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Spaces of Desire in Charles Brockden Brown's Edgar Huntly

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Spaces of Desire in Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly*

by

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A Thesis

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#Lehigh English #ilovemaps

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ABSTRACT

I begin my analysis of *Edgar Huntly* by exploring the many moments in the novel that indicate Edgar's familiarity with the landscape, as well as his geographic and cartographic education and skills. Once I have established the presence of Edgar's geographic knowledge, I examine Edgar's potential motivations, including his homoerotic desire for Clithero, for abstracting the landscape into a metaphor for his inner turmoil. This is achieved through his purposeful confusion of the landscape of Norwalk and his attempts to lose himself within that space. Despite these efforts, the conclusion of the novel portrays Edgar abandoning his attempts to engage in an unmediated, sympathetic, homoerotic relationship with Clithero. Instead, Edgar re-assimilates himself into the social space of Solebury, symbolized by his tutor and surrogate father Sarsefield. Thus, for Brown, abstract space and cartographic practices work to stifle alternatives for male homoeroticism. However, as seen through the existence of Norwalk, these spaces of alternative desire prevail even within the controlled, settled space behind the frontier. Within the novel, Brown takes care to highlight that Norwalk is in fact to the east of Inglefield's home rather than the west, which is the direction of the unsettled frontier. Thus, unchartered wilderness exists behind the frontier and within the settled and privatized space of colonial America. Through his exploration of the homoerotic and subversive potential of the space of Norwalk, Brown undermines Jefferson's attempts to create a heteronormative society through his carefully mediated production of Cartesian social space. Brown's gothic space emerges and throws off the grid of heteronormativity so carefully imposed over the landscape.

Introduction

Charles Brockden Brown's novel, *Edgar Huntly; or Memoirs of a Sleepwalker*, challenges Jefferson's democratic geography, most evident in Edgar's purposeful confusion of the Pennsylvania landscape, which Jefferson labored to organize and control. I argue that Edgar is propelled to confuse the landscape and flirt with "madness" as a result of his struggles to understand his transgressive desire for Clithero. Since same-sex desire has no place in social space, it cannot be located within the Cartesian grid of American civilization (Jefferson's geographic vision). Edgar must remove himself from abstract social space and lose himself in the wilderness of Norwalk in order to experience an intimate, homoerotic interaction with Clithero. In attempting to understand his desire through his abstraction of uncharted, uncontrolled space, Edgar takes what space theorist Henri Lefebvre describes as the "*salto mortale*" into the abyss that divides mental space and real space. By operating within the untheorized gap between real space and mental space, Edgar believes he will be able to extricate himself from hegemonic society and occupy a space entirely separate from social practice. However, as his constant awareness of property and human habitation indicates, Edgar remains ambivalent regarding whether he truly desires to lose himself within the wilderness.

Edgar begins his sensational journey through the wilderness immediately following the reduction of his inheritance, which already did not include property because of his parents' deaths. In addition to his dispossession as a result of his loss of private property, Edgar ends up feeling dispossessed of his very self due to his desire for,

and eventual doubling of, Clithero. The gap between wilderness and private property, embodied by Norwalk, proves to be a productive space in *Edgar Huntly*, one which combats Edgar's relational dispossession because of its status as a space in which unmediated relationships between men can occur. Both Elizabeth Jane Wall Hinds and George Toles also argue that Edgar's loss of property and failure to achieve the status of a landed gentleman motivate his pursuit of Clithero into the wilderness. Most relevant to my argument, Toles asserts that Edgar pursues Clithero as a model for an unmediated interaction with the landscape: "He can truly encounter the world only at the point of being cut off from it, in the interval between possession and loss" (135). Edgar pursues Clithero into the gap between property and dispossession. I extend this analysis to include the potential for transgressive homoerotic manifestations of desire within this gap between mediated and unmediated space, or private property and wilderness.

Norwalk's potential to house homoerotic desires and encounters directly undermines Jefferson's attempt to control the American landscape and its inhabitants through his production of democratic space. Within his portrayal of Norwalk, Brown displays the possibilities for the transgression of social conventions within the unmapped or improperly mapped spaces of the American landscape. In a useful contextualization and analysis of the novel, Hsuan Hsu provides an account of Jefferson's motivations and ideals, simultaneously highlighting Brown's critiques of Jefferson's geographic practices.¹ Hsu defines democratic space as Jefferson conceives it: "Democratic space, imagined as a continually expanding grid of equivalent and self-sufficient cells, provided

¹ For more on the relationship between Jefferson and Brown, see Martin Brückner's *The Geographic Revolution in Early America* and Stefan L. Brandt's "Exploring the 'Heart of the Wilderness': Cultural Self-Fashioning and the Aesthetics of the Body in Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker*."

a self-legitimizing mechanism for first representing new colonial territories as vacant and subsequently mapping and incorporating these territories as new national possessions” (29). Such practices, Hsu argues, erase the inhabitants of the landscape, meaning both the natives whose land is stripped from them and the colonizers who occupy this newly obtained land. During an analysis of another antebellum novel, Mary Unger highlights the subversive spaces that thrive despite Jefferson’s production of democratic space, specifically noting the depiction of unmappable spaces within antebellum gothic novels. A similar phenomenon unfolds in *Edgar Huntly* in which Brown depicts Edgar repeatedly being lost in order to highlight the shortcomings of Cartesian geographic practices, thus undermining Jefferson’s vision.

The specific transgressive potential of these spaces consists of the possibility for relationships and interactions that do not conform to heteronormative standards. In arguing that Edgar enters this space in order to understand his desire for Clithero, I align myself with other critics who have interpreted Edgar’s and Clithero’s relationship as Brown’s representation of an alternative social order which allows for homoerotic relationships between men. Most notably, Stephen Shapiro proposes that *Edgar Huntly* attempts to create a language for male homoeroticism. According to Shapiro, Brown employs sleep-walking to indicate Edgar’s and Clithero’s psychological removal from heteronormative subjectivity. Shapiro further reads Brown’s description of the landscape of Norwalk as a space of potential for alternative relationships between men: “its sylvan displacement also fashions the forest as an autonomous zone, no longer simply marginal

to the mainstream city but now radically separated from it as an erotic sanctuary” (229).² I resist Shapiro’s reading here in characterizing Norwalk as an “erotic sanctuary” completely removed from the influences of the city. The paths, roads, and other signs of human habitation indicate that parts of Norwalk are put to use by society and thus remain subject to social practices.

The landscape of Norwalk serves as the metaphorical stage for Edgar’s grappling with his sexual identity and uncertain status within society. Although I argue that Edgar abstracts the landscape in order to symbolize his inner confusion, I still consider the landscape of Norwalk to be a representation of real space. In my insistence on Brown’s geographic centeredness in the novel, I depart from many other critics who argue that Norwalk is an imagined space or a projection of Edgar’s mind. These readings do not engage with Lefebvre’s challenge to explore the gap between real and mental space, but merely accept that real space is a metaphor for the human mind. Specifically, Richard F. Fleck argues that Brown uses the landscape as merely a representation of Edgar’s mind. Stefan L. Brandt extends this reading further in arguing that the landscape of Norwalk is actually an imaginary rather than real space: “The landscape in *Edgar Huntly* functions not so much as an actual geographic location, but rather as a metaphor for activities in the

² For more on the emergence of Edgar’s unconscious and the unsettling effects these moments have in the novel, see: Jochen Achilles’s “Composite (Dis)Order: Cultural Identity in *Wieland*, *Edgar Huntly*, and *Arthur Gordon Pym*,” in which she highlights Brown’s ambivalence regarding the boundaries between individual and social identity formation; Beverly R. Voloshin’s “*Edgar Huntly* and the Coherence of the Self,” in which she argues that Brown writes *Edgar Huntly* in order to explore “what happens in such gaps in consciousness” which decenter the self (265); and Leonard Cassuto’s “[Un]Consciousness Itself Is the Malady’: *Edgar Huntly* and the Discourse of the Other,” in which he claims that a two-fold guilt drives Edgar into the wilderness: survivor’s guilt for not being home when the Native Americans invaded and killed his parents, as well as guilt for having his repressed Oedipal fantasies fulfilled (121).

cultural and individual unconscious” (144). Brandt goes on to claim that Brown’s “wilderness is modeled here as an ‘abstract space’ in the Lefebvrian sense, full of emotions and latent aggression” (144). I take issue with both of these readings as they neglect to treat the Pennsylvania landscape as real space, a geographic space within which Brown intentionally and pointedly situates his novel.

My argument hinges upon the distinction between Solebury as an abstract social space and Norwalk as an unmediated, peripheral space. Despite Brandt’s reference to Lefebvre quoted above, I argue that he misuses the term “abstract space” within his article. In my interpretation, Norwalk serves as a space almost free from social conventions and impositions in which Edgar can engage in an unmediated relationship with Clithero. Thus, Norwalk cannot be an abstract space since Edgar’s same-sex desire subverts the homogeneity imposed onto space through abstraction. According to Lefebvre, abstract space is not a space of emotion, but one “of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism” which “erases distinctions, as much those which derive from nature and (historical) time as those which originate in the body (age, sex, ethnicity)” (57, 49). In fact, nature has no place within abstract space as “lived experience is crushed, vanquished by what is ‘conceived of’” (51). In direct contrast to this definition, Norwalk is a natural space in which Edgar’s experience on the ground often subverts any attempts at mapping as a form of abstraction.

Edgar’s failure to translate his abstract understanding of Norwalk into his lived experience of navigating through the wilderness results from his desire for an unmediated interaction with the landscape. In other words, Edgar purposely neglects his geographic education in favor of plunging heedlessly into the wilderness in pursuit of Clithero. I

propose that Edgar confuses the landscape in his attempt to understand his transgressive desire for Clithero, which he often represents as madness. By interpreting the wilderness as unnavigable, Edgar is able to freely engage with the unexplored aspects of his own mind and desires while he blindly plunges through Norwalk. My argument that Edgar intentionally neglects to locate himself within the geography of Norwalk indicates a departure from Martin Brückner's interpretation of *Edgar Huntly* as Brown's critique of geographic educational practices. My argument aligns with Brückner's when he states: "Ultimately, the novel reveals the psychological consequences of the geographically trained, republican-minded citizen who by wandering off the pages of the geographic narrative moves outside the nation and its controlled spatial system" (197). However, my analysis contradicts Brückner's claim that Edgar becomes lost within Norwalk because of his faulty geographic education. Brückner argues that as a result of his liberal education, Edgar "has learned to read the world, not geographically, but novelistically or poetically" (199). In contrast, I argue that Edgar's geographic education is ample and significant, resulting in cartographic skills and a geographic understanding of the landscape that extends beyond an aesthetic appreciation for nature. As I will demonstrate below, Edgar's understanding of geography and familiarity with the landscape are ample and should be sufficient for his successful navigation through Norwalk.

I begin my analysis of *Edgar Huntly* by exploring the many moments in the novel that indicate Edgar's familiarity with the landscape, as well as his geographic and cartographic education and skills. Once I have established the presence of Edgar's geographic knowledge, I examine Edgar's potential motivations, including his homoerotic desire for Clithero, for abstracting the landscape into a metaphor for his inner

turmoil. This is achieved through his purposeful confusion of the landscape of Norwalk and his attempts to lose himself within that space. Despite these efforts, the conclusion of the novel portrays Edgar abandoning his attempts to engage in an unmediated, sympathetic, homoerotic relationship with Clithero. Instead, Edgar re-assimilates himself into the social space of Solebury, symbolized by his tutor and surrogate father Sarsefield. Thus, for Brown, abstract space and cartographic practices work to stifle alternatives for male homoeroticism. However, as seen through the existence of Norwalk, these spaces of alternative desire prevail even within the controlled, settled space behind the frontier.

Edgar's Familiarity with the Landscape

Although Edgar persistently claims that he is lost within Norwalk, Brown makes Edgar's familiarity with the landscape evident within the first pages of the novel. When searching for evidence regarding Waldegrave's murder, Edgar relates his extensive scouring of the surrounding areas including the "pits and hollows" of the "neighboring groves and precipices" (7). Not only does he explore the landscape himself, but he "pored over books" (7) relating to the surrounding areas. The placement of this statement within Edgar's reflections concerning his efforts to discover Waldegrave's murderer implies that the books are in fact geographical tools of some kind, whether textbooks, atlases, or gazetteers. As a result of his readings and explorations, Edgar asserts: "I was familiar with the way, though trackless and intricate" (8). Thus, Edgar employs his tools and faculties to successfully attain an intimate knowledge of the landscape and the geography of Norwalk, Solebury, and the surrounding areas. Brown repeats the language used here, namely "trackless" and "intricate," later in the novel when describing the landscape of Norwalk when Edgar is supposedly lost within it. However, the repetition

of this language does not signify Edgar's recognition that he remains within a landscape which he knows intimately.

The effectiveness of Edgar's geographic education is most apparent in the novel through his privileging of a cartographic gaze, which complements and displays the high quality of his surveying skills.³ As a youth, Edgar relished occupying spaces which offered expansive views of the landscape, frequenting places that provide the means for him to survey the topography of that landscape. Edgar's cartographic gaze manifests itself on multiple occasions in the novel, moments which clearly illustrate his surveying skills and showcase his geographic, and especially cartographic, education. As soon as he emerges from the labyrinthine cavern for the first time, Edgar makes efforts to orient himself through his survey of the area from a summit. His gaze moves over the "extensive scene ... My station, also, was higher, and the limits of my view, consequently more ample than any which I had hitherto enjoyed" (70). In the subsequent paragraphs, Edgar engages in a methodological inspection of the scene, verbally drawing a map of the space for readers. Such a practice highlights not only his surveying skills, but his geographic education through his confidence in his ability to orient himself within the geography of Norwalk and the surrounding areas. His confidence directly stems from his capacity to accurately draw a mental map of the landscape, a practice which provides him with a particular type of knowledge of the area. Later in the novel, Edgar's surveying

³ Hsu also highlights scenes in which Edgar encounters "vast uncharted areas" in the novel, indicating that these moments result in "a sense of disorientation as well as exhilaration in the conquest of open space" (35). However, Hsu argues that Edgar cannot successfully translate his cartographic knowledge into an ability to navigate Norwalk, events which Hsu interprets as Brown's critique of Jefferson's vision for the production of abstract social space. I take this argument further, indicating that Edgar chooses not to employ his cartographic understanding when he loses himself within the landscape.

skills are clearly evident when he contemplates whether or not to leap into the water: “I made myself acquainted, at a glance, with the position of surrounding objects” (147). Such a rapid, and successful, assessment of the landscape and the water displays not only confidence, but expert skill. As evidenced through these moments of mental mapping, Edgar seems to believe that if he is able to hold a picture or map of an area within his mind, he will be able to navigate through the landscape, whether or not it is unknown.

Edgar’s successful survey of the landscape hinges upon the presence of privatized space within the area. Often, Edgar’s belief that he is lost in Norwalk is founded on the fact that he cannot identify any private property within the surrounding landscape. Rather than searching for recognizable natural occurrences or landmarks, Edgar simply searches for claimed and settled land in order to reorient himself on his mental map of the region. According to Edgar, the wilderness of Norwalk exists to serve as a connection between farms and settlements, with paths and roads crossing through the otherwise “trackless wilderness” (135). Although roads are not necessarily private property, they still serve as symbols of settlement and ownership of the landscape. By specifically calling the wilderness “trackless,” Brown highlights the binary he draws between wilderness and private property. As Hsu’s analysis demonstrates, early American maps depict property rather than attempt to accurately represent real space. By describing Edgar as entirely reliant on property in order to orient himself within the landscape, Brown undermines the usefulness of these maps of private property. He challenges the sole reliance on maps and other cartographic tools typical of early American geographic subjectivity which privilege property over representations of the topography of the area. When Edgar consciously searches only for property or signs of human habitation, he

frequently does not notice or ignores details and aspects of the landscape itself that are familiar to him as a result of his previous explorations.

In addition to Edgar's demonstrated cartographic and surveying abilities and his reliance on these skills to proceed through the landscape, Brown draws attention to Edgar's frequent rambles throughout Norwalk and the surrounding areas earlier in his life. As a result of these expeditions, Edgar admits that his knowledge of the landscape is quite thorough and intimate. Thus, not only does he possess a topographical understanding of the region, but he amasses a wealth of familiarity with the lived experience of traversing the landscape and navigating his way through it on the ground. Upon his first visit to the cavern, Edgar calls attention to his prior journeys throughout the landscape: "The desert tract called Norwalk, which I have often mentioned to you, my curiosity had formerly induced me to traverse in various directions" (15). By describing the driving force behind his prior journeys as curiosity, Edgar implies that he sought to satisfy this curiosity with knowledge or specific answers in regards to the geography and the details of the area. Not only does Edgar pursue these paths in multiple directions in order to form a clear picture of the characteristics of the area, but he purposely seeks out the most rugged, solitary, and unexplored spaces within Norwalk: "I trod, without caution, the ruggedest and most solitary haunts" (84). Edgar's fearless plunging into these "haunts" clearly illustrates his confidence in his navigation abilities, as well as his familiarity with the landscape. Since he rejects caution in these rambles, Edgar highlights his sense of belonging within the region.

As reliable confirmation that Edgar's knowledge of Norwalk is substantial, Brown elaborates regarding Sarsefield's familiarity with Norwalk and Solebury. Further,

Brown indicates that Sarsefield is only familiar with the landscape as a result of his rambles with Edgar. Unlike Edgar, Sarsefield easily navigates the landscape throughout the book and never appears to be lost even when his path overlaps Edgar's. While darkness and night seem to be obstructions for Edgar when locating himself geographically, Sarsefield has no problem recognizing Norwalk at night: "It was night before I entered the Norwalk path, but my ancient rambles with you made me familiar with it, and I was not affraid [*sic*] of being obstructed or bewildered" (164). Just as Edgar had journeyed into Norwalk without caution in the past, so does Sarsefield continue through Norwalk fearlessly despite night's having fallen. As Sarsefield recounts his story to Edgar, he highlights quite a few specific moments when he navigates the landscape easily while Edgar claims to be hopelessly lost. Most notably, Sarsefield finds and follows the path Edgar was supposed to take, based on his hostess's instructions, without difficulty: "I followed you in the path you were said to have taken" (171). However, as I will demonstrate below, Edgar does not accurately follow that path, so Sarsefield fails to locate Edgar along it.

As Edgar's guide through Norwalk, Sarsefield represents an even more important figure, symbolizing a specific form of interacting with the landscape and with Edgar in a manner which allows for a socially condoned intimacy between men. Edgar explicitly associates Sarsefield with reason, morality, and proper social conventions or interactions: "When Sarsefield came among us, I became his favourite scholar and the companion of all his pedestrian excursions . . . to carry on more effectually that species of instruction which he had adopted with regard to me, and which chiefly consisted in moralizing narratives or synthetical reasonings" (67). Not only do Edgar and Sarsefield explore the

landscape of Norwalk together, identifying plants and minerals and constructing mental maps of the area, but they also hold theoretical and moral discussions. As Edgar's "parent and fosterer of my mind, the companion and instructor of my youth," Sarsefield grooms Edgar to become a respectable member of hegemonic society and a proper inhabitant of the controlled social space of Solebury (159). Although considerable affection exists between the two, it is always expressed in forms that are proper, controlled, and contained, rather than overflowing sympathies and homoeroticism like those Edgar desires to experience with Clithero.

Leaving aside the question of Sarsefield's familiarity with and mediation of the space of Norwalk for now, Brown indicates Edgar's familiarity with the region through carefully placed moments in which Edgar admits to possessing a knowledge of the landscape even while claiming to be entirely lost. The first time Edgar follows Clithero to the mouth of the cavern, Edgar describes the journey as circuitous, labyrinthine, and disorienting. Although he loses track of his exact location within the geography or map of the landscape, Edgar acknowledges hints of the familiar during his fearless plunging into the "deepest thickets" and the "darkness" in pursuit of Clithero: "This vale, though I had never before viewed it by the glimpses of the moon, suggested the belief that I had visited it before" (15). In this moment, Edgar does not openly admit to possessing prior knowledge of the space, veiling this understanding behind suggestions and darkness. Unlike Sarsefield, Edgar claims to be unable to identify spaces definitively with which he is familiar once night has fallen.

In addition to Edgar's nagging feelings of familiarity, he unhesitatingly navigates his way back from the cavern: "It was easy to find my way out of this wilderness by

going forward in one direction, regardless of impediments and cross-paths” (16). This approach only succeeds here, although Edgar employs it a few other times in the novel. At this point, Edgar has not yet spoken to Clithero, meaning that he still desires to reside within social space and has not yet immersed himself into the wilderness and into the depths of his desire for Clithero. Once this immersion has occurred, Edgar wants to remain lost, so he adheres to a straight line in order to plunge himself deeper into the wilderness. On his way to Deb’s hut, Edgar employs this technique: “In a wilderness like this, my only hope was to light on obscure paths, made by cattle. Meanwhile I endeavoured to adhere to one line, and to burst through the vexatious obstacles which encumbered our way” (122). Here, he relies not on his own geographic knowledge of the landscape, but on society’s cartographic logic which creates paths and roads in order to navigate the landscape. Edgar claims he hopes that by adhering to one direction, he will eventually find a road or path which will lead him and the girl he rescued to safe refuge within social space. Edgar indeed finds shelter, although Deb’s hut exists in the gap between mediated and unmediated space rather than safely nestled within controlled social space, indicating that he has not yet returned to abstract social space despite locating human habitation.

As the novel progresses, these moments of Edgar’s covertly acknowledged grasp of the landscape despite claiming to be lost becomes even more clear. After emerging from the cavern and attempting for some time to locate himself geographically but failing to do so, Edgar demonstrates a particular knowledge of the landscape and geography of the region: “Along this verge lay the only road by which I could reach the water and by which I could escape” (119). However, in the very next moment, Edgar claims to be

“unacquainted with the way” (119). If he truly does not know where he is or how to navigate the area, I question Edgar’s conviction that the road before him provides him with the *only* means for escape. In a similar moment, Edgar possesses inexplicable knowledge of the ford into which he jumps: “I knew the nature and dimensions of this ford. I knew that, at a few yards from the rock, the channel was of great depth. To leap into it, in this place, was a less dangerous exploit, than at the spot where I had formerly been tempted to leap” (145). Throughout this scene, Edgar insists that he has ventured into land with which he is unfamiliar and that he is entirely lost. The strategy that he employs before leaping into the water consists of continued motion westward with the hope that he will find a familiar road. Edgar in fact leaps over this road into the water from a place which Sarsefield later describes as a spot that “could not be found but by those who were accustomed to traverse it” (172-173). Although Sarsefield maintains his belief that Edgar was unacquainted with the area, his narrative, particularly this statement, undermines that assertion. Edgar’s knowledge of Norwalk and the surrounding areas is indeed intimate and abundant.

Edgar’s Purposeful Confusion of the Landscape: Exploring the Gap between Real and Mental Space

As substantiated by the evidence above, Edgar possesses quite an adequate knowledge of the landscape in which he loses himself throughout the novel. Since such knowledge is present, I question Edgar’s repeated claims to being lost and propose instead that he intentionally loses himself within Norwalk. Through an analysis of Edgar’s moments of purposeful confusion of the landscape and his geographic location, I explore how Brown plays within the gap between real and metaphorical mental space

through both Edgar and sometimes Clithero, as well as his potential motivations for doing so. By abstracting real space into a symbol for his mental state, Edgar reduces and conflates real space with his thoughts and feelings, creating a separation between his body and the space he inhabits. Often, Edgar's and Clithero's thoughts obscure real space through their understandings of their minds as spaces, leaving them removed from the landscape and incapable of moving successfully through it. In this section, I argue that Edgar is propelled to confuse the landscape in order to escape the confines of controlled social space which do not allow for the type of intimate relationship he desires to have with Clithero.

In order to fully define this gap between real and mental space, I turn to the theory of Henri Lefebvre, presented in *The Production of Space*, regarding the production of space as an exercise of social power and articulation of social relations. Lefebvre criticizes the casual and unreflective use of the term "space" to describe so many aspects of social relations and human existence. In particular, Lefebvre notes the characterization of consciousness as "mental space," for which no clear theory or account has ever been articulated which draws space and the mind together (3). Lefebvre argues that this characterization of thought and consciousness as *space*, free from the influence of ideology, is truly a fantasy and quite problematic: "The quasi-logical presupposition of an identity between mental space (the space of the philosophers and epistemologists) and real space creates an abyss between the mental sphere on one side and the physical and social spheres on the other" (6). Edgar takes what Lefebvre describes as the "*salto mortale*" into this abyss which divides mental space and real space in his attempt to negotiate consciousness through his abstraction of landscape to reflect his desire.

Lefebvre argues that space itself is reduced “to the status of a *message*, and the inhabiting of it to the status of a *reading*” (7). By turning space into language, the reality of the landscape is obscured in abstraction. In his pursuit of Clithero into the “wilderness” and his attempt to negotiate and understand his desire for Clithero, Edgar reduces the landscape into a metaphorical reflection of his own mental state. The cavern, precipices, woods, and paths all become symbolic of the lurking madness he perceives as threatening to consume his consciousness because of his desire for Clithero.

At the initial stages of Edgar’s attempt to understand Clithero, Edgar enters the wilderness confident that he will find Clithero and be able to converse with him: “When I awoke in the morning, I hied, in fancy, to the wilderness. I saw nothing but the figure of the wanderer before me” (24). Not only does Edgar feel he can only truly engage with Clithero outside of social space and in the wilderness of Norwalk, but here Edgar conflates Clithero with that wilderness. Edgar sees “nothing but the figure” of Clithero when he enters Norwalk. As readers know from Edgar’s detailed descriptions of the geography of the region and the topographical characteristics, Norwalk is far from empty. Yet Edgar only perceives Clithero, rather than the trees, creatures, paths, and plants that surround him. For Edgar, Clithero represents the rejection of property and other symbols of social space, and the free-roaming through the wilderness that Edgar courts. Still, Edgar does not ever truly experience the wilderness in an unmediated fashion, but instead constantly mediates, interprets, divides, qualifies, and abstracts the wilderness into the status of a metaphor. Edgar’s abstraction of the landscape, as well as his use of private property as a touchstone to prevent him from entirely losing himself within Norwalk,

highlights his ambivalence regarding his decision to disorient himself geographically, which results from his fear of the destructive potential of the wilderness.

Serving as the gateway to the wilderness of Norwalk, the Elm symbolizes the a jumping off point for Edgar's exploration of his multi-faceted dispossession and deviation from social space. Edgar situates the infamous Elm, the site where Waldegrave was murdered, in relation to the nearest pieces of property: "the Elm, in the midst of a private road, on the verge of Norwalk, near the habitation of Inglefield, but three miles from my uncle's house" (8). Edgar takes pains to note that even the road that passes by the Elm is private, and highlights not only the nearest property, but the Elm's relation to his own dwelling. However, as a scene of murder and social deviance, the Elm rests on the edge of Norwalk, serving as a gateway into the uncontrolled space of the wilderness. For Edgar, the Elm is a catalyst for his pursuit of Clithero into the wilderness and his subsequent adventures. Thus, its location is essential, resting on the border between wilderness and private property, yet still defined by the real estate surrounding it. As the editors, Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro, note, the Elm echoes the Treaty Elm where William Penn signed a treaty with the Delaware Indians and founded Pennsylvania, dispossessing the Native Americans of their land while claiming ownership of the area for the Euro-American settlers (8).⁴ As the Elm symbolizes the deprivation of the Native Americans of their land, the Elm's role in Edgar's narrative consists of symbolizing a

⁴ For an alternate interpretation of the role of the Elm in the novel which emphasizes the homoerotic nature of the location, see Kate Ward Sugar's "'A Wonderful Disease': *Edgar Huntly*, Erasmus Darwin, and Revolutionary American Masculinity." Sugar argues: "Simultaneously phallic and again, mesmeric, the elm tree serves as a magnetic-rod-like force that draws men together and deepens Edgar's interest in and sentimental love for Clithero" (41).

jumping off point for Edgar's exploration of his own dispossession and deviation from social space.

In using the term dispossession here, I refer to the most recent work of Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*. Butler and Athanasiou identify the goal of their work in their "Preface": "the consideration of a poststructuralist position we both share, namely that the idea of the unitary subject serves a form of power that must be challenged and undone, signifying a style of masculinity that effaces sexual difference and enacts mastery over the domain of life" (ix). In order to begin dismantling this power which seeks to regulate people into uniform subjects, Butler and Athanasiou propose embracing the dispossession of the sovereign self while combating the unjust forms of dispossession enacted by colonizers in which people are deprived of their land, nationhood, identity, and livelihood. Butler and Athanasiou argue that all humans are dispossessed because of their status as interdependent, relational beings, and that they react to this dispossession by claiming ownership of property, including real property and their own bodies. Butler and Athanasiou echo MacPherson in characterizing this claiming of ownership as "possessive individualism," highlighting the practice of defining the self based on the ownership of property (7), a system which Edgar seems to buy into with his constant naming of the owners of the landscape and denial of the Native Americans as having a right to the land. I argue that *Edgar Huntly* proposes a third form of dispossession in addition to Butler's and Athanasiou's two forms (privative dispossession, or the oppressive dispossession that results from colonization, and relational dispossession, which results from being interdependent beings): the dislodging of the person who owns and maps the landscape. Throughout the novel,

Brown dispossesses cartographers and owners of the landscape, highlighting the frailty of relying on privatizing the landscape in order to combat relational dispossession. As a marginal figure because of his same-sex desire, Edgar embraces this third form of dispossession within his intimate interactions with Clithero inside the wilderness of Norwalk, with the Elm serving as the site at which Edgar is dislodged or dispossessed.

Following their meeting at the Elm, Edgar and Clithero almost exclusively engage in meaningful exchanges within the depths of Norwalk, outside the social space of Solebury. Edgar believes that he cannot speak freely with Clithero, except within the woods of Norwalk, which exist outside of the social space of Solebury and are thus freed from any control or the imposition of social conventions. Edgar justifies leading Clithero into the woods by claiming a desire to not be overheard: “Yes, said I, let us turn down this path, pointing at the same time, to that along which I had followed him the preceding night ... Go with me down this path. We shall be in less danger of interruption” (22). In a parallel scene, Clithero leads Edgar into the same woods in order to finally tell Edgar his Dublin story. Clithero hopes to “find some spot, where we might discourse at our leisure, and be exempt from interruption” (24). Here, Clithero consciously removes the pair of them from social space rather than Edgar. Clithero does not stop until they perceive themselves to be within “the heart of Norwalk,” where he proceeds to tell Edgar his tale (24). Edgar’s experiences with Clithero outside social space propel Edgar to completely remove himself from social space by losing himself within the wilderness. Through his immersion into Norwalk, Edgar explores his desires for a truly intimate, homoerotic relationship that he almost had with Sarsefield within Norwalk and now desires to have with Clithero.

In the novel, Clithero serves as the figure whom Edgar not only desires, but also comes to double, especially regarding his interactions with and characterizations of the landscape. Consequently, Brown first explores the confusion of trying to negotiate the untheorized gap between real and mental space through Clithero's confession. Within his narrative, Clithero freely moves between descriptions of the external world and his internal contemplations after killing Wiatte. He contrasts the state of his intended journey with the madness that accompanies his travels after killing Wiatte. Before the event, Clithero passes through the landscape consciously engaging with his cartographic understanding of Dublin and relying on his geographic knowledge:

Previously to it, I was calm, considerate, self-collected. I marked the way that I was going. Passing objects were observed. If I adverted to the series of my own reflections, my attention was not seized and fastened by them. I could disengage myself at pleasure, and could pass, without difficulty, from attention to the world within, to contemplation of that without. (52)

Before Wiatte's death, when Clithero's mental state is one of stability and calm, he navigates the controlled social space of Dublin freely and easily. As he mentally and emotionally conforms to social understandings of propriety, Clithero allows his thoughts free reign while maintaining his orientation within the outside world. Brown has Clithero describe his mind in this moment as "the world within," a choice which highlights Brown's use of the spatial metaphor when describing thoughts, feelings, and mental states. Through Clithero's voice, Brown defines his conception of mental space, which Edgar adopts in his own journeys into Norwalk.

Clithero easily balances his mental “space” and the real space through which he moves prior to Wiatte’s death. However, once he has killed Wiatte, thus disrupting social space and conventions, Clithero’s mental “world” overwhelms and obscures the real world, and the mental “world” no longer conforms to what the “real” world is:

Now my liberty, in this respect, was at an end. I was fettered, confounded, smitten with excess of thought, and laid prostrate with wonder. I no longer attended to my steps. When I emerged from my stupor, I found that I had trodden back the way which I had lately come, and had arrived within sight of the banker’s door. I checked myself, and once more turned my steps homeward. (52-53)

Symbolized by his inability to navigate his way through the city, Clithero completely detaches himself from the physical world and merely allows his body to carry him through the streets. He does not survey the surrounding area as he had been doing before, and momentarily loses himself within the familiar topography of Dublin. Like Edgar when he obsesses over Waldegrave’s murder, Clithero’s feet naturally direct him away from home and the intimate social relationships which he has threatened by killing Wiatte. Clithero believes his actions result in his ejection from social space: “I have shewn myself unworthy the society of men” (54). Because he no longer feels he has a place within the social space of Dublin, Clithero decides to remove himself to Pennsylvania.

By relocating Clithero to Philadelphia specifically, Brown directly points to Jefferson’s democratic geography and undeviating imposition of the Cartesian grid onto the landscape in order to exert dominance and order over its inhabitants. The winding

lanes of Dublin and labyrinthine paths of Norwalk have no parallels in Philadelphia, which instead consists of straight, perpendicular streets allowing for simple navigation and controlled social relations. For Clithero, however, this relocation and immersion into Pennsylvania symbolizes freedom. He feels the new landscape, and new social situation, will impose order onto his tumultuous state of mind while reflecting the unfamiliar and confusing elements of his emotional state: “The idea of abjuring my country, and flying forever from the hateful scene, partook, to my apprehension, of the vast, the boundless, and the strange” (61). Clithero adheres to the utopian impulse manifested in the idea of the “New World” which engages in the spatial fantasy of utopian communities that social relationships alter when locations are changed.

Despite Clithero’s initial settlement in Philadelphia, he quickly travels north to Solebury for work, from which he frequents Norwalk on his days off. Norwalk matches Clithero’s expectation with regards to the “New World” by providing landscape that seems boundless and strange. Further, the landscape of the areas he frequents in Norwalk provides him with a space in which he can freely engage with his torturous emotions and express his socially improper grief: “Often have I brooded over my sorrows in the recesses of that cavern. The scene is adapted to my temper. Its mountainous asperities supply me with images of desolation and seclusion, and its headlong streams lull me into temporary forgetfulness of mankind” (62). This space’s removal from the society of mankind serves as its essential element for Clithero in terms of his desire for comfort and freedom of expression. To this point, Edgar has yet to visit this particular space, at least not by the same route through the cavern that Clithero uses. However, after this moment, Edgar’s recollections of his pleasurable ramblings through Norwalk shift to echo the

language used by Clithero with regard to seeking spaces that mirror or reflect his mental state and emotions.

Whereas Edgar previously describes his journeys into Norwalk as resulting in pleasure and satisfying curiosity, after listening to Clithero, Edgar's representation of the landscape becomes much more metaphoric. Instead of simply seeking beauty, excitement, and geographic knowledge, Edgar now desires to "hold converse with the solemnities and secrecies of nature in the rude retreats of Norwalk" (66). Further, the "melancholy" spots he visits "are in unison with vacancy and solitude" (67). For Edgar, these scenes transform from scenes of beauty, to metaphorical representations of his emotions and desires. Like Clithero, Edgar seeks removal from society in order to possess the freedom to deeply engage with his thoughts and feelings. However, despite his many years of exploring Norwalk, Edgar seems not to have attained such a deep union with the landscape or such freedom from the confines of social space as Clithero describes and exhibits. Much of Edgar's previous explorations occurred in the company of his instructor Sarsefield, who prevents Edgar from truly engaging with his internal desires and struggles and instead keeps him confined to a socially-condoned interaction with the landscape, which includes mapping, surveying, identifying plant growth, and calmly appreciating beauty. By following Clithero, both geographically and mentally, Edgar delves into unexplored regions of both the landscape and his internal existence.

After telling his story, Clithero vanishes, leaving Edgar alone, unsatisfied, and desperate to commune with Clithero within the recesses he describes. In his attempts to find Clithero and save him from his potential suicide, Edgar proceeds into the very paths and caverns which Clithero described as his favorite haunts. Notably, Edgar has a

cartographic memory of the area from his previous ramblings: “I had faint remembrance of the valley, into which I descended after him, but till then I had viewed it at a distance, and supposed it impossible to reach the bottom but by leaping from a precipice of some hundred feet in height” (68). Edgar has previously perceived this landscape which he conceives of now as a representation of his desire. Descending into this valley, which he used to believe could only be accessed by leaping from a precipice, symbolizes for Edgar his recognition of the possibility of truly embracing his desire and engaging in a socially unmediated relationship between Clithero and himself. Edgar’s departure from conventional social space increases as he proceeds through the impenetrably dark cavern, and even more when he falls into the pit, catalyzed by Edgar’s attempts to intentionally lose himself within the landscape of Norwalk.

For the rest of the novel, Edgar proceeds through the landscape despite his fears of getting lost and neglects to continue to employ the cartographic and surveying skills through which he formerly engaged with Norwalk. Upon entering the cavern for the first time, Edgar makes some attempt to mentally map the cavern, although this effort is quite undermined by the fact that he chooses not to return home for a light by which to explore the cavern. Instead, he proceeds through the cavern, guided only by touch. As a result, Edgar’s mental map of the intricacies of the cavern proves much less substantial or reliable than his usual cartographic understanding of the area, which provides his geographic orientation within the landscape: “my path became more intricate and more difficult to retread in proportion as I advanced. I endeavoured to preserve a vivid conception of the way which I had already passed, and to keep the images of the left, and right-hand wall, and the gulf, in due succession in my memory” (70). However, as there

is no light by which to see, Edgar's "images" are purely mental, indicating his complete abstraction of the cavern into a metaphorical space.

By intentionally entering this cave without a light and relying solely on mental pictures created with no guide other than touch, Edgar treats the cavern as a metaphorical space which allows him to penetrate into the mysteries of mental existence beyond the thoughts and feelings of which he is consciously aware. During all of his visits to the cavern, Edgar describes the cave in terms reminiscent of the womb.⁵ On his first visit, he regards the entrance as a "cleft" through which Clithero vanishes (16). Upon his return and penetration into the cave, Edgar describes a small canal through which he must crawl, which eventually opens into an expansive, completely dark cavern. In reflecting upon his current immersion in darkness, Edgar here comments: "Intense dark is always the parent of fears" (69). These characterizations suggest that Edgar's journey through this dark, womb-like place constitutes a re-birth. After crawling through the metaphorical birth canal, navigating his way through the womb-like cavern by touch alone, and emerging in the landscape of desire inhabited by Clithero, Edgar frees himself from the social conventions imposed on him since his physical birth. However, after this initial trip through the cavern, Edgar successfully navigates his return journey and moves

⁵ Critics have offered various other interpretations of the cavern within the novel that depart from my reading of Edgar's emergence from the darkness as constituting a rebirth. Michela Vanon Alliata argues that the cavern is subversive and dangerous: "The cave, symbol of the natural, uncontaminated wilderness, is the *locus* of horror. It is here that subversive experiences are perceived in all their dangerous attraction" (127). While Vanon Alliata hints at the subversive potential of the cavern, Shapiro more explicitly interprets Edgar's journey through the cave in homoerotic terms: "Edgar's sublime sense of deviation from the 'customary paths of men' anatomizes Norwalk's intestinal entryway as an anal terrain of male-male intercourse" (228-229).

freely between this space of metaphor and freedom, and the social space of Solebury, that is until he apparently sleep-walks into the gulf within the cavern.

Although Brown strongly implies, and Sarsefield's account towards the end of the novel seemingly confirms, that Edgar sleepwalked into the pit, Edgar's final analysis of the events that transpire over the course of the novel undermines this assumption. Edgar describes his own journey: "Hurried on by phantoms too indistinct to be now recalled, I wandered from my chamber to the desert. I plunged into some unvisited cavern, and easily proceeded till I reached the edge of a pit. There my step was deceived, and I tumbled headlong from the precipice" (185). While Edgar does not recall the "phantoms" that drove him from his bed into the cavern, he certainly recalls the journey itself, indicating that he does not in fact sleepwalk into the cavern. Further, despite claiming that falling into the pit was a mistake, Edgar's ability to "easily" navigate the cavern to the edge of the pit, then his "mistaken" step which results in his fall, suggests that his fall may not have been accidental. Especially considering his earlier careful movements through the cavern and successful arrival at the other side, Edgar's capabilities to safely pass through the darkness are proven to be quite strong. In assuming that Edgar intentionally leapt into the pit, readers are left questioning his motivations. However, considering his transformation throughout his journeys after this fall, Edgar's descent into the pit symbolizes his mental plunge into the unexplored caverns of his thoughts and desires.

The moment Edgar regains consciousness within the entirely dark cavern at the bottom of the gulf signifies his complete immersion into the metaphorical mental landscape of desire. Throughout the rest of the novel, Edgar wrestles with the contrast

between the pleasure of freeing himself from social conventions and expressing his desire for a deep relationship with Clithero, and the often dangerous or terrifying realities of existing outside of social space. Already, his ability to distinguish between metaphorical mental space and real space diminishes as he describes his mental state using geographic language: “My thoughts were wildering and mazy, and though consciousness were present, it was disconnected with the loco-motive or voluntary power” (107). Just as Clithero’s internal “world” overwhelms and obscures the physical world of Dublin after killing Wiatte, Edgar’s metaphorical mental landscape threatens and temporarily obliterates his ability to physically move through the real world. Once he regains control over his body, Edgar attempts to combat his fears and mental instability by painstakingly surveying the cavern into which he has fallen. He re-engages his cartographic and surveying skills as he seeks to find a path that will lead out of the cavern.

Despite his initial efforts to regain a sense of geographic context and a cartographic understanding of the cavern, Edgar soon abandons the attempt to mentally map the cavern as he journeys out of the darkness. This moment signifies Edgar’s complete immersion into the landscape and the manifestation of his desire to lose himself within the uncontrolled space of Norwalk: “my track could not be retraced. I had frequently deviated from a straight direction for the sake of avoiding impediments. All of which I was sensible was, that I was travelling up an irregular acclivity” (114). While Edgar clearly desires to escape the impenetrable darkness of the cave, he indicates no desire to possess the ability to retrace his steps through the cave in order to return to Solebury. Unlike Clithero in Dublin who “paused on the brink of the precipice, as if to survey the depth of that phrensy that invaded me” (55), Edgar throws himself over the

precipice, both physically into the cavern and later into the water, and metaphorically into what he conceives of as madness but truly consists of his socially unacceptable desire for Clithero. Admittedly, Edgar does not make this leap without occasionally looking back and expressing a desire to return to the controlled, safe, predictable space of Solebury. He frequently makes some efforts to do so, but quickly relents in favor of further losing himself within the landscape.

Driven by hunger and need, Edgar locates a residence, which by all signifiers serves as a quintessential representation of Edgar's understanding of a home, and requests sustenance from the "good woman" who lives there (136). While he eats, the woman questions him regarding his identity, indicating that men had recently inquired after a missing man who matches Edgar's appearance. Throughout the exchange, Edgar questions her minutely regarding the missing man, but never identifies himself as Edgar Huntly although the woman mentions his name in her responses. Instead, Edgar provides the reader with a detailed account of Old Deb and his former interactions with her.⁶ The fact that Edgar never identifies himself is later confirmed by Sarsefield who also questions the woman and ascertains that a man had stopped for food. Sarsefield relates that he identified this man as Edgar through his appearance and the weapon he was said to have carried rather than by his name (171). Edgar's omission of self-identification and re-immersion into the landscape highlight his continued lack of desire to be found and to return to controlled social space. Further, although he asks the woman for directions to Solebury, he quickly fails to follow these directions after leaving her house.

⁶ Hinds highlights Edgar's treatment of Old Deb as a spectacle rather than a person, particularly evident in his renaming of her: "As much as the loss of land, however, the Delaware have been themselves appropriated into Edgar's own cultural understanding, as it is he who has renamed Old Deb Queen Mab in his youth" (59).

While departing the woman's house, Edgar ascertains detailed directions, part of which includes the woman pointing out a visible path that leads to the proper road. Thus, Edgar attains a cartographic understanding of this path as he is able to view it from the house, although he acknowledges that the path is not a direct one. However, as he proceeds, Edgar begins to ignore and even doubt the directions of the hostess, despite the fact that she obviously possesses intimate familiarity with the landscape within which she resides. Edgar's choices following his departure from his hostess indicate his purposeful confusion of the landscape:

The first impulse was to fix my eye upon the summit, and to leap from crag to crag till I reached it, but this my experience had taught me was impracticable. It was only by winding through gullies, and coasting precipices and bestriding chasms, that I could finally hope to gain the top, and I was assured that by one way only was it possible to accomplish even this ... I consoled myself with thinking that the survey which my informant had made of the hill-side, might prove inaccurate. (142)

Edgar intentionally looks away from the path he had been told to take and ignores the cartographic knowledge he had just obtained. Instead, he impulsively moves through the landscape, adhering to no path, winding aimlessly, eventually ascending the hill. Finally, Edgar stumbles upon a recognizable spot "which led into the midst of Solebury" and directs his steps to Inglefield's residence. Despite his physical return to social space, Edgar's mental state remains convoluted, tumultuous, and uncontrolled until Sarsefield forces his thoughts and emotions to return to their proper or heteronormative condition.

Edgar's Return to Mediated Social Space

When Edgar finally reaches Solebury and Sarsefield discovers him, the degree of Edgar's inability to engage in heteronormative social interactions manifests itself most clearly. He greets the appearance of Sarsefield with boundless, unchecked emotion: "My deportment, at an interview so much desired and so wholly unforeseen, was that of a maniac. The petrifying influence of surprise, yielded to the impetuositities of passion" (160). As a result of his maniacal aspect and overflowing, powerful emotions, in addition to Edgar's horrific appearance, Sarsefield fails to recognize Edgar. Instead of responding seriously, Sarsefield disengages himself from Edgar and spurns his overwhelming welcome. Edgar laments: "The sterner passions and habitual austerities of my companion, exempted him from pouring out this testimony of his feelings" (160). Although Sarsefield admittedly does not recognize Edgar, the reasons Edgar ascribes to Sarsefield's rejection of him do not stem solely from this misrecognition. Instead, Sarsefield reacts to Edgar's emotions in a manner that suits his "habitual austerities." Thus, Sarsefield checks Edgar's outpouring of emotion because of its status as a socially unacceptable display of emotion. Even when he recognizes Edgar, Sarsefield continues to repulse Edgar's advances: "He now withdrew his eyes from me and fixed them on the floor" (160). As a man who conforms to the patriarchal form of interaction which does not allow for such deep and open expressions of love to occur between men, Sarsefield turns away from Edgar's indecency. His rejection of Edgar serves to initiate Edgar's transition and re-acclimation into the social space of Solebury and the proper interactions that occur between men within this controlled, hegemonic space. However, before Edgar re-conforms into hegemonic society, he must fully engage with his inner desires through

his abstraction of the landscape of Norwalk into a symbol for his mental turmoil and struggles, losing himself within the landscape in order to fully engage with his desire for Clithero, which he conceives of as madness.

Upon the conclusion of Edgar's adventures into Norwalk and his explorations of his repressed desires, Edgar returns to Sarsefield's mode of living and abandons his desire to escape the social space of Solebury. Throughout the interactions and exchange of stories between Sarsefield and Edgar, Brown provides no direct indication of who is speaking as the conversation unfolds. Through this narrative choice, Brown highlights Edgar's blending into the character of Sarsefield, which serves as a contrast to his previous blending into or doubling of Clithero's character. However, before completely abandoning Clithero and all that he represents in favor of Sarsefield as the representative figure for reason and order, Edgar attempts to draw Clithero back into social space and away from the brink of what Edgar conceives of as madness. Edgar cannot yet abandon Clithero and all that he promises in terms of a deep and true relationship with another man whom he desires both homoerotically and homosocially. In his efforts to find a balance between mediated and unmediated relationships between men, Edgar appeals separately to both Sarsefield and Clithero to close this metaphorical gap between them and what they represent for Edgar.

Edgar first prevails upon Sarsefield to let go of old grudges and prejudices, and instead to allow Clithero peace of mind in telling him the truth, simultaneously granting Clithero a second chance to have a relationship with Sarsefield and his other former friends. In alignment with Sarsefield's earlier censure of Edgar, Sarsefield rejects all of Edgar's efforts to convince him, through reason, to allow Clithero any reprieve.

Sarsefield exclaims: “I will not occupy the same land, the same world with him” (176). Sarsefield’s protests against Clithero center on his refusal to occupy the same space as Clithero rather than focusing on resisting any form of relationship with him. Brown seems to intentionally make this choice, which is in keeping with the explorations of spatial relations that he makes throughout the novel. Since Sarsefield serves as the representative for a man of reason and proper morals, Brown implies that Sarsefield abides by Jefferson’s democratic vision for an organized, controlled social space, effected through the imposition of Cartesian geography onto the landscape of the “New World.” Such a vision has no place for marginal figures, such as Native Americans or immigrants who are believed to be mad, like Clithero.

Despite Edgar’s desire to rekindle his close relationship with Sarsefield, Edgar remains resistant to Sarsefield’s demands that Edgar reject Clithero. Edgar imagines the effect that enlightening Clithero to the news that he did not in fact kill Mrs. Lorimer might have upon Clithero’s current mental state. Once Edgar imparts this knowledge, he hopes to convince Clithero to return to the social space of Solebury. Edgar contemplates the hopeful outcome of this news: “Was it possible to bring them together; to win the maniac from his solitude, wrest from him his fatal purposes, and restore him to communion with the beings whose imagined indignation is the torment of his life?” (177). Already, Sarsefield’s influence over Edgar’s thoughts manifests itself through Edgar’s use of the term “maniac” when describing Clithero. However, Edgar also seems to ascribe a similar desire to please Sarsefield to Clithero through the choice of language when describing Clithero’s suffering. Edgar does not hope that Clithero will be united with the person whom he believes to have killed, Mrs. Lorimer, but with those “whose

indignation is the torment of his life,” meaning Sarsefield (and perhaps Clarice).

However, considering Edgar’s internal battle, Edgar implies that communion with Sarsefield symbolizes Clithero’s true return to social space.

Edgar soon learns that his hopes for reuniting Clithero and Sarsefield are futile and seemingly impossible. Sarsefield recounts that Clithero had been rescued from his Native American captives, brought to Solebury to have his wounds treated, then further wounded by an escaping Native American prisoner. Despite having the power to do so, Sarsefield refuses to treat Clithero and bids Edgar to flee with him the residence which houses Clithero. Sarsefield commands Edgar: “Rise and come with me” (178).

Although he greatly desires to accompany Sarsefield and renew their close friendship, Edgar hesitates at the thought of leaving Clithero dying alone without assistance. His resistance fails to stand firm against Sarsefield’s urgings: “These thoughts made me linger, but hindered me from attempting to change the determination of my friend. He renewed his importunities for me to fly with him. He dragged me by the arm, and wavering and reluctant I followed where he chose to lead” (179). In keeping with his former relationship with Sarsefield, Edgar initially allows Sarsefield to direct his steps to whatever location Sarsefield deems appropriate and desirable. Still, Edgar registers his hesitation to accompany Sarsefield out of the house, finally entirely resisting Sarsefield’s urgings.

Even within Sarsefield’s physical grip, which indicates Sarsefield’s further pressuring of Edgar to return to social space, Edgar remains unable to entirely abandon the suffering Clithero, and consequently resists rejecting his formerly repressed homoerotic desires. While being led from the house by Sarsefield, Edgar views the dying

Clithero with his own eyes. The sight stops Edgar in his tracks, causing Sarsefield to abandon his attempts to drag Edgar from the house and leave in haste on his own. Edgar describes his sudden pause as something that occurs almost outside his control: “This object was gazed at with emotions that rooted me to the spot” (179). By constructing this sentence in passive voice, Edgar admits to some agency at work other than his rational mind. Further, his characterization of Clithero as an object rather than a person indicates his removal from true sympathy with Clithero and his re-assimilation into hegemonic society. Although he manages to resist Sarsefield physically, Edgar’s mind has succumbed to a degree to Sarsefield’s influence and urgings. Despite this transition, Edgar’s re-repressed desire for Clithero manifests itself in his body, causing him to freeze. He describes the sensation in spatial terms, deeming himself “rooted” to the spot on which he stands. This common phrase calls to mind the roots of trees, possibly even the Elm beneath which Clithero buries his secrets. Thus, Edgar’s sympathy with Clithero and his desire to share a true and deep connection with him still thrives deep within Edgar.

Once this deep-rooted desire has been acknowledged, Edgar truly abandons hegemonic codes and enters into a moment of pure compassion and union with Clithero. Further, as Inglefield’s property is situated on the edge of Norwalk, Edgar and Clithero physically occupy a space which allows for free movement between property and wilderness. The deep union between them is only possible within the gaps between human and animal, property and wilderness, real and metaphorical space:

I was sensible of nothing but compassion. I acted without design, when seating myself on the floor I raised his head and placed it on my knees.

This movement awakened his attention, and opening his eyes he fixed them on my countenance. They testified neither insensibility, nor horror, nor distraction. A faint emotion of surprise gave way to an appearance of tranquility—Having perceived these tokens of a state less hopeless than I at first imagined, I spoke to him:—My friend! (180)

Unlike Sarsefield, Clithero immediately recognizes Edgar, and his appearance inspires tranquility and ease rather than the horror and repulsion first exhibited by Sarsefield upon viewing Edgar. Clithero also finds comfort in Edgar's embrace rather than resists it. In fact, Edgar's touch and compassion grant Clithero the strength to recount his narrative for Edgar, in which he highlights the effects Edgar's compassion had throughout his sufferings, interactions which inspired him to abandon his suicidal intentions. For Brown, this moment serves as the ideal manifestation of relationships that can exist within the gap between mediated and unmediated space symbolized by Inglefield's residence on the border of Norwalk. Because of their abandonment of social norms and any form of mediation of the self, Clithero and Edgar immediately recognize one another and express true sympathy, compassion, and love for each other.

This utopian moment astonishes the men who enter the house, interrupting Clithero's narrative. Their reaction does not surprise Edgar, nor does it prevent him from entreating them to aid Clithero in his plight. However, Edgar makes sure to note their reaction to viewing such an unmediated interaction between men, emphasizing that their reaction is typical or common: "Their astonishment at seeing me, sustaining the head of the dying man, may easily be conceived" (181). Once more, Edgar pleads for Sarsefield to aid Clithero, however his efforts are to no avail. In a moment that echoes Sarsefield's

earlier repulsion of Edgar, Sarsefield physically displays his resistance to helping Clithero: “He recoiled with involuntary shuddering from any task which would confine him to the presence of this man” (185). Once more, Edgar focuses his analysis of Sarsefield’s rejection of Clithero on his repulsion at the thought of being in a close vicinity with Clithero. He wants there to be distance between himself and Clithero more than he wants Clithero to amend for what Sarsefield regards as sins committed by a madman. Since Sarsefield adamantly refuses to treat Clithero, Edgar turns to the “score of aged women in this district” who proved adequately prepared to treat the wounded Clithero (185). Brown purposely has Edgar turn from the staunch, rational, stubborn man to the charitable and compassionate women of the surrounding areas, highlighting the gendering of relationality within the rigid social space of Solebury.

As the novel ends, Edgar concludes his letter to his fiancée Mary. Following Edgar’s signature, Brown attaches letters that are exchanged between Edgar and Sarsefield which provide the concluding details of the narrative. In these letters, Edgar never mentions Mary again, and in fact indicates that he has been residing with Mrs. Lorimer and Sarsefield, which leads the reader to infer that he has indeed accepted Clarice as his new fiancée as Sarsefield had hoped. This acceptance signifies Edgar’s complete re-assimilation into controlled social space and proper social relations. He allows his identity to mirror Sarsefield’s and seems to seek his approval and affection, however detached their relationship remains. However, Edgar maintains some hope that he does not have to abandon Clithero to a fate of misery. Despite Sarsefield’s orders to leave Clithero behind, both physically and mentally, Edgar seeks an interview in order to enlighten Clithero to the truth of Mrs. Lorimer’s existence. Edgar believes that if

Clithero becomes aware that Mrs. Lorimer is still alive, the knowledge will “cure his diseased intellects, and restore him to those vocations for which his talents, and that rank in society for which his education had qualified him” (190). As evidenced by this statement, Edgar’s main goal is no longer to console Clithero, but to help him return to his proper place in hegemonic society, the place held for him as a result of his class and education.

Edgar easily navigates his way through the area in which he had formerly considered himself to be hopelessly lost and finds Deb’s former hut where Clithero now resides. Inside this hut, Edgar finds no furniture, “nothing capable of human use, but a heap of faggots in the corner, which seemed intended for fuel” (190). The lack of furnishings or any other indication of human habitation highlight how far Clithero has removed himself from society. When Clithero arrives and finds Edgar, he shows no signs of recognition of Edgar: “He looked at me without any tokens of remembrance!” (190). Clithero’s failure to recognize Edgar results from Edgar’s transformation due to his successful and complete re-assimilation into society while Clithero continues to occupy the space between wilderness and property, real space and mental space, animal/savage and personhood. He resides within the gap embodied by Deb’s hut, which remains a residence without being considered a piece of private property. Clithero merely dwells within the walls rather than owns the space, and the hut remains within Norwalk rather than becoming one of the farms or settlements that Norwalk serves to connect. After this encounter, Edgar denounces Clithero as a maniac and takes pains to ensure that Sarsefield removes Clithero from any further contact with hegemonic society.

In response to Edgar's letters and warnings about a sinister deed which Clithero has threatened to commit, Sarsefield arranges for Clithero's arrest and imprisonment in a mental hospital "as the most atrocious criminal" (193). Such an assessment clearly exaggerates any crime Clithero may have committed, and truly refers to Clithero's self-removal from social space, a decision which Sarsefield is incapable of comprehending. Sarsefield sends Clithero to Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia, the city in which Clithero first arrived in the New World. By sending Clithero to the first embodiment of Jefferson's geographic vision and imposition of Cartesian geography onto the landscape, Brown highlights the suffocating and controlling nature of such a cartographic practice and abstract production of space. The implication is that Clithero's double confinement in a mental hospital within the grid of Philadelphia will force him to reform his mind, emotions, and social interactions until he fully conforms to hegemonic understandings of personhood. Simultaneously, Edgar's final link to homoerotic, unmediated social interactions is destroyed.

Conclusion

Within the sensational narrative of *Edgar Huntly*, Brown embeds his critique of the geographic and cartographic practices that accompany Westward Expansion and Manifest Destiny. In his prefatory comments, Brown acknowledges that the representation of spaces within his novel depart from traditional images, and instead emphasizes the "western wildness" and "incidents of Indian hostility" that occur throughout the American landscape. Brown uses *Edgar Huntly* to illustrate that despite Jefferson's attempts to map and abstract the American landscape into discreet parcels of private property (which represent the exertion of control over the inhabitants of the

landscape through the production of controlled social space), wild, threatening, unmediated spaces such as Norwalk thrive within this carefully abstracted social space.

Within the novel, Brown takes care to highlight that Norwalk is in fact to the east of Inglefield's home rather than the west, which is the direction of the unsettled frontier. Thus, unchartered wilderness exists behind the frontier and within the settled and privatized space of colonial America. Through his exploration of the homoerotic and subversive potential of the space of Norwalk, Brown undermines Jefferson's attempts to create a heteronormative society through his carefully mediated production of Cartesian social space. Brown's gothic space emerges and throws off the grid of heteronormativity so carefully imposed over the landscape.

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VITA

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