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Gothic Implications on the Enlightenment, Puritanism, and Transcendentalism in Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland**

Charles Brockden Brown'un Wieland Adlı Eserinde Aydınlanma, Püritanizm ve Transandantalizm Üzerine Gotik Çıkarımlar

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ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Charles Brockden Brown'un *Wieland* adlı eserinde gotik betimlemelerle Aydınlanma fikirlerine sorular yönelterek akıl ve rasyonelliğe nasıl karşı çıktığını, toplum ve insanlık üzerinde köktendinciliğin zarar verici etkisine göndermede bulunarak Püritanizmi nasıl eleştirdiğini ve insanı doğası gereği iyi ve saygın kılan Transandantal düşünceyi nasıl çığnediğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Eserde, Brown korku kaynaklarını saptayarak ve duygusal ve ruhsal aşırıcılığın gotik mizacını sürdürerek aklın kötüye kullanılmasının, saplantılı dini melankolinin ve insanlığın habis doğasının altını çizmektedir. Çalışma, Brown'un rasyonellikle ile özdeşleşmeyen gotik elementler ile aklın insanlığın ilerlemesini temin ettiğini savunan düşünceyi tanımadığını, Püritanizme göndermelerde bulunarak insanlık üzerinde dini tutuculuğun yıkıcı etkilerine, dair eleştiriler sunduğunu, bireyin kötü doğasının insanlığı nasıl şeytani eylemlere sürüklediğini göstererek transandantal görüşü sorguladığını göstermektedir.

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ABSTRACT

The impetus behind the current study lies in exploring how Charles Brockden Brown expostulates reason and rationalism by posing questions to Enlightenment ideas, criticizes Puritanism through addressing the detrimental influence of religious fanaticism on society and humanity, and violates Transcendentalist concept of the inherently good and dignified human with gothic representations in *Wieland*. Brown underlines the dark applications of reason, obsessive religious melancholy, and destructive evil nature of humanity by locating the sources of terror and retaining a gothic mood of emotional and psychological extremity in the novel. The study shows that Brown violates the idea that reason ensures the progress of humanity; offers his critiques of the impending influence of religious mania on humanity by addressing Puritanism; and questions the transcendentalist view by presenting how the perverse nature of evil buried within each individual drags humans into diabolical actions through gothic elements which do not deal with rationality.

1. Introduction

Gothic romance arising during the Romantic period in the late eighteenth century is a mode of literature which evokes the atmosphere of mystery, dread, and horror, conveys abnormal states of mind, psychological fatigue,

transgressive thoughts, desires, and impulses of the characters, and elicits intense feelings of fear in the reader. Heavily impressed by medievalism, the gothic is comprised of deeply decayed themes such as murder, evil, suicide, insanity, physical and psychological torture as well as fear enhanced by unexplained, unknown, and flawed characters

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who cannot deal with a feeling of impending doom and raw nerves. Therefore, Varma (1966: 10) regards the gothic as “frost-cramped strength, the shaggy covering and dusky plumage of the northern tribes, and the gothic idea wrought in gloomy castles and somber cathedrals appeared dark and barbarous to the renaissance mind”. In addition to actions taking place in bleak and besetting corridors in epicidial castles, supernatural forces, mysterious voices, omens, curses, and paranormal activities stimulate fear and increase the tension in the reader.

The gothic is regarded “as a lurid offshoot from a dominant tradition of largely realist and morally respectable fiction” since it represents “extreme circumstances of terror, oppression and persecution, darkness and obscurity of setting, and innocence betrayed” (Smith, 2004:3). Actually, it concentrates on darkness and persecution as a descent of characters’ inner consciousness, morbid psychology, suffocating human psyche, dark impulses, and inclination to evil. It is a reaction to sentimental ideas of the time glossing over social unrest and anxieties due to industrialization, revolutions, institutional power, societal deterioration, destructive religious credulity, contemporary events, brutality, and crime. For this reason, the gothic is assumed as “return of the past, of the repressed and denied, the buried secret that subverts and corrodes the present, whatever the culture does not want to know or admit, will not or dare not tell itself” (Smith, 2004: 1).

Privileging irrationality and evil over rationality, reason, and goodness, it aims to create a sense of unease and foreboding revealing darkness and raises disturbing questions to the soothing ideas of humanity and society. According to Marquis de Sade (as cited in: Davidson, 1986: 219), the intention of gothic literature is “to call hell to the rescue” through creating social disturbance towards social, political, and philosophical values. The gothic maintains the dark and stimulated feelings via dreadful things such as howls, eerie sounds, doors suddenly slamming shut, footsteps approaching, evil potions, and flickering candles. Thus, it aims to evoke feelings of suspense and fear, to reflect the self as vulnerable and subjected to the power of passions, and to question the integrity of persona in a reaction to Enlightenment and Transcendentalist optimistic values and ideas.

Charles Brockden Brown, one of the most significant masters of this literary genre, has been regarded as the footing upon which the American gothic novel rests. The first major American gothic novel *Wieland*, published in 1798, is the story of a religious fanatic seduced by devilish voices driving him to murder his wife and children. Brown exploits horror and terror through themes such as madness, murder, suicide, religious obsession, and seduction of innocence so as to display how human brain under emotional stress, evil, and awestruck terror bring the sublimation to man’s inner world in the novel. *Wieland* exactly dramatizes a gothic culture plagued, demonized, and dehumanized by irrationality, insanity, psychological torture, and melancholy via supernatural forces, mysterious voices, and inexplicable events.

In the light of the facts, the current study concentrates upon how Charles Brockden Brown expostulates reason and rationalism by subverting and posing questions to Enlightenment practices and ideas, criticizes Puritanism

through addressing to the detrimental influence of religious fanaticism on society and humanity, and questions the possibility of purely good man of Transcendentalism due to perverse nature of evil buried within each individual by using Gothic elements and themes in *Wieland*.

2. Rationality versus Irrationality

The Enlightenment, the intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries which is also known as the Age of Reason, celebrates the power of rationality and reason by which humans achieve happiness, liberty, and knowledge. In his essay dated 1784, *What is Enlightenment?*, Immanuel Kant states that an immature human cannot understand himself or herself without any guidance, defines enlightenment as “mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity”, and underlines “the motto of enlightenment” as “Sapere Aude!”, which means a human must know and dare to use his/her own understanding, reason, and intelligence (1996: 58). The Age of Reason applauds rationality through privileging reason above feelings in an attempt “to break up the patches of darkness that blocked the light, eliminate the shadowy areas of society, demolish the unlit chambers where arbitrary political acts, monarchical caprice, religious superstitions, tyrannical and priestly plots, epidemics and the illusions of ignorance were fomented” (Foucault, 1980: 153). Defying pre-established thoughts, traditions, and superstitions, the Enlightenment accentuates human volition, almightiness of knowledge and reason, and self-mastery through striving for liberation from instincts, impulses, and passions.

As the 18th century wanes, however, gothic writers privilege irrationality, emotions, and the uncanny through associating their work with dark, terrifying, mysterious, and superstitious dimensions. As a reaction to and rejection of the clarity and rationalism of the Enlightenment, the gothic enunciates literary exorbitance via bleak ambience, supernatural forces, delusions, spiritual corruption, mental disintegration, excesses, macabre nature of humanity, and diabolical tendencies, thereby turning the Enlightenment morals, values, and ideas upside-down. In an effort to shadow the progress of the Enlightenment values, the gothic incarcerates the protagonists into madness, mysterious and supernatural rituals, hidden instincts, realistic psychological insights, and fear and horror, thereby deteriorating the representation of rationality and reason.

As an American gothic author, Charles Brockden Brown also challenges the Enlightenment beliefs and vilifies the virtues of rationality focusing on the complexity of humanity which cannot be alone explained by reason. Therefore, he aspires to dethrone the reason by creating a tension between the rationality and the irrationality in his masterpiece, *Wieland*. Sleuthing the demoralization and demise of the rationality, *Wieland* explicitly confutes the optimistic philosophy of the Enlightenment, presenting humans as naturally depraved prey to external factors beyond their control. As Kilgour (1995: 11) highlights, Brockden seems to attack the idea that “the individual is a self-regulating autonomous entity who is able to govern his own passions rationally without the help, or hindrance, of external restraints”. The plot consists of strict irrational gothic elements including ventriloquism, spontaneous combustion, illusion, madness, seduction, and mass murder.

Furthermore, the bleak atmosphere that challenges reality, the mysterious voices and supernatural events that cannot be hidden or rationalized despite all efforts, and the oscillation between reason and madness are preponderant reactions against enlightened rationality in *Wieland*.

Clara and Theodore Wieland grow up in both evangelist and rationalist family. Mettingen is a rational utopia where the Wielands and the Pleyels live in perfectly enlightened harmony and discuss literature, music, poetry, and virtue. As Clara points out, they attach importance to “intellectual liberty” and reject “all guidance but reason” (Brown, 2009: 23). However, mysterious voices and supernatural events come to light when elder Wieland builds a small summerhouse which Clara envisions a “temple of his Deity” (Brown, 2009: 23). As the time passes by, this temple proves to be a haunted gothic castle and the center of irrational actions such as spontaneous combustion, ventriloquism, murder, and suicide in the novel. The elder Wieland’s inexplicably spontaneous combustion in his temple ignites the wick. Their father’s mysterious and dreadful death for which no reasonable explanation is given serves as the breeding ground for the madness and irrational violence for the Wielands in spite of their belief in intellectual liberty and reason in the beginning of the novel.

Following the elder Wieland’s death, the chain of events which set in motion with inexplicable voices threatens to destabilize the Wieland family’s state of mind, thereby splintering reason and rationality. Although they try to preserve the rationality by discussing “the will is the tool of the understanding, which must fashion its conclusions on the notices of sense”, the first mysterious voice undermines their conviction for reason (Brown, 2009: 32). In this way, a shadow falls over their reason and readers witness the Wielands’ slide down the slippery ground of reality. Feeling torn between mysterious voices and reason, the Wieland family’s secured, ordered, and coherent world is turned upside down.

Along with supernatural events and mysterious voices, Theodore supposes that he is hearing spiritual voices due to Carwin’s ventriloquism and deception. Therefore, it deracinates him from tranquility and optimism of human rationality. Driven mad by these voices, he is swamped with solitude, slaughters his wife and children, and attempts to murder his sister. Insanity has been a thoroughly gothic concern of Brown since it exceeds reason throughout the novel. Concerning how mind is corrupted by abysmal fear and supernatural forces, Brown stiffens the gothic theme of madness as a rebellion against rationality.

Both Theodore and Clara vacillate between reason and irrationality throughout most of the novel. Despite her strict adherence to rationality and strong-minded personality, she generally reminisces about her father’s dreadful and mysterious death, increasingly insisting on supernatural beings and events. Although Clara utters that “the future, like the present, was serene” in the beginning of the novel (Brown, 2009: 20), she explains that she “was visited by dread of unknown dangers, and the future was a scene over which clouds rolled, and thunders muttered” as the sequence of supernatural events progress (Brown, 2009: 64). Her inability to foresee a promising future and to extinguish the fear of uncertainty and mystery thwarts her from thinking rationally. Clara is consumed by mysterious

voices “Hold! Hold!” in her closet and dashes herself against the wall in an involuntary reaction (Brown, 2009: 135). Her belief in supernatural and mysterious events debars her from reason and Clara attempts to self-harm.

Through a wealth of high weirdness such as spontaneous combustion, demonic ventriloquism, murder, madness, and suicide, Brown shows the inability of the Enlightenment rationalism to annihilate fear, supernatural inclination, and potential danger of belief in mysterious energies. The characters’ failure of reason, the deception of their senses, and their immersion into the dark but inevitable realm of mystery with all the trappings of psychological gothic trauma and mental deterioration is, indeed, a caution against the overly optimistic Enlightenment views on reason and rationality.

3. Religious Affiliation

Puritanism is a religious and societal movement calling for purifying the Anglican Church and establishing ideal faith society in New World in the 16th and 17th century. The ultimate goal of Puritanism is “to transform society by first using grace to make God’s will one’s own”, to guide people to “lead an exemplary life that would persuade others to follow the path of right belief and behavior”, and “to make society a godly kingdom” (Bremer, 2009: 3).

The Puritans believe that they have a unique covenant with God, value plainness and simplicity, lead an austere life, and follow strict rules of behavior. They regard life as “a curse imposed upon man by the wrath of God” and believe that humans have to seek redemption through constant penance and refuse healthy impulses, joy, and beauty (Goldman, 1917: 1). According to Oldbridge (1998:83), the bleak message of Puritanism is that “the joys of salvation were unobtainable without suffering and pain”. Goldman also adds that oppressive Puritanism transforms life into dolefulness, delight into hopelessness, honesty into lies, and truth into hypocrisy (1917: 1).

That being the case, the gothic believes that imprisoned and chained humanity is the triumph of Puritan persecution. The gothic literature illustrates psychological problems, madness, desires, and unexplained passions suppressed by Puritanism so as to reveal religious moral corruption, and degenerated aspects of Puritan faith. Establishing a set of themes and concerns revealing Puritan tendency towards religious excess which curtails one’s desires and stifles impulses, the gothic views Puritanism as a psychological metaphor for humanity’s most profound repressed desires, psyche, and hidden blackness in their souls.

American Gothicism views Puritanism as “a cruel, recalcitrant, vindictive ideology meant to terrorize its adherents into an always-failing project of self-governmentality” (Bruhm, 2014: 368). In this regard, Brown reveals the destructive ethics and virtues of Puritanism by criticizing strict moral disciplines which subjugate and immobilize humans in his gothic work. Revealing repressed impulses and desires with the dark elements and sharp language of Gothicism, he decries Puritan bigotry which attempts “to fetter the whole gamut of human emotions” (Goldman, 1917: 4).

Wieland is a cautionary tale on the dangers of religious fervor and a critique of self-destruction originating from

religious fanaticism. Focusing on darker elements such as mental illness and psychological trauma, Brown draws a picture of the Wielands' life which is guided by religious obsession with divine power and sacred texts. The destructive psychological problems that befall the characters stemming from religious enthusiasm in the novel indicate Brown's dislike for extreme religious sentiment.

Wieland begins with a civilized Christian who sets out on a journey to the wilderness so as to convert savages. When the Wieland grandfather and his wife die in the bloom of life, their only child leads a hard life in London. The hard conditions drag him into a dramatic conversion to Puritanism. Imbibed with the belief of "his duty to disseminate the truths of the gospel among the unbelieving nations" the elder Wieland migrates to America to convert the Indians, thereby becoming the reification of Puritan mission (Brown, 2009: 7). Upon reading the words "Seek and ye shall find", Wieland devotes himself to biblical study (Brown, 2009: 8). For him, the Bible "was the fountain beyond which it was unnecessary to trace the stream of religious truth; but it was his duty to trace it thus far" (Brown, 2009: 8). The elder Wieland's Puritan-like resignation to textual purification hereby begins. With the years passing, however, he notices that he married, prospered, became distracted from his mission by worldly affairs and financial success, and forgot his promise to God. After a brief and vain attempt to convert some Indians, Wieland builds a temple so as to worship his God dutifully. His blind obedience to religion and consciousness of guilt stemming from the inability to fulfill his errand estranges him from comeliness of life, forcing him to be entrapped in a deep solitude. He waits for his punishment as a disappointed man filled with gloom and one night in his temple he perishes in a flash of light that reduces him to ashes.

The elder Wieland's life is controlled by intense religious obsession whereas his children are raised by the virtues of the Enlightenment philosophy. Their education is not based on religious standard; on the contrary, they are interested in art and science, cultivating their broad, gentle, and inquisitive minds. For this reason, their inclination to God is limited and rationalistic in contrast to her father's fanatic devotion. However, Theodore puts rational understanding aside as he witnesses supernatural events and mysterious voices. His father's abortive sacred mission comes into prominence and he tends to seek a direct contact with divinity. In spite of the precepts of reason and mind rather than strict religious doctrines in the beginning of the novel, his father's obsessive tendencies to religion pester Theodore. As the elder Wieland does, Theodore begins to believe that the *raison d'être* is to accomplish an errand for the Deity. This is what Bercovitch (2012: 123) calls: "the familiar figural imperative: what the fathers began, the sons were bound to complete." The elder Wieland bequeaths an ostensible sacred errand which etiolates his son's life. Theodore devotes himself to fulfill his father's task of conversion. This devotion lifts a heavy lid covering Theodore's dark impulses and instincts by which the Wieland family will be caught in a cleft stick. Thus, the brutal fervors which are pent up in his psyche convert into religious fanaticism.

Carwin's evil actions in combination with Wieland's tendencies to religious affiliation tragically ruin Theodore's

ideal life. His tendency to religion is so vulnerable that he is easily deceived by Carwin's misuse of ventriloquism, thereby supposing that he communicates directly with divinity. His religious credulity transforms him from a theoretical defender of religion into a fanatic and then into madman who hears God's voice. One night while hugging her wife and reading the Bible by the fireplace, he suddenly hears mysterious voices which bade him destroy all idols. He obeys the order as he believes that the commander is God. Despite the fact that he is devoted to his wife and children, he brutally murders his wife and four children including a six month old baby. Like his father, Theodore believes his actions to be a "sacred duty" from "divine command" (Brown, 2009: 158). Driven insane, he acts upon the prompting of the voices and murders his family in the pursuit of illusive faith. Clara's utterance, "the storm that tore up our happiness, and changed into dreariness and desert the blooming scene of our existence", reveals how religious combustion transforms their life into a nightmare (Brown, 2009: 5). In a subtle sense, Brown alludes to the impending and detrimental consequences of blind obedience to religion, Puritanism, murder, madness, ventriloquism, and regulated deception down to the last detail.

4. Dark versus Transcendental Light

Transcendentalism, American theological and philosophical thought of the early nineteenth century, attaches credence to the potential within each individual to achieve awareness and a heightened state of being through an introspective look at oneself. Laying weight on the essence of life, the inherent goodness of humanity, and nature, the transcendentalists believe that the purity of the individuals is fettered and corrupted by religious and political systems of society. Thus, they spread an effort to reverse conditions which prevent beings from perceiving their full potential. In spite of the innocence negatively tainted, they have faith in the power and divine spark within to transcend the tumult and estuation originating from the system.

The transcendentalists put emphasis on the innate beneficence of humans and the ascending spiritual values such as beauty, goodness, and truth in opposition to inescapable human depravity. Moreover, they esteem the Oversoul by proclaiming the inherent unity of God, nature, and humans. They center upon the divine light bestowed upon human soul by God. Divinity pervades all nature and each individual carries nature within oneself. Moreover, they believe that the evil will exist no more as the Oversoul is good. In his essay, "Nature," Ralph Waldo Emerson concentrates on the Oversoul as follows: "Standing on the bare ground, my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God" (1983: 10). In *Walden*, Thoreau also promotes Emerson's transcendentalist idea that God is found in nature; therefore, nature is sacred and each individual is able to reform oneself by attaining beauty, mental and spiritual clarity, and recuperating the corrupted innocence in civilized universe by means of nature as follows: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see

if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" (1983: 135).

The prominent contributors of Transcendentalism such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Margaret Fuller view nature and humans as inherently good. Conversely, the notable Gothic writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Charles Brockden Brown believe that humans are imperfect and inclined to self-destruction and sin. The transcendentalists evaporate the sense of evil and liberate humans from sin via the Oversoul, self-reliance, the glorification of the individual, and the belief in the immanent goodness of humankind and the sanctity of nature. However, Gothic authors seem to underestimate "the perfectionist schemes of utopian transcendentalists", thereby focusing on "the ambiguous discordant and chaotic aspects of human experience" (Ladd et al., 2010: 58). Striking a pessimistic attitude, they concentrate upon humans' limited and questionable potential. Therefore, they urge upon the existence of evil buried deep inside the human soul via melancholy, guilt, sin, madness, and depressed human psyche in their works. As Stephanou (2019: 219) emphasizes, the gothic writers "unveil the dark life writhing behind the mask of spiritualism and theological mysticism in order to show mortality's evil aspirations to divine will" whereas the transcendentalists try to "elevate spirituality and idealize materiality, thus reducing life to mysticism". According to Gothic writers who are not "disposed to deny the reality of evil", humans are not "simply oriented towards truth, beauty, and justice" and their hearts also "beat to the rhythms of illusion, cruelty, and power" (Ladd et al., 2010: 58).

Charles Brockden Brown depicts the innate wickedness of human beings, human tendency to evil, the psychological effects of guilt and sin, derangement in human psyche, and the turmoil within each individual's mind as well as gothic motifs such as the desire for revenge, suicide, murder, betrayal, seduction, insanity, and the atmosphere beset by a sense of darkness, doom, persecution, and fear. He plays havoc with the optimistic transcendental view of the world as good and evil as virtually nonexistent. Accordingly, *Wieland* hallmarks Brown's interest in ciphering out the self-destructive and macabre nature of human psyche. It is quite clearly preoccupied with the problems of morbid psychology and suffocating latent evil energies. As Manuel (1999: 102) states, the novel is not "a study in individual dementia, but a profound research in collective flaws, an allegory of the corruption of the faith in the virtues of its citizenry, a shocking discovery of inner disorder that mirrors outer turbulence and chaos, a disturbing mindscape of the errand." Spontaneous combustion, psychological terror inflicted upon individuals, ill-used ventriloquism, murder, suicide, grief, and sorrow are evil forces pervading and taking root in fallen human nature in the novel.

In *Wieland*, the intrusion of evil stops the time, impedes nature, stuns the self-development, and gets the hope blurred, and stimulates the destructive energies that lurk inside. Carwin is, indeed, the great cause of evils which befall the Wieland family; therefore, he is regarded as the author of treason, destruction, all misery, peril, suffering, black conspiracy, and evil. Carwin brings death and sin into the garden of the Wieland. His impulsive use of ventriloquism manipulates the members of the family

dragging them into the grim path of insanity, murder, and suicide; therefore, he is seen as evil incarnate. Theodore who is under delusion, obeys Carwin's evil so-called divine commandment to slaughter his family, and succumbs in his evil propensities reflects Brown's skepticism about the faith in individual's inherent goodness, the need of optimism, and the importance of self-reliance. Pleyel distrusts Clara's fidelity and performs hysterical reactions because of Carwin's intrigues. As for Clara, the memory of her father's terrifying death, Theodore's descent into insanity, and his murderous depravity erode her confidence in optimism. Thus, the sense of evil destabilizes her sense of order and disrupts her rational worldviews. As dark emissary, Carwin, assails her, her inclination to evil is clearly seen in the following utterance: "My heart was black enough to mediate the stabbing of a brother... my hands were sprinkled with his blood as he fell" (Brown, 2009: 208).

Although Clara accuses Carwin of bloody actions and her family catastrophe, Carwin tries to exonerate himself and says: "I am not this villain; I have slain no one; I have prompted none to slay; I have handled a tool of wonderful efficacy without malignant intentions, but without caution: ample will be the punishment of my temerity, if my conduct has contributed to this evil" (Brown, 2009: 181). Carwin puts the blame on his uncontrollable biloquism and represents himself as a victim that is unable to resist the desire to use his destructive talent: "A thousand times had I vowed never again to employ the dangerous talent which I possessed" (Brown, 2009: 183). In contrast to the innate goodness of humanity, Brown highlights the permanent existence of evil buried within human souls no matter how hard they attempt to repress wicked and malignant energies.

Evil genius Carwin's intrusion and machinations shatter the equilibrium and harmony and Theodore, Pleyel, and Clara are seen as passive victims of his malignant forces. However, his ventriloquism actually unmasks the apparent idyllic family, animates the dormant evil within, and accelerates the certainty of evil because of characters' diabolical tendencies. In contrast to their portrait as rational and scientifically oriented individuals, all react hysterically to ventriloquism arising from not only Carwin's anarchic voice but also their own repressed animosities, demonic self, the natural depravity in being's nature. Theodore's transformation from an enlightened landlord into overwrought zealot and brutal massacre of family is actually his own tendency to evil lying underneath the idealistic veil of sense of self and identity. As Clara confesses in the end of the novel, the evil that Carwin's machinations bring about "owed their existence to the errors of the sufferers" (Brown, 2009: 223).

5. Conclusion

In sum, *Wieland* evinces a critical approach toward the certitudes of reason, the destructive virtues of extreme religious sentiment, and the immanent goodness and perfectibility of humans by using gothic elements in reaction to Puritanism, the Enlightenment, Transcendentalist values and ideas. The study has illustrated that Charles Brockden Brown expostulates the virtues of reason, alludes to the detrimental consequences of blind obedience to religion, and depicts human propensity to evil and immanent goodness of humankind by

means of inexplicable events, mysterious voices, psychological terror, deception, insanity, ventriloquism, and murder.

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