: “The name of AMERICAN, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of Patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations” (7). Loyalty and obedience to the federal Constitution would require that the people give up their loyalties to their state governments, cease to see themselves as Carolinians or Virginians, and begin to see themselves as Americans. That the Constitution was the cornerstone of the new repressive State apparatus I established in the introduction; I am now extending this claim by stating that in The Farewell Address Washington was establishing the Constitution as the foundation of the concurrent political ISA as well.

In any ideology, the foundation must be unquestionable. Althusser labels these ‘truths’ that formulate the foundation obviousnesses because “we cannot *fail to recognize* [them]” (emphasis in original 46). In the Farewell Address, Washington wrote extensively on the Constitution’s ability to protect liberty. Liberty was the buzz word of the Revolutionary generation, and love of liberty was an obviousness of colonial republican ideology. Washington said, “Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment” (5). Ironically, I would say that in this passage Washington *is* confirming the people’s attachment to liberty so that he may channel their loyalty to the idea of liberty into loyalty to the Constitution.

Washington had to convince the people that what the Constitution provided was a defense of liberty—and the only possible defense thereof—in order to establish the right of the Constitution to be the foundational document in what Spalding calls “a form of political religion” and what I have suggested is an American political ISA (67). To this effect, Washington offers the following statement: “The unity of government that constitutes you one people is also dear to you. It is justly so” (5-6). Unlike his solitary comment about liberty, however, Washington continues to describe the Constitution, “it is a main Pillar in the Edifice of your real independence; the support of your tranquility at home; your peace abroad; your safety; of your prosperity; of that very Liberty, which you so highly prize” (6). Washington’s extended commentary, which ends with a repetition of *liberty*, indicates that he felt compelled to ‘remind’ the people of why they loved the Constitution. The emphasis he gives to these statements shows how Washington was trying to establish a new obviousness for a new ISA: love of liberty is equivalent to loyalty to the Constitution. By recognizing the obviousness of Washington’s statement that the Constitution is the “Palladium of [their] Political safety and prosperity,” the

people accept the Constitution as the American foundation, and thereby make it the foundation of their American ideology as well (6).

Washington wanted the people not only to trust the frame of government established by the Constitution, but to protect it: he commands them to “cherish a cordial, habitual, immovable attachment to it...watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety,” (6). This command assimilated anti-federalist thought into the new ideology by telling the people that they were responsible for the Constitution’s preservation. The main concern of the anti-federalists was the encroachment of power on liberty, but having established that the Constitution protects liberty, Washington absorbs anti-federalist habits by saying that the people must protect their liberty by protecting the Constitution. In this way, the people are blinded to the fact that this document reallocated to the federal government much of the power that used to belong to the state governments under the Articles of Confederation, where the people’s voice was proportionally louder. By accepting the Constitution as a just frame of government, the people have not only accepted as equitable the relatively weakened position that the Constitution assigned them, but they have been incited to defend the very system that renders them so. This is “the reality” which Althusser says “is necessarily ignored... in the very forms of recognition” that make an individual a member of an ideology: in this case, an American as Washington defines one (57). To be one of Washington’s “friends and fellow citizens,” as he greeted his readers at the beginning of the address, the reader must recognize the obviousnesses that he puts forth, and defend the document that ‘undeniably’ protects his/her liberty (Washington 1).

All of this advice points to the underlying purpose of The Farewell Address, and that is obedience to the laws established by the Constitution. Washington reminds his reader that although it is “the right of the people to make and to alter their... Government...the constitution

which at any time exists, ‘till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole People, is sacredly obligatory upon all’ (13). Rather than using force and fear to oblige the people to be obedient, Washington seeks to convince them that “Respect for [the Constitution’s] authority, compliance with its Laws, [and] acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true Liberty” (13). Washington tells the people that true liberty and freedom is secured through obedience to the law. Once again, love of liberty is made equivalent with something else: this time it is not loyalty to the Constitution, but obedience to it.

Washington says that “the very idea of the power and the right of the People to establish Government, presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established Government” (13). He tells them that the Constitution, because it was ratified by representatives of the people from each state, binds the people to its laws, and ensures the safety of their liberty if they will respect its authority, and peacefully obey its laws.

I have demonstrated how The Farewell Address was Washington’s attempt to bolster the stability of the weak federal government and quell widespread dissension by using a rhetorically powerful moment to help establish a new ideology. This new ideology unified readers of disparate states and parties under the title of American citizen because it included key concepts from other republican ideologies that were competing at the time into a composite that promised stability. The rhetoric of the Farewell Address did the work of ideology, I argued, because in reading the Farewell Address, individuals came to believe the imaginary relationship that Washington created between them and the government, and began to operate in a manner that supported the state without feeling oppressed by its strictures. To accomplish this goal, he had to convince them that their liberties were protected as long as they were obedient to and protective of the Constitution and its laws. Washington said that his “sentiments” were “all important to

the permanency” of the people’s “felicity,” and the success of his rhetoric can be seen in the way that he convinced the people of the truth of this statement: by affecting their consequent beliefs (5). Today, one can see that Washington succeeded in establishing the Constitution as the “sacred” cornerstone of American government and American political thought, and to a large degree, he succeeded in establishing the name of American as predominant over other (local) forms of identification. Washington’s rhetoric was very important in the transformation of rebels who no longer had a cause into content, prosperous American citizens.

Portrait of an Ideological Life

In the previous chapter, I argued that Washington's rhetoric in The Farewell Address attempted to create a new ideology, specifically "American" in order to create a new "American" citizen. This ideology encouraged national or civic virtue, which I argued was, in reality, obedience to the Constitution. In this chapter, I will examine the novel *Wieland, or the Transformation, an American Tale*, which I believe responded to the ideological agenda of Washington's address through a fictional portrayal of ideological life on an individual scale. The novel was published in 1798, a mere two years after Washington's Farewell Address was published, and its brutality and horror undermines Washington's vision, which attempts to represent the new country and its citizens as a unified whole. The author, Charles Brockden Brown was born in 1771 in Philadelphia and grew up amidst the chaos and turmoil of the Revolutionary war ("Charles Brockden Brown"). He labeled his first novel an "American tale" for the same reason that Washington wanted his ideology to be "American": Brown had a specific audience and a specific message in mind.

Brown's avowed purpose in writing *Wieland*, as stated in the Advertisement prefacing the original publication, was to illustrate "some important branches of the moral constitution of man" (Brown, *Wieland* 3). Many critics have commented on the political nature of this statement, based on an understanding of 18th-century society. Joseph Ellis sums up this knowledge by saying that in the 18th-century "the artistic, political, and economic life of any society... was a single thing and not several different things" (24). Gordon Wood, in speaking of the Founding Fathers, also illustrates this concept when he says, "There is no doubt that the founders were...the leading intellectuals of their day. But they were as well the political leaders of their day... Of course they were neither 'intellectuals' nor 'politicians,' for the modern

meaning of these terms suggests the very separation between them that the revolutionaries avoided” (*Revolutionary Characters* 10). The separation between spheres of thought and influence that is so natural in today’s society simply did not exist at the time of the writing of *Wieland*.

Having established that *Wieland* was written by a man who was a product of his time, and that the purport of the novel must therefore have been political as well as intellectual and moral, many analysts then argue that Brown was making either a federalist or an anti-federalist statement through the novel. For example, Jane Tompkins argued that “Brown's picture of the disintegration of the Wielands' miniature society is a more or less direct reflection of Federalist skepticism about the efficacy of religion and education in preparing citizens to govern themselves” (44). On the other hand, Eric Wolfe says that the novel “suggests the dangers of insisting too stridently on the need for a unified identity,” which he calls a “‘Federalist’ search,” and thereby allies “Brown with current theorists of radical democracy” (437). Though they differ, both of these analyses, in reading *Wieland* as a political novel, conclude that Brown was taking a specific political stance in the debates that raged around him in 1798.

I propose instead that Brown’s motive for writing *Wieland* was neither political (whether Federalist or Democratic) nor apolitical, but that it was meta-political. Remember that Brown stated his purpose in writing the novel: “the illustration of some important branches of the moral constitution of man” (Brown 3). The word *constitution* here deserves attention, given that Brown’s first novel was written following an era of constitution making. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word *constitution* as “The system or body of fundamental principles according to which a nation, state, or body politic is constituted and governed” (“Constitution”). In the years following the ratification of the United States Constitution, it is interesting that

Brown so explicitly stated his authorial intention to be an illumination of the “constitution of man.” Brown’s reference to “man” was almost certainly to mankind as a body politic, and I contend that his intention was to display the fundamental principle by which people operate: ideology.

In *Wieland*, Brown reveals the constitution of man to be ideological, just as Althusser stated in *Essays on Ideology*: “man is an ideological animal by nature” (44). Brown, I argue, recognized that ideology functions as the “imaginary” relationship between people and the real world (38). The inherent danger of ideology is twofold. First, because it represents an imaginary relationship to the real world, ideology is “the ‘cause’ which has to explain the imaginary distortion of the...real world” in men’s minds (38). Second, adherence to one’s beliefs through action is the requirement of any and all ideology: any man, “believing in the ‘ideas’ that his ‘consciousness’ inspires in him must ‘act according to his ideas’, must therefore inscribe his own ideas as a free subject in the actions of his material practice” (42). I propose that Brown saw the danger of men living out their ideologies because ideology, by nature, “do[es] not correspond to reality, i.e. that [it] constitute[s] an illusion” (36). Adherence to an illusion can have very dire consequences when man is required to act on that illusion, and I will attempt to argue that Brown’s novel is a portrayal of ideological life meant to terrify his American audience. Brown responds to Washington’s rhetoric—his encouragement of obedience as civic virtue—by twisting his characters’ ideologies into the cause of a hair-raising tragedy.

The themes of allegiance, obedience, and virtue as part of an ideology interact throughout each incident of the novel until they culminate at its tragic, disturbing peak. My analysis of the working of the novel echoes W.B. Berthoff’s view of Brockden Brown’s literary method. The

novel is organized, as Berthoff describes it, through “thematic repetition... [through] successive and cumulative analogy” (47). Berthoff says that Brown reiterated his point in increasingly subtle or obvious fictitious circumstances, that the disparate scenes of the novel are connected because they each explore “the common theme” (47). I will also expand Berthoff’s analysis of Brown’s method to argue that he reiterates the themes not only through the scenes, but also through his characters: Wieland and Pleyel are so dedicated to fitting the events of their lives to their ideologies, that they sacrifice true rationality for the sake of their formula. In this way, Brown shows the destruction that results from disregarding plausible explanations for the sake of the coherence of a creed. Consequently, he shows the potential danger of living out any ideology, including that which is behind Washington’s Farewell Address.

The conclusion of the novel is also particular to Brown in that he fashioned it to purposefully *avoid* conclusions so that the reader must draw moral and meta-political inferences for her or himself. A word of clarification may be in order here. The climax of the novel, in which the themes are relentlessly hammered, folded, and twisted upon themselves, takes place in the penultimate chapter. It is this chapter that ends without any narrative interpretation of the events that it reports. In fact, Clara—the narrator—refuses to reason through the horrors that she has witnessed. She dismisses all analysis by saying, “I care not from what source these disasters have flowed; it suffices that they have swallowed up our hopes and our existence” (Brown 261). The last chapter of the book is dated three years after the previous scene, and it is here that Clara gives a brief, dry account of her return to rationality and a simple moral. In this way, the very triviality of the moral serves to goad the reader into acknowledging for him/herself what Brown refuses to acknowledge for him in the preceding chapter: the real problems that brought about

the tragic events of the story. As Berthoff says, “At every turn we shall observe how the circumstances of the plot subvert the superficial moral” (48).

The different ideologies of the Wieland family are present from Brown’s first characterization of them. Theodore Wieland is a very religious character, contrary to his brother-in-law, Henry Pleyel, who is “the champion of intellectual liberty, [who] rejected all guidance but that of his reason” (Brown 28). On first glance, it seems that “these two figures somewhat crudely represent the temperamental division of the age into rationalists and evangelicals,” but “Brown will expose [this division] as a false dichotomy” (Fliegelman viii). In fact, Brown tears down this dichotomy as soon as he sets it up, confounding the reader’s expectations by describing Wieland as somewhat in-between the two camps. Every characterization of him shows the mixing of the two systems; for example, Clara says, “He is in some respects, an enthusiast, but is fortified in his belief by innumerable arguments and subtilities [sic]” (Brown 40). Wieland, although deeply religious, feels it necessary to establish the rationality of his belief, and he uses reason to do so: “he was much conversant with the history of religious opinions, and took pains to ascertain their validity. He deemed it indispensable to examine the ground of his belief, to settle the relation between motives and actions, the criterion of merit, and the kinds and properties of evidence” (26). Wieland’s preoccupation with “examin[ing] the ground of his belief” is an attempt to balance the tension between two philosophies that were juxtaposed in the 18th century: the religious assertion that knowledge is revealed by God, and the Enlightenment hypothesis of sensory perception as the foundation of all knowledge (26).

Wieland wishes to see the world around him as evidence for the veracity of his religious beliefs, but his two philosophies mix uneasily, for faith by nature is blind, and rationalism by nature is skeptical. From the very beginning, Wieland’s situation is that of an impasse: he is

caught between the ideas of the Enlightenment and the “calvinistic inspiration” of his ancestors (28). Wieland is so dedicated to resolving the tension between the two camps, without having to choose one, that his devotion seems to border on obsession, as Clara’s nuanced description shows: “what distinguished him was a propensity to ruminate on these truths,” and this morose habit lends him a countenance “of thrilling melancholy” (25). He stands between two worldviews that are antithetical, but instead of choosing one at the expense of the other, he tries to make the authority of his senses submit to the unquestionable authority of God; in short, he is attempting to wrest together two philosophies that resist each other like the positive ends of two magnets. Clara’s statement that her brother Wieland “discovered only confirmations of his faith,” the more he studied and meditated indicates Wieland’s determination to reconcile his allegiance to two opposing accounts of authority into a single creed (28).

The difference between Wieland and Pleyel then is not that they adhere to different ideologies, but that Pleyel has chosen a single system for interpreting the world, while Wieland attempts to create a new ideology that enrolls the “rational” precepts of Pleyel’s philosophy into a religious system. Clara says that “their creeds were in many respects opposite,” but I propose that although these two characters organized their beliefs to different effects, they are in fact analogous because both insist on the veracity of their respective creeds (28). What Brown’s introduction to the Wielands reveals about his characters is their need for a unified, explanatory credo. While Wieland’s ideology is a compilation, mixing old beliefs with new in order to make sense of everything he encounters, Pleyel’s system is strict rationalism. However, both men are unyielding in their adherence, and that is why “their discussions were [so] frequent” (28).

Wieland's Dilemma

Theodore Wieland is walking toward a pavilion on his property one night when he hears the voice of his wife, Catharine, commanding him, ““Stop. Go no farther. There is danger in your path”” (37). Wieland cannot see his wife anywhere nearby, and he says, ““What could I do? The warning was mysterious. To be uttered by Catharine at a place, and on an occasion like these enhanced the mystery. I could do nothing but obey”” (37). When Wieland returns to the house, he finds his wife with the rest of the family, all of whom swear that Catharine never left their side and never spoke a word during his absence. This event has a marked affect on Wieland, for he cannot disregard the testimony of his senses, although the authority of his family contradicts him. Wieland tells his family, ““either I heard my wife’s voice at the bottom of the hill, or I do not hear your voice at present”” (36). He is convinced that his senses were not mistaken, but it is also just as certain that he had to have been. Pleyel’s foreboding response is: ““it is a sad dilemma to which you have reduced yourself”” (36).

Wieland must choose between two authoritative sources: Enlightenment theory demands that Wieland rely on his senses while another, equally authoritative source—in this instance, his family, who *saw* that Catharine did not leave the room—has informed him that his senses had to have been mistaken. Wieland, who has only ever ““discovered...confirmations of his faith,”” has suddenly been put in a situation where his belief that his wife spoke is not confirmed by his wife’s acknowledgment. Wieland’s ideology does not allow him to understand what has just happened, nor does it provide a resolution. Pleyel, the rational cynic, ““did not scruple to regard the whole as a deception of the senses”” but Wieland cannot accept such an explanation, because his interpretation of the world relies on the veracity of the senses, and if Wieland allows the idea that he has been mistaken in this area, his entire worldview is invalidated (38).

The reason that Wieland and his family are concerned is because of the potentially dangerous consequences if Wieland's senses are faulty. Clara says she "could not bear to think that his [Wieland's] senses should be the victims of such delusion," for "the will is the tool of the understanding, which must fashion its conclusions on the notices of sense. If the senses be depraved it is impossible to calculate the evils that may flow from the consequent deductions of the understanding" (39). This statement displays an Enlightenment view of the process of thought. David Nordquest asserts that the revolutionary generation "regarded thought as a dynamic process in which a prior stage prompts and develops into a succeeding one" (29). In *Wieland*, the final stage of the "dynamic process" is action, and that is why Clara is so afraid of the consequences if Wieland's "senses be depraved" (Brown 39). From an ideological perspective, this same concept is described in the following way: a man "must 'act [sic] according to his ideas'" (Althusser 42). Action is the hallmark of belief, and if Wieland's beliefs are the result of faulty perception—whether it is his ideology or his senses that makes them faulty—then he may be led to commit terrible acts. This scene is a foreshadowing of the novel's imminent tragedy because Wieland admits that he did not understand the "mysterious" warning, but because he recognized the command he could "do nothing but obey" (Brown 37).

When Wieland returns to the house, he is informed that his obedience was falsified because his wife did not speak to him. Wieland will not admit that his obedience was prompted by a false perception of his wife's voice. At the same time he knows that it could not have been his wife who spoke, because his family was witness to it. Wieland never resolves this problem in a satisfactory way; instead, this same scene is replayed as the stakes grow higher, and the consequences of his rigid adherence to the idea that his senses will always confirm his beliefs become increasingly destructive.

This opening scene is an analogy of Wieland's larger dilemma, which is his desire to force the testimony of his senses to uphold his belief in God as the only authority. What Wieland refuses to acknowledge is that his desire to have his senses support his belief proves that he does believe in the autonomy of his senses, and fears that they may be capable of opposing his belief in God. Wieland's desire as a religiously minded person is to experience God's authority in a personal way. He wishes to know God's will, and to perform the actions that will signify his obedience. Wieland describes his desire as thus: "I have thirsted for the knowledge of [God's] will...My days have been spent in searching for the revelation of that will" (185-186). However, Wieland does not resort to a text to discover God's will; what his 'Enlightened' mind demands is that he receive this knowledge through his senses. Wieland is continually frustrated in his search for authentic information from his senses that reveals the commands of the divine presence. He would do anything to prove his obedience to God's will by action, but so far, his "days have been mournful, because [his] search" for an unambiguous and authoritative command has "failed" (186). Most importantly, he recalls his beseeches to God: "'O! ...that mine were the supreme delight of knowing thy will, and of performing it! The blissful privilege of direct communication with thee, and of listening to the audible enunciation of thy pleasure!'" (187). Wieland wishes to match his actions to God's will, but only by hearing God's commands with his own ears can he submit himself to the will of the authority in which he claims to place unquestioning belief. Unlike a typical evangelist, who relies on scripture, Wieland needs to hear with his own ears the revelation of God's will so that God's authority matches the authority of his senses, thereby resolving the problem that was apparent in the scene with Catharine's voice, in which two authorities contradict each other.

Pleyel's Dilemma

Henry Pleyel is Wieland's brother-in-law, and if he is initially set up as "the champion of intellectual liberty, [who] rejected all guidance but that of his reason" as opposed to the slavish Wieland, Brown reveals that Pleyel's insistence on 'rational' deductions from the senses is no less susceptible to false and destructive conclusions than Wieland's quandary (28). Pleyel is in love with Clara Wieland, but one night, while walking to Clara's house, he overhears a conversation between two people, who "judging [only] by their voices" were Carwin, a very recent acquaintance of the Wielands, and Clara (125). The woman's filthy words justify Pleyel "in concluding [Clara] to be, indeed, one of the most profligate of women" (125). Although Pleyel has known Clara for many years and has considered her "accomplished and wise beyond the rest of women," upon overhearing this conversation, for "hearing was the only avenue to information," he refuses to admit the possibility that his senses have been mistaken (132; 154).

Clara goes to visit Pleyel to try to correct the misunderstanding. She declares herself to be innocent, and reproaches him, "You were precipitate and prone to condemn" (134). She accuses him of allowing his sensory perception to overrule his knowledge of her purity: "The sentiments expressed were not allowed to outweigh the casual or concerted resemblance of voice" even though these "sentiments [were] the reverse of all those whose influence my former life had attested" (133-134). Clara's statement points Pleyel to the flaw in his reasoning. His knowledge of Clara's upright character is the result of many years testimony of his senses. In fact, Pleyel admits that he has spent years studying Clara: "I have watched your eyes; my attention has hung on your lips...I have contemplated your principles, and been astonished at the solidity of their foundation, and the perfection of their structure" (138). Yet all of this evidence

is utterly negated in Pleyel's mind by one instance of Clara's voice being heard to utter vile sentiments.

When Clara levels this accusation at Pleyel, she reports that he "was for a moment affected" (134). Whether Pleyel is briefly able to see the problem in his own logic, or whether he is moved by her emotional distress is not clear because "this quickly gave place to a mournful solemnity" (134). He declares that he is leaving forever, and Clara faints. Upon her revival Pleyel exclaims, "I fear I have been precipitate and unjust. My senses must have been the victims of some inexplicable and momentary phrenzy" (136). Minutes later, Clara gets up to talk to him, and perceives that "the tenderness which he had lately betrayed, had now disappeared, and he once more relapsed into a chilling solemnity" (136). His decision to refuse to believe Clara destroys his relationship with her. Pleyel illustrates Brown's belief in the disastrous consequences of stubborn adherence to any philosophy that so limits one's ability to draw rational conclusions.

Pleyel is the opposite as well as the mirror of Wieland. He is the opposite of Wieland because unlike his brother-in-law, who encounters a conflict in his ideology when he is told that his senses are mistaken, Pleyel gives no authority to Clara's defense of herself, and thereby avoids being torn as Wieland was. Pleyel's skepticism prompts him to disregard "all guidance but that of his reason," even if his conclusions are not very reasonable, and in the end, he can "find nothing but reasons to doubt" Clara (28). However, Pleyel and Wieland are also mirrors because their devotion to their respective ideologies is so strong that they refuse to accept any evidence that doesn't fit their system of belief, and in doing so, destroy any chance of arriving at a true understanding of the bizarre events taking place in the novel.

Transformation

Wieland's dilemma is resolved one night, while he is walking his grounds and praying for "an audible enunciation of [God's] pleasure" (187). A voice answers him, "'Thy prayers are heard'" (188). Finally, Wieland has encountered God in a way that confirms his belief. His ideology is affirmed, for his belief in God is supported by his perception. The next moment the voice says "In proof of thy faith, render me thy wife. This is the victim I chuse [sic]" (189). This voice demands the sacrificial death of Wieland's wife, Catharine, as a test of Wieland's obedience. Althusser says that actions are the indicator of true belief: a person "must...inscribe his own ideas as a free subject in the actions of his material practice. If he does not do so, 'that is wicked'" (Althusser 42). Brown has maneuvered the plot so that the action inscribed with Wieland's belief is predetermined: 'the voice of God' has told him *how* to prove his belief. Wieland must obey the command—"for if he does not do so, 'that is wicked'" (Althusser 42). Wieland's response is unflinching: "'The conditions were prescribed; the decree had gone forth, and nothing remained but to execute it'" (Brown 189). Theodore does not protest the immorality of the deed, does not weigh the relative wickedness of murder with the wickedness of ignoring God's command; on the contrary, he sees his act as *entirely* and unquestionably virtuous, because it is a display of his obedience to his ideology.

Wieland's encounter with the 'voice of God' seems to be the moment of his transformation into a madman. This encounter bears a remarkable similarity to Althusser's description of the way ideology transforms people into subjects: "ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it... 'transforms' the individuals into subjects...by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday...hailing: 'Hey, you there!'" (48). Evidence of a transformation in

the text can be seen in Catharine's dismayed exhortation to her husband not to kill her: "Surely, surely Wieland thou dost not mean it. Am I not thy wife? And wouldst thou kill me? Thou wilt not; and yet—I see—thou art Wieland no longer! A fury resistless and horrible possesses thee— Spare me—spare—help—help—" (Brown 194). As she is being strangled, Catharine acknowledges that Wieland as she once knew him is Wieland no longer; he has been transformed into a lunatic.

The fact that Wieland (mis)recognized the command to murder his family as a decree from God indicates that his mind was already compromised. The insanity did not originate from that command, but from Wieland's predisposal to uncritical acceptance of any physical phenomenon as the will of God. Wieland proves his willingness to accept any physical declaration, any command no matter how gruesome, when he beseeches God to give a sign of his presence: "Would that a momentary emanation from thy glory would visit me! that some unambiguous token of thy presence would salute my senses!" (187). At this moment, Laura Korobkin says, "Had there been no external, vocalized response, no demand for a death and a victim, it is likely that Wieland's religious fervor, though continuing, would have flowed as it had so far, in nonviolent directions" (728). Wieland's insanity lies in his belief that the real and true God *could* desire him to murder his family. Wieland may not be naturally violent, but his willingness to commit violence in the name of virtue testifies to the danger of adherence to an ideology which distorts one's perception of the real world.

The Real Transformation

While Clara is convalescing from the horror of her brother's familicide, she learns that she is Wieland's next intended victim. Upon returning to her house, Clara is accosted by

Carwin, who confesses to abusing the power of ventriloquism to mislead Pleyel, but denies that it was his voice that urged Theodore to murder. At this moment, Theodore himself enters the room and tells Clara that he is going to kill her. Clara, panic-stricken, points to Carwin and decries him as the prompter of Wieland's actions. Wieland demands of Carwin, "'whose form—whose voice—was it thy contrivance? Answer me'" (Brown 246). Carwin's answer is given "confusedly and scarcely articulated. 'I meant nothing—I intended no ill—if I understand—if I do not mistake you—it is too true—I did appear—in the entry—did speak. The contrivance was mine, but—'" (247). Wieland is disturbed by this confession, and at this moment Clara says, "Did I place a right construction on the conduct of Wieland? Was the error that misled him so easily rectified? Were views so vivid and faith so strenuous thus liable to fading and to change?" (248). Clara is unsure whether to believe in Wieland's restoration to an accurate perception of his actions. He tells her, "'If I erred, it was not my judgment that deceived me, but my senses'" (251-252). Wieland is momentarily willing to forsake the authority of his senses in order to comfort himself with the idea that, "'In thy sight, being of beings! I am still pure'" (252). Clara asks herself, "Did my ears truly report these sounds? If I did not err, my brother was restored to just perceptions" (252). Wieland's behavior in this moment echoes Pleyel's transient refutation of the authority of his senses; however, like Pleyel's ultimate continuity of thought, Wieland also returns to his original creed. Clara is correct in doubting whether "the error that misled him" was "so easily rectified" (248).

Wieland, instead of accepting "that [he] had been made the victim of human malice," invents an explanation that fits with his worldview. He tells Clara, "The form thou hast seen was the incarnation of a daemon. The visage and voice which urged me to the sacrifice of my family, were his... This minister is evil, but he from whom his commission was received is God" (253).

Wieland would rather accept the idea that Carwin is a daemon that God has used to carry his behests than that he is “the victim of human malice” (253). This explanation is hardly rational, but it is the only view that allows Wieland’s belief—that he heard correctly and that he accomplished God’s will—to remain intact. Wieland, like Pleyel, desires to fit events to his doctrine. This desire is stronger than anything else, and this is the real madness that Brown wishes to expose.

Wieland once more informs Clara that he must kill her. At this time, Carwin re-enters. Clara begs Carwin to save her through the use of his ventriloquism but he leaves without a word. At the exact moment when Wieland is approaching to kill his sister, a voice “commanded him—to hold!” (257). The voice continues, saying, “Man of errors! Cease to cherish thy delusion: not heaven or hell, but thy senses have misled thee to commit these acts. Shake off thy phrenzy, and ascend into rational and human. Be lunatic no longer” (257). Wieland’s response is to ask “whether he had acted in consequence of insane perceptions” (258). He is “loudly answered in the affirmative” (258). This dialogue is the opening of the final scene of Wieland’s life. Upon receiving this revelation, Theodore is “transformed at once into the *man of sorrows!*” (258). This final transformation is the quintessence of the psychological spiraling that has taken place throughout the novel: the reader’s questions are answered unequivocally, but the answers are a lie. In this scene Brown issues a challenge to his readers to determine for themselves the moral.

This opportunity arrives first in the recognition of the irony of Wieland’s reaction. The irony is that in accepting the voice’s declaration that he “acted in consequence of insane perceptions” Wieland has once again uncritically accepted the authority of the voice, and furthermore he has proved that the insanity does not lie in his perception. There was nothing wrong with Wieland’s hearing, but in his ideology: the fact that he could only ever accept

“confirmations” of his faith, that he had not even a moment’s doubt as to this being the real voice of God (28). Clara acknowledges this, in saying, “He reflected not that credit should be as reasonably denied to the last, as to any former intimation, that one might as justly be ascribed to erring or diseased senses as the other” (258). This is the tragedy of Wieland’s situation. His reliance on his senses does not allow him to be skeptical of his perception. Perception is all that Wieland has to construct an ideology, all he can use to order his world. If his senses are mistaken, his whole world order collapses; this coherence is what Carwin’s final speech to Wieland destroys. What the reader can see that Wieland cannot is that this moment actually proves the *opposite* of Carwin’s claim. Wieland’s perception is just fine because there is in fact a human voice speaking to him: it is in his judgment, his ideology that there resides a problem. Remember that Althusser defines ideology in this way:

...it is not ... their real world, that ‘men’ ‘represent to themselves’ in ideology, but above all it is their relation to [the real world] which is at the center of every ideological, i.e. imaginary, representation of the real world. It is this relation that contains the ‘cause’ which has to explain the imaginary distortion of the ideological representation of the real world. (38)

The structure of ideology places a man’s relation to the world at the center of his representation of his world, and Althusser claims this relation as the reason for the distortions that make a person’s ideology different from reality. Why do men need to imagine their relation to their real conditions of existence? To give purpose to their actions. To create order in their universe. In *Wieland*, Theodore has made his relation to the world that of a divine tool to carry out God’s will, and this relation has made him susceptible to misrecognizing the communication

of God's will in his eagerness to carry out his (imaginary) purpose. What has happened when Wieland is answered in the affirmative that "he had acted in consequence of insane perceptions" is that he can see, in part, his real relation to the world (Brown 258). He has seen that he was not in fact carrying out the divine will, but that he was duped into murder. Hitherto this instance, Wieland was confident in his virtue, because he believed that he had sacrificed his family as an act of obedience to God. Clara says that the revelation that he had not acted in accordance with God's will—that he had not even *heard* God's voice—effaces the virtue that was inherent in his misguided "preference of supreme good, and [his] boundless energy of duty" (258). The knowledge that he has committed a crime, instead of an honorable and selfless act, destroys Wieland completely, and once he is disillusioned to this reality, the only action left for him is self-destruction.

The real tragedy of this story is that Wieland is never "restored to just perception" because the only way to convince him that he was mistaken in killing his family members is to use the same method that prompted him to it in the first place (252). Wieland is still uncritical of the voice which informs him that his "senses have misled [him] to commit these acts" (257). Clara says that he "reflected not that credit should be as reasonably denied to the last, as to any former intimation; that one might as justly be ascribed to erring or diseased senses as the other" (258). It is in fact extremely ironic that Wieland is only willing to accept that "he had acted in consequence of insane perceptions" if he is told so by the same authority that he believed desired such an action in the first place. Clara also points to the irony that Wieland is not aware that "his

motives had lost none of their claims to the homage of mankind” (258). Instead of being undeceived as to the real events, Wieland is again made the “dupe of human imposture” (211).⁹

At the end of the novel, Clara provides a single moral: “If Wieland had framed juster notions of moral duty and of the divine attributes...the double-tongued deceiver would have been baffled and repelled” (273). However, “the circumstances of the plot subvert [this] superficial moral” in a variety of ways (Berthoff 48). Most importantly, it was established at the beginning that Wieland was obsessively determined to “examine the ground of his belief, to settle the relation between motives and actions, the criterion of merit, and the kinds and properties of evidence” (Brown 26). He could not have established “juster notions of...the divine attributes” under the circumstances (273). In addition, Clara had already realized during her unsuccessful attempt to convince Pleyel of her innocence that “Carwin had constructed his plot in a manner suited to the characters of those whom he had selected for his victims” (152). In that moment, she realized “that the convictions of Pleyel were immutable” (152). How much truer is this when applied to Wieland’s situation, where the stakes are so much higher?

Conclusion

One of the most haunting issues in this book is the question of Wieland’s virtue. He claims that he heard the voice of God telling him to do something. According to Althusser, if Wieland freely accepts the ideas that his perception inspires in him, it would be wicked of him not to act upon those ideas. In a sick and savage way, Wieland proves his faith through his

⁹ This statement rests on an interpretation of Carwin as the prompter of Wieland’s murders. For a well-reasoned argument to this effect, see Laura Korobkin, “Murder by Madman: Criminal Responsibility, Law, and Judgment in *Wieland*,” *American Literature* 72.4 (2000): 721-750.

obedience; he proves that his actions are the direct result of his beliefs, and that his will is to obey the will of God, as it is communicated to him by his senses. As savage as his actions are, Clara seems to believe along with Wieland that his sacrifice is at least noble in his intentions. Near the end of the novel, during her final meeting with her brother, she says, “his motives had lost none of their claims to the homage of mankind” (258). She in fact describes him as “a brother thus supreme in misery; thus towering in virtue!” (250). The only reason for Clara’s bizarre characterization of her homicidal brother is if she defines virtue as obedience to one’s belief, however inconceivable or barbaric.

The question of Wieland’s virtue is the issue that Brown leaves ambiguous at the end of the novel. He has exposed the “moral constitution of man” to be ideologically based and ideology defines morality as the inscription of one’s ideas into his material practice. The morality of a person’s action is therefore no longer based on a system of absolute right and wrong but whether or not he acted according to his system of beliefs. By this definition Wieland is virtuous. Brown is writing in a time when Washington’s new ‘American ideology is taking hold, and his tale was designed to make his audience recoil against this definition of morality thereby casting suspicion on the possible outcomes of the new ‘American’ ISA.

Wieland and Pleyel, who both began the novel as two well-educated, Enlightened gentleman saw their lives destroyed by their own hand, in Wieland’s case quite literally. Their ideologies presented them with a distorted view of the world and their place in it, and without the ability to see the reality before them, they were led into disaster. In Pleyel’s case, the disaster was not as horrifying, nor was it irreparable: Clara mentions in the epilogue that Carwin and Pleyel met, and she says, “explanations took place which restored me at once to the good opinion of the latter” (266). This reconciliation may superficially appear to be a political statement on

Brown's part about the relative superiority of one system of belief over another; however, the reunification of Clara and Pleyel is suspicious both because "there is no talk of evidence, hearing, judgment, or verdict," all terms that had defined and shaped the plot from the very beginning, and because the conciliation takes place in Europe, outside of America (Korobkin 742). Pleyel and Clara only escape the troubles of their past by leaving America and its ideological systems forever: Clara says that "Montpellier [France]...will henceforth, I believe, be our permanent abode" (Brown 267). Wieland's fate on the other hand, is that he is the agent of his own and his family's destruction, a fate that Brown reserved for the 'ideal' American republican citizen. The tragedy of Brown's novel does not result from the political ramifications of his main character's ideology, but from the nature of ideology itself: the way it distorts a person's relationship to the world, and its definition of obedience—willfully blind obedience—as virtue. The events of the novel, and the causes of the events of the novel reflect on Washington's Farewell Address because it casts doubt on the benefit of a unifying ideology that attempts to resolve philosophical conflict through incorporation.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined two works that were important in the ideological debates in the critical period of America's founding. First, The Farewell Address was shown to be an attempt on Washington's part to introduce a new national ideology for a new and fragile nation. This ideology would unify the citizens in obedience to the Constitution, thereby insuring the stability of the country. In the second chapter, I showed that the demise of Brown's main character, Wieland, was due to his religious and intellectual ideology, which demanded obedience, whatever the task and whatever the cost. Wieland's commitment to inventing a system that explained all the facts of his world and his relationship to that world in the end allowed—indeed required—him to commit murder. Wieland's downfall, and to a lesser extent Pleyel's betrayal of Clara, display Brown's belief in the dangerous irrationality that underlies “the moral constitution of man” (Brown 3). Brown's novel casts a sinister light on the rhetoric of the Farewell Address by making Wieland's ideology parallel to that of the Address: Washington's Farewell Address attempted to create an ideology which absorbed the habits and beliefs of older republican ideologies and tied them to the U.S. Constitution. This ideology disguised the facts of their real world by presenting them with new obviousnesses and created for them an imaginary relationship to each other, and to the Constitution. Washington felt that this ideology would soothe some of the debate that had gripped the country during his administration. Both Washington's Farewell Address and *Wieland* are meta-political documents, concerned more with the fundamental principles of republican ideology than with the specific party debates that dominated the 1790s.

It is an understatement to say that the stability of the nation was fearfully in question during the 1790s, and this instability can be, I argue, directly tied to the ideological

fragmentation of the period. The Republican ideology that had spurred the writing of the state constitutions in the 1770s and 80s and the Articles of Confederation had splintered with ratification of the U.S. Constitution because the Constitution legitimized a powerful central government that had no place in the republican ideologies of the past. The ideals of the American Revolution were drowning in the political upheaval, and Washington needed to restore hope in the republican system. To accomplish this task, he had to redefine republicanism to support the Constitution.

Washington's ideas and advice comprised a new ideology that was developed for the people of his time. He encouraged the precepts of classical Republican ideology, such as the encouragement of virtue and religion, because they gave a feeling of continuity with the past, and because these habits inculcated obedience in the people in their private lives, which would make them predisposed to obedience in their civic lives. He also encouraged watchfulness in the people as a way to acknowledge anti-federalist fears of a power hungry bureaucracy and bring them on board with the new 'American' identity. Unlike Althusser, I am not proposing that Washington sought the total submission of the populace, but that in an era so tortured by strife, he wanted to establish peace, and the most effective way to do this was to unify the people in their political beliefs.

Washington believed that the Constitution should be the foundation of the people's unity and in order to establish it as such, he had to convince the people that their liberties were protected by the Constitution, and that there was no place left for rebellion of any kind. His focus on the importance and truth of this statement seems superfluous today only because Washington succeeded in establishing the sacrilege of the Constitution in the American consciousness. Uniformity of opinion, if only on this one topic, would serve as a step toward a

decrease in the baneful factions that were proving so problematic in the founding period.

Matthew Spalding says Washington believed that “party spirit stirred up individual passions and overpowered man’s reasons, bringing out the worst aspects of popular government. In its worst form, excessive party spirit distracted the government, agitated the community, fomented riots and insurrections, and opened the door to foreign influence and corruption” (68). Washington’s rhetoric is calming and commanding; it is a warning as well as a reassurance. He says, “I dare not hope [these counsels] will make the strong and lasting impression, I could wish—, that they will controul [sic] the usual current of passions, or prevent our Nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of Nations” (Farewell Address 29). In this passage he reminds the reader of the decline that has “marked the destiny of Nations” as a real possibility for America if they do not heed his advice, but he also says that his counsel provides an answer as to how his fellow-citizens may enjoy the liberty which they have fought so hard to gain (29). The answer is moderation of party spirit, unity, and protection and obedience to the constitution.

On the other side of this ideological answer is the end of the novel *Wieland*, at which point the reader is left questioning everything, including a neatly packaged ‘American’ ideology like the one that Washington provides. The conversation between these two pieces is not about public policy or even about forms of government, but the operation of ideology, both on an individual and on a national scale. Washington attempts to create a national ISA with the cohesive power to bind the citizens of the different states in their allegiance to it, while Brown shows the possible destruction that may result when individuals attempt to live out the kind of synthesized ideology that The Farewell Address displays. Both documents display fears of different sorts. Washington battles the fears of national chaos and disunity by channeling it into

habits and beliefs that are supposed to ward off this doom; Brown counters with a novel that shows that there may be more to fear in living in ideology than in living in disarray.

The operation of ideology in the formation of the American republic is not a widely explored topic in post-revolutionary research. Much of the research focuses on the politics of the era, thereby overlooking the fact that much of what they label 'political' is at least partially concerned with meta-politics. This view of the time accords with accounts of 18th-century American culture as a single thing, comprising the political, social, economic, and religious lives of its people. An acknowledgement of how much of the literature of this time was devoted to the discussion of the formation, operation, and effects of political ideologies will enhance our understanding of the real concerns and fears of the founding generation. A better understanding of the scope of meta-political works will better explain the true extent of the fears of our fathers.

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