Chapter Seven

CRUEL PARENTS

PROVIDENCE deals kindly with some characters, unkindly with others: in *Emily Hamilton* it takes no less than the deaths of Mrs. Belmont and Devas to clear the heroine’s path to happiness. And Clara Belmont might have thought of herself ill-treated by fate, even before her premature end. Like Mrs. Malcolm in *The Step-Mother*, she has been forced into a marriage for money; she may not have committed adultery, as did Mrs. Malcolm, but she considered holding on to her true love Le Fabre. When their parents try to marry them against their will, the heroes and heroines of fiction either submit more or less passively, hoping for some last-minute reprieve, or they elope and marry against the wishes of their families. In either case the result is liable to cause much grief and pain; at best, the lovers may find only a long-delayed and short-lived happiness.

In *St. Herbert* (1813) the hero runs away with Louisa Howard because his father and the girl’s guardian do not want them to marry. His triumph is soon followed by sorrow, for his wife’s health breaks down when it is discovered that they have really been living in sin: theirs was a mock wedding ceremony only. It is as though their parents’ disapproval had beforehand blighted their chance of happiness. In trying to keep the young lovers apart, Maurisson and the elder St. Herbert were moved by revenge and guilt; St. Herbert and Louisa, like Romeo and Juliet, pit their love against a law of hate. This is a further claim on our sympathy, in addition to the fact that they are to be disposed of in marriage against their will; nor is it irrelevant that they rebel against the matches arranged for them only when mutually supported by their love.

They seek shelter in a house thought to be haunted. St. Her-
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bert and Louisa brave its Gothic dangers, but their courage is in vain because the building was erected by Maurisson to imprison the lady who preferred the elder St. Herbert to himself. The young couple have thus remained within the reach of his rule of revenge. Briefly their love changes the desolate spot into a bower of pastoral bliss:

Though unaccustomed to labour, I arose each morning with the sun, either to guide the plough, or press the spade, and when my diurnal task was finished, I would stroll with my happy girl, along the banks of a creek, and amuse myself with catching small fish, which her soft hands would dress for my evening's repast; or we would wander to our neighbour's cot, and there with his little family, and perhaps some passenger who had strayed that way: we would divert ourselves upon the green with songs and innocent chat, or the guileless sports of youth. We knew no anxiety—we were contented: true we were poor, yet poverty did not afflict us, for ambition and envy found not a place in those hearts that were consecrated to pure and lasting affection. (p. 24)

Their daughter Louisa longs to return to this retreat when, years later, she is pining for her lover and the social pleasures of New York no longer distract her from her grief; it is in such seclusion that one may learn to appreciate man's essential values. At a later date still, another lover, Albudor, in search of his Caroline, responds to the Gothic gloominess of the remote district: “The sun was verging towards the empurpled horizon, and the evening winds had already unfolded their dewy wings, when the weary Albudor entered the forest, within whose gloomy confines he hoped to find his solitary Caroline, who fleeing from the rigour of parental authority, had taken up her residence with an aged nun of Montreal in the wilderness” (p. 3). To Albudor the episode is to be a mere passage through a purgatory of anguish, as it were, on his way to nuptial bliss with Caroline; their story treats in a spirit of pleasantry the theme used with somber didactic connotations in the main narrative of St. Herbert.

The setting of this tale, upper New York State, is used also in The Fortunate Discovery. Or, The History of Henry Villars
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(1798), a novel by “a young lady of the State of New-York.” Its main protagonist is introduced first as a personage of the subsidiary plot: our attention focuses at the beginning, and again in the last quarter, of The Fortunate Discovery on the story of Bellmore and Louisa. Both this episode, set in the present, and the middle sections, glancing back into the past of the Villars and Beauclair families, are in the main sentimental love stories which use or hint at the elopement and the seduction motifs. The concluding pages turn into social comedy; Louisa and Bellmore are spared the cruel sufferings imposed by the Beauclairs upon Villars and Lady Maria and seem to profit by the mood of repentance and rehabilitation that has restored the Villars to love and prosperity.

Henry Villars alias Hargrave serves first as a well-meaning witness to the precarious love of Louisa and the wounded British officer Bellmore; the couple are thrown together in the atmosphere of divided loyalties in the Villars household at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Both Hargrave and Bellmore know that the latter’s father will inevitably oppose a match with Louisa. There follows Hargrave’s successful courting of Eliza, then Mr. Villars relates his adventures; by now the reader has guessed that Hargrave is connected with Louisa’s family. Hargrave himself is aware that Lady Maria’s claim to the Beauclair fortune is stronger than his own. The revelation that he is the Villars’ long-lost son is not much of a surprise any longer. It serves above all to intensify his interest in the Louisa-Bellmore affair, since it is now clear that he has sanctioned his own sister’s marriage to his best friend. He therefore busily tries to arrange for the happiness of these two, and he succeeds by combining his general knowledge of man’s affectations and his specific knowledge of Miss Lovemore’s real affections.

In spite of his importance to the plot, Hargrave is not more than a stereotype novel-hero, accomplished, gentlemanly, resourceful. The other personages, whether in the sentimental or the satirical parts of the book, stand even less of a chance of achieving true and living characters. The stress is on the narrative anyway, not on the protagonists; and that narrative is a concoction of popular plot elements, in style perhaps slightly more

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sentimental than the average story of this type; its fairy-tale ending is rather characteristic:

...Mr. Villars and his family retired to a beautiful little retreat, Lord Beauclair had purchased for them nigh Hampton-Hall [old Lady Beauclair's country-house]. Lord and Lady Beauclair continued with the old Lady, and spent their summers with her in the country.

Captain Bellmore went to live at Union-Park, (a seat which his Father had presented him on his marriage) about five miles from the Hall. He gave up his commission, and resided wholly in the country: blessed with his Louisa, his happiness was complete, and joy beamed around. Lord Bellmore lived to an advanced age, honoured by his children.

Mr. and Mrs. Villars, in their decline of life, enjoyed every felicity. Blessed in seeing their children happy, their every wish was complete. (pp. 178-79)

The most successful of the satirical touches are perhaps to be found in the scene at Miss Lovemore's, when Hargrave ironically belittles Bellmore's genuine qualities and thus reflects on the shallow standards of the fashionable world (pp. 170-71).

Even if compared with a routine tale of sentimental moralism like The Fortunate Discovery, Mrs. Patterson's The Unfortunate Lovers and Cruel Parents (1797) is an atrocious performance. It tells of another instance of rebellion against parents in the name of love and honor. Gauze breaks an agreement with his former business partner, clearly unimpressed even by the providential encouragement given to their joint plan; but his mercenariness after Beaumont's bankruptcy is followed by his punishment. His daughter's elopement with Samuel Beaumont is doubly justified: it is a form of retribution and also simply the fulfillment of Gauze's own pledge to have Samuel for a son-in-law. The story ends in a style quite indicative of its author's talents, as in evidence in The Unfortunate Lovers: "He conveyed her to a Coffee-House, sent for a Justice of the Peace, and they were joined in the bands of wedding, it being on Saturday evening... They crowned the remainder of their days in love and unity; and thus enjoyed all the pleasures which can contribute to the happiness of a rural life" (p. 27).
In Charles Brockden Brown’s *Jane Talbot* (1801) the thwarting influence of the elder generation is furthered by the young heroine’s self-denying response. In the manner of Clara Howard, Jane, too, raises obstacles of her own that delay her happiness. The hero-lover is not *a priori* a blameless character; Jane retrospectively confesses that she had her reservations about him, even at times when she felt inclined to renounce her other ties (p. 344). Colden himself readily admits that he may well be distrusted, though he tends to feel guilty of other errors than those he is charged with. At any rate, in *Jane Talbot* there can be no black-and-white presentation wholeheartedly hostile to the characters assuming parental functions. On the contrary, those who advise Jane obviously have the good of the girl in mind; they are not moved—like St. Herbert, Sr., or Lord Beauclair—above all by revenge, or by material and social assertions. Mrs. Fielder is willing to support Jane after the girl’s dismissal of Colden and to forget how harshly she has judged the girl; yet she has nothing to gain when she insists on taking Jane under her protection again. It is simply that she thinks the girl needs help, given her character and weaknesses: “Certain indications, I early saw in you of a sensibility that required strict government; an inattention to any thing but feeling; a proneness to romantic friendship and a pining after good not consistent with our nature” (p. 93).

Jane’s world is thus at least more complex, if not necessarily more compelling and plausible, than those of St. Herbert or Beauclair. The protagonists of *Jane Talbot*, in spite of their differences, still find it possible to communicate with one another. They attempt reasoning and persuasion, and it is therefore not necessary for them immediately to resort to force or ruse. Even the villains, Jane’s brother Frank (who plays the part of her protector as convincingly as Huck Finn’s father does Huck’s) and jealous Miss Jessup, can be talked to and at least temporarily swayed. Nor is there a fixed line laid down (as there is in *Clara Howard*) between passion and reason, or between enthusiasm and prudence, or even between radicalism and conservatism. Jane is tolerant of Colden’s past, while the young man is capable of changing his position. In so doing he proves less
consistent than Jane herself, who may be irresolute outwardly but is firm in her fundamental beliefs; this is the reason why Colden can be overmatched by the girl.\textsuperscript{13} He is a volcano of radicalism that is rapidly cooling, and can be compared to the young Brockden Brown or the young Shelley only.\textsuperscript{14}

Jane is to begin with caught between two impulses. She may either obey her powerful feelings—that is, overrule her scruples and conform with her beloved Colden's views—or she may accept Mrs. Fielder's guidance and her idea of the dangerous immoral and irreligious influence exerted by the young man. She is from the first too confused to make up her mind once and for all;\textsuperscript{15} she is keenly aware, more poignantly so than the usual novel heroine, not just of the conflict between love and duty but of a clash between positions that cannot be reduced to entire clarity. For evidently she feels there is something to be said for and against both Mrs. Fielder and Colden, neither of whom, to Jane's mind, is doing full justice to the other side. It is this very failure of Jane to subscribe unreservedly to one or the other party that keeps up the contact between them.

Now Jane, widowed after a short marriage to Talbot,\textsuperscript{16} should be in a position to disregard opinions hostile to Colden, but she never quite convinces herself that she is right in loving and admiring him. At least she feels she can decide whether she is ready to risk marrying him: at that point, however, Jane is held back and moved to her first formal renunciation of Colden, for she abruptly comes to think her shortcomings more serious than his, and to conceive of herself as a damaging liability: “...What shall I bring to thy arms? A blasted reputation, poverty, contempt. The indignation of mine and of thy friends. For thou art poor and so am I. Thy kindred have antipathies for me as strong as those that are fostered against thyself” (p. 114). She gradually recovers her self-confidence and her belief that she has something essential to share with, and bestow on, Colden—her religious faith (pp. 190-91). But once more she withdraws when she hears that she has been the cause of a break between Colden and his father; she holds that the claim of kinship takes precedence over even the most intense love between man and woman. This decision is entirely consistent with Jane’s experi-
ence so far. She accepted without murmur the choice of Risberg for her husband; and after that young man's defection she became Mrs. Talbot, following the advice of her father and Mrs. Fielder. She has at first hesitated at also obeying Mrs. Fielder with regard to Colden because of genuine doubts about the lady's competence in deciding for her in this particular instance, and also, in spite of Jane's usual gentleness, because she has felt pique at Mrs. Fielder's uncharitable hints and accusations.17

Brown uncharacteristically, in the case of Jane and Colden, joined more or less equal partners into a couple. While his exchanges with Jane are taking place, Colden is by no means any longer the dynamic figure he seems to have been at an earlier date. He sets great store by his honesty (p. 142),18 but this proud love of truth makes him seem stubborn and defiant rather than confident. Often self-accusatory and helpless privately,19 he strikes one as too reticent and secretive to have much to say for himself and those of his convictions so offensive to both Mrs. Fielder and the well-meaning Thompson.20 Jane indeed reproaches him for his silence (p. 134), though she may be willing to consider it as a refusal to obtrude himself and an instance of his self-discipline, similar to his restraint in the face of temptation (at a time when she might herself have yielded) (p. 83).

The presentation of Colden by means of rumors and secondhand accusations is unsatisfactory.21 This is felt above all when he is finally converted to orthodoxy in matters of morals and religion, for this conversion is important: it is such a comforting fulfillment of Jane's secret hopes (pp. 190-96, 343). Colden has not so much made his way from one well-established position to another that is gradually acknowledged as superior; he seems rather to have passed, almost as a matter of course, from a phase of immaturity to a clearer sense of responsibility. In other words, it is not the man Colden who has gained through his conversion but a mere literary figure that has been changed by having an additional attribute superimposed on its former character.22 Colden's sincerity seems genuine, but we have been inadequately prepared for his final development.

Still, some provision has been made for the fact that Jane and Colden must secure religious and moral harmony before they can
find fulfillment in love. When the girl relates how she has been affected by wrestling with Colden's doubts and her own too easy certainties, she brings to light an important and appealing aspect of their relationship:

Thus I grew up, never beset by any doubts; never venturing on inquiry. My knowledge of you, put an end to this state of superstitious ignorance. In you I found, not one that disbelieved, but one that doubted. In all your demeanor there was simplicity and frankness. You concealed not your sentiments; you obtruded them not upon my hearing. When called upon to state the history of your opinions, it was candidly detailed; with no view of gaining my concurrence, but merely to gratify my curiosity.

In no respect has your company made me a worse, in every respect it has made me a better woman. Not only my piety has become more rational and fervent, but a new spring has been imparted to my languishing curiosity. To find a soul, to whom my improvement will give delight; eager to direct and assist my enquiries; delicately liberal no less of censure when merited, than of praise where praise is due; entering, almost without the help of language from me, into my inmost thoughts; assisting me, if I may so speak, to comprehend myself; and raising to a steadfast and bright flame, the spark that my wayward fancy, left to itself, would have instantaneously emitted and lost. (pp. 193, 195-96)²³

The reader is not likely to lose his interest in the partners of such a confrontation²⁴ and is more inclined to believe them in earnest than when reading Jane's earlier "heart-dissecting" correspondence (pp. 129-30).²⁵

Yet, everything considered, only a small proportion of Brown's last novel sustainedly interests us. The colorless to and fro of the tale, which reflects the heroine's refusal to decide rashly in face of complex views and attitudes, strikes the reader as the most characteristic feature of Jane Talbot. The detective element concerning Miss Jessup's forgery is all too naive, and so is this treacherous lady's unexplained retraction of the confession made to Colden. The concluding phases of Jane's apparently hopeless waiting for Colden to return are only perfunctorily tacked on to the narrative. No less than Clara Howard, its immediate prede-
cessor, and far more than Brown's earlier fiction, *Jane Talbot* gains from the comparative lack of distinction among the contemporary American novelists.

Mrs. Margaret Botsford (fl. 1812-30) used in *Adelaide* (1816) a heroine who is physically as passive as Jane; and since she has no comparable intellectual gifts, Adelaide is entirely helpless when faced with the problems thrust upon her. She lives in a world marked by violent action, whose pressures are physical rather than moral. Literally as well as figuratively, she is dragged to the altar to be joined to a husband she does not care for. Her father has no consideration whatsoever for her feelings or her true lover's, but much respect for his own wishes and whims and the appearance of his authority. The heroine's apology for resignation is an adequate reflection of her character and, beyond that, of the simplified motivation of the plot: "I must learn to suffer. I have been enviably happy; but felicity, I am conscious, cannot be expected in this imperfect state of existence, and I must be resigned to my destiny..." (2:11). Adelaide's words probably deserve our approval, or at any rate the reader feels that such must have been Mrs. Botsford's opinion. As with the remarks of Mrs. Clifford, however, according to whom Adelaide and her friend Elinda "are possessed of superior minds" and "inspire admiration and command respect" (1:18), we must be content with accepting the author's bare judgment, for Adelaide never steps out of the pages of the novel to vindicate any claim made for her. Yet she is loved by Mandeville Clifford and Montwilbert, she has all the sympathy of Clifford's cousin Morgiana and Caroline Danvers. It is her very passiveness that seems to attract trouble. Significantly, Adelaide never leaves the place to which our author conveyed her at the beginning of the tale; all the other characters must consequently be carried there as well. Morgiana rushes from Barbados to her assistance; Wellingham stops with his companion at V*** on his quest for health; Olivia following her father reaches the place just before Clifford returns from his despairing journey to Europe. Then, at last, the stage is set for disposing of the villains and establishing the prosperous happiness of the virtuous.

Delmont, capable of any villainy and violence with regard to
Adelaide, is simply the personification of parental tyranny: "By G - - I will not thus be trifled with. She shall transfer her affections to a suitable object. She shall, I repeat, love only the man whom I approve. Nor dare to irritate me by practicing more of the d - - n'd arts peculiar to her sex; tears, hysterics, swoonings and supplications, in order to gain her point..." (1:248). He may be said to be on the decline already when he tries to make her do his will; the loss of his partner in crime, Vironaldi, together with the reappearance of his son Edgar (who can easily afford to give Adelaide 50,000 pounds), just about finish him off. In former years he possessed dimensions more formidable; the recollections of his sensitive wife reflect his earlier qualities of Radcliffean glamor (1:72). Vironaldi himself is an offspring of Montoni and Schedoni but without their stern impressiveness, so that his effect on the reader is close to that of a caricature. The relation of his misdeeds provides for digressions from the main narrative.

Another way of obtaining relief and an alternation of moods is attempted in the comedy of a servus gloriosus, Vironaldi's servant Le Rapiere, whose pride in, and emulation of, the achievements of his master make him an easy victim for a practical joke and a seduced girl's harmless if costly revenge. Morgiana's satirical humor, too, has its uses for the creation of relief. The girl, reproached for her levity by Mrs. Clifford and Adelaide, pokes fun at Clayton because he is so respectfully shy, "a perfect sentimentalist... precisely calculated to give one the vapours... a creature who will not quarrel for the pleasure of becoming friends again" (1:8). Used protectively, and without too much insistence when matrimony is really in question, Morgiana's coquetry neither discourages Clayton nor prevents the girl from accepting his proposal with pleasure. We never doubt Morgiana's actual reliability: it is she who supplies an effective spirit of resistance and hurry's to Adelaide's side when Delmont's schemes are unfolded.

But Mrs. Botsford's well-meant efforts at varying her tone cannot offset the pervasively pathetic or picturesque features of her novel. They are features which conform with the fashionable tendencies of the contemporary fiction just as much as the plot
elements or the types used for characters. The emphasis of the following passage from Mrs. Delmont's story, for example, is too marked not to permeate whole sections more neutral in tone:

The voice of Pembrooke faltered; a convulsive groan impeded further utterance; indescribable agony pervaded my bosom; I suspired convulsively; my whole frame was agitated. Pembrooke caught my hand, and tremulously conveyed it to his quivering lips; he kissed it with impassioned tenderness. His emotion overpowered him; he groaned in anguish of soul, and bathed my trembling hand with copious tears. Mine flowed profusely and in silence; respiration became short; my frame was agitated almost to dissolution, and, in anguish of soul, I exclaimed falteringly, ah! ill-fated Emilia! death, only, can mitigate thy anguish! I sank unconsciously on the shoulder of Ormond. (1:122)

Individual elegant phrasings also contribute to the artificial character of the book, a character further strengthened by the use of elaborate landscape settings which encourage and reflect the sentimental lyricism of certain figures. The writer's inability to choose discerningly from the tempting abundance of popular fiction material results in many passages and details obviously written for effect alone. Here is a literary landscape typical of the stylized manner of the minor novelists of the age; it describes by means of accumulation and heterogeneous variety, instead of by selection and arrangement, and ends on a pious admonition:

From a thicket composed of venerable oaks, pines, cedars, &c. and which you would suppose impenetrable, you are led by a winding path into a beauuteous lawn, nearly encircled by wood, and from thence a serpentine path conducts to an eminence on which the mansion is erected. On approaching it, you pass through an enclosure where a profusion of shrubbery diffuses grateful fragrance and regales the eye with various vivid hues. Passing through an arbour in the centre, which is composed of grape-vines, jasmine, and honey-suckle, you at length arrive at the portico; while the feathered inhabitants of this little paradise salute the ear with various exquisite notes, in which they vie to compensate for their intrusion. The opposite side of the building commands an extensive view of the Delaware, which
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is scarcely two hundred yards distant. The adjacent scenery is romantic beyond description. The eminences command extensive and sublime prospects, calculated to elevate the soul. Rocks of immense height, covered with moss of the most vivid green, wild roses and flowers of various hues, contrasted with the laurel, cedar, silver pines, &c. have a pleasing effect. In another direction, the rivulet's serpentine course among the richly embroidered meadows, is scarcely inferior. And can the eye be ever sated with the beauties of nature? How insensate the being who can behold and merely admire. The numerous beauties which are perpetually present should awaken rapturous sensations, on reflecting that the hand which formed them is Divine.

(1:150)

Clayton, Colden, Samuel Beaumont—they all undergo various adventures abroad until the obstacles raised by parental prejudices can conveniently be done away with. In Fidelity Rewarded, or, The History of Polly Granville (1796) Danford is similarly exiled when the father of his Polly abruptly decrees that the hero is not good enough for the girl. What happens to him on the voyage that is to bring him prosperity remains unknown; only the fact of his prosperity is relevant, since it is part of Polly's reward for her fidelity. The girl makes plain in her very first letter, to her friend Sophia, that she believes in keeping promises. Though the person of Mr. Stapleton, promoted by Mr. Granville, is morally and physically repulsive enough to account for the young lady's refusal, yet it is chiefly the fact that she considers herself engaged to Danford—with her parents' tacit agreement, too—that gives Polly the strength to resist her father's wishes. Hers is not just a struggle between love and duty but between two different orders of duty. On the one hand, there is a temporal one, valid enough in itself but distorted through the conceptions that influence it, especially the materialism that blots out love; on the other hand there is a sort of duty which immediately and unadulteratedly reflects its dependence on transcendent principles. Backed by her love for Danford, Polly maintains her willingness to meet all the legitimate requirements of filial duty, as long as she must not offend against religion and honor. She is very quickly victorious, for Granville underestimates the force that can be derived from convictions such as
Polly's. He also misunderstands the motives of Danford in leaving Polly and is therefore so much baffled when his daughter persists in rejecting Stapleton even after her lover's seeming desertion that he gives her up as hopeless. The truce achieved when Polly is allowed to go and stay with her uncle paves the way for the girl's triumph. She obviously deserves it, we are given to understand, if only because she has resisted the temptation of eloping with Danford and marrying without her father's consent. Providence steps in as her ally and humbles Mr. Granville into a proper notion of his insignificance. Threatened with bankruptcy and abandoned by those he thought his friends, he cannot help concluding that Polly was right in relying on a transcendent being. One of Polly's rewards, therefore, turns out to be her father's conversion to a moral view of things (p. 71).

He becomes fully aware of Danford's merits; and his son-in-law Murfee in turn experiences a similar change from flint-heartedness to Christian disinterestedness, so that Granville can be the first to congratulate him on his reformation (p. 94).

The characters of this novel generally move in pairs, such as Granville-Murfee. Danford, altruistic, generous, and forgiving, has a partner in the person of Polly's uncle (pp. 7, 45). The worldly Stapleton (pp. 16-17), whose very ugliness (p. 5) reflects his inner rottenness, finds himself yoked in marriage to a caricature of a suitable wife. Danford and Polly form one unit rather than a couple; their very letters mutually echo and repeat certain statements and phrases; they are truly "of a consonant turn of mind" (p. 11). Polly carries off the role of the steadfast girl with greater confidence than other heroines and with commendably few tears. For all her confidence, she responds, like Pamela, rather sensitively to her trials; among these we must include the meetings with her unwelcome suitor and her irritated father (pp. 15, 43), as well as her wedding: ". . . Tremble, tremble went my feet all the way! Lay still, said I, you little fool! why should you be so uneasy? For my heart was ready to leave its orbit. After the first flutter was over, I held up better, while the ceremony was performing, than I was afraid I should" (p. 64). Like Richardson's heroine, too, she has her husband set forth explicitly his views on, say, the correct behavior toward
guests and the disregard to be shown all foolish affectations and fashions.\textsuperscript{41}

The author of \textit{Fidelity Rewarded} remained bogged down in the morass of a naive fictional moralizing. Rebecca Rush,\textsuperscript{42} who wrote \textit{Kelroy}, fashioned within the limitations of the contemporary standards among novelists and their readers a tale more convincing and, in its execution, considerably more careful and finished. With the partial exception of \textit{St. Herbert}, this is the only novel using the "cruel parents" pattern that does not offer a happy ending: it is as if the necessity of rewarding the virtuous and deserving kept the authors stuck with certain materials and compulsive ways of treating them.\textsuperscript{43} If Brockden Brown managed to preserve some of his genuine personality and artistry in the face of such pressures, the distinction of his achievement in \textit{Clara Howard} and \textit{Jane Talbot} is very much a relative one only: a comparison of these novels to \textit{Kelroy} shows up their limitations.

Despite its title, the novel of Miss Rush is not so much about Kelroy, in love with Emily Hammond, as it is about Mrs. Hammond, the girl's mother. She is introduced, with praiseworthy economy, as a widow who has been left none too well-off, and is now soberly planning a shrewd investment of her resources. Her purpose is to create an impression of comfortable wealth in order to obtain for her two daughters husbands correspondingly rich. She emerges from years of retirement and a comparatively frugal life which people think she has accepted for the sake of personally supervising her daughters' education. This is true in a sense, and Mrs. Hammond's confidence of having ensured beforehand a complete success for her schemes derives in particular from her faith in the example she has set the two girls, that is, reliance on calculating principles and rational coolness. As if to prove her right, within a short time Lucy wins the admiration and love of a visiting lord, Walsingham.\textsuperscript{44}

It appears, however, that Mrs. Hammond's conquest of a first son-in-law may prove a Pyrrhic victory only. Lucy embodies all of her mother's notions of purposeful and ladylike self-possession, and her very appearance bespeaks the fact (pp. 5-6): it is plausible indeed that she should quickly realize her mother's

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ambitions. But the explicit opposition between Lucy and her younger sister Emily (p. 12) suggests that the latter will not come up so satisfactorily to Mrs. Hammond's expectations. Walsingham has one friend whom he prizes particularly, Kelroy, to whose poetic gifts Emily responds instinctively even before having met him in person. In so doing she forgets her mother's rule to regard rank and wealth before anything else in a potential suitor and husband. Emily and Kelroy soon meet face to face; their attraction is mutual and not long kept secret because the two rely on their innate sense of values and therefore easily see through all that is mere social disguise and restraint.

Mrs. Hammond is anxious to dispose of her daughters favorably before her financial resources are exhausted; failure to achieve this would to her mean losing face and consequently giving up the chance of maintaining the lavish style of living she has had to miss so long. Her flaw becomes visible here: she has planned her campaign with circumspection, but she has neglected properly to assess her resistance to worries and delays. Furthermore she has forgotten to take into account her own liability to enjoy more of the pleasures of society than are strictly necessary to secure her daughters' marriage and consistent with her financial situation. Since Kelroy's position is at best only vaguely promising, Mrs. Hammond must envisage keeping up her rather showy way of life longer than reckoned. Still in possession of her wits, she refrains from asking the lovers not to see each other, but she tries to prevent their meeting privately. In this she fails because her general coldness has generated hostility against her, and a servant who sympathizes with Emily and has penetrated his mistress' motives admits Kelroy into the house during Mrs. Hammond's absence. Emily's mother finds out that the lovers have exchanged confidences and promises; she then unexpectedly encourages an unpleasant newly rich character named Marney, hoping to bring him to the point before Kelroy formally proposes. She is thwarted by the short-range worrying and inward nagging of her current expenses. Realizing that she is in difficulties, Walsingham none too gently blackmails her into agreeing to Emily's engagement. Mrs. Hammond has never liked Kelroy (p. 57) and therefore bitterly resents the engagement
forced upon her, the more so as upon second thoughts she feels that she might have bluffed Walsingham. She cannot, however, encourage Marney any longer. But when, during Kelroy’s absence, another suitor turns up who is more to Emily’s liking than Marney, Mrs. Hammond maneuvers her daughter into his arms by forging “Dear John” letters for Emily as well as Kelroy. This piece of treachery is to haunt her to her dying day: she learns that there is a tremendous difference between looking for the main chance on behalf of one’s children and what she has been led to do, separating a pair of lovers by means of vicious slander. Her crime clearly cannot be rationalized into a sensible measure of protection but instead reveals mercilessly an essential and monstrous selfishness. Mrs. Hammond, who has come to adjust to her financial situation and to keep her appetites in check (p. 210), too late pays heed to the moral issue of her ways.

Though intent upon moralizing, Miss Rush succeeded in conveying with some plausibility the two levels of Mrs. Hammond’s concern over Emily’s fate—the one justifiable if petty, the other criminal. Various characters, in the service respectively of more or less unmitigated materialism or idealism, serve to bring into relief the nature and built-in dangers of Mrs. Hammond’s preoccupations. The social criticism of Kelroy is harsh, though only once does it sound the depths of disillusionment (in some remarks which Walsingham addresses to Emily):

Experience will teach you the real characters of the beings who chiefly compose your species. You will find them a set of harpies, absurd, treacherous, and deceitful—regardless of strong obligations, and mindful of slight injuries—and when your integrity has been shocked, and every just, and native feeling severely tried, the sensibility which you now so liberally bestow on others, will then be absorbed in lamenting its own cruel disappointments, and inefficacious tenderness; and you will gladly consult the dictates of your understanding, to prevent being preyed on by continual depravity. (p. 129)

Generally it is rather the thoughtless acceptance of shallow social distinctions that is criticized; a small number of persons like Mrs. Cathcart are sufficient to give it currency, and it may then make

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for the rise of men like Marney, who “spend the latter half of their lives in striving to erase from the minds of the community all remembrance of the former” (p. 99). Moral indifference and intellectual mediocrity, Miss Rush was saying, can easily render themselves acceptable to society, whereas on the other hand the sensitive, reacting strongly on the level of the moral and the aesthetic, cause social discomfort and are treated as freaks.

Kelroy is obviously meant to be an exceptional being. He is very much a romantic conception: gifted with exalted faculties and inclined to sympathetic understanding or arrogant rejection, he is endowed with an aura of melancholy. He curiously combines dependence on his friend with a realistic view of the necessity of independent decisions and of his chances of obtaining Emily (p. 63). Yet he remains a shadowy creation; and we are not given any encouragement to elaborate the author’s presentation of him, which consists of direct statements and Emily’s thoughts concerning her lover. The girl, who hardly comes to life either, projects all her high hopes of mankind into her view of Kelroy:

In his character was combined all that appeared to her worthy of estimation, and she contemplated this living image of her own cherished standard of excellence, with indescribable emotions both of pleasure and pain. His learning, genius, temper, and understanding, were such as might silence the most fastidious critic; and she felt soothed by the consciousness that her preference, however misplaced in other respects, could only reflect honour on her judgment.

This is very far indeed from the disillusionment voiced by Walsingham. But Emily’s reflections now take another turn:

But his depressed situation, and her perfect knowledge of her mother’s views, convinced her that she ought, if possible, to banish him entirely from her thoughts. She endeavoured to turn her mind from these melancholy ideas to the happier lot of her sister, but the contrast afforded aggravated uneasiness, and she felt tempted, for the first time in her life, to arraign fortune of unkindness. She saw Lucy, cold, and heartless, in possession of the undivided affections of an amiable man, whose worth she
was incapable of appreciating, and mistress of immense wealth which she would never employ to any better purpose than the attainment of luxury or fashion; and whilst Walsingham was thus cheated into a union with one whose deficiencies she feared would be too early displayed to him, Kelroy and herself might waste the bloom of life in pursuing hopes, which if unsuccessful would embitter the remainder of their days. (p. 60)

Emily’s fate is to justify her misgivings. Like many heroes and heroines of fiction, Emily betrays herself as much as she is betrayed: by her willingness to accept the forged letter as coming from Kelroy, she proves false to her lofty conceptions. Even the spiritual legacy transmitted to Kelroy through the agency of her faithful friend Helen cannot efface that moment of treason. But Emily’s reaction to the fatal letter, on the other hand, may be said to contribute to rendering her more human. The Mr. Dunlevy whom she eventually marries (pp. 223-24) further helps to adjust the heroine to a scale of things not quite so exalted as the one she might wish to be measured by. Comedy is, perhaps surprisingly, also represented in Kelroy: there is the inveterate proposer Dr. Blake and the spectacle of the Gurnets, who are coarsely and derisively shown to be incapable of rising to anything like genteel social rank.47

Although Kelroy is an uneven production, the book nevertheless possesses sound qualities and offers reading both pleasant and interesting enough. The author was especially successful in her creation of Mrs. Hammond, a noteworthy step toward the conception of a fictional character which is both memorable and plausible.48 Other assets of this novel include a plot which is relatively unencumbered and a style which errs on the side of dryness rather than the elaborate manner favored by minor writers of the age.49


2. The passage here referred to shows a sympathy with Roman Catholicism which is exceptional among the American fiction of the age. See also the story of the "nun" from Montreal, a former Mme Dugazon rejected by her family for having married a Catholic Frenchman.
3. St. Herbert is taught stoic acceptance by an Indian who learned to appreciate his blessings only after he had lost them.

4. The reintroduction of Albudor after St. Herbert has completed his tale comes as a surprise: the Albudor episode had seemed a simple pretext for St. Herbert's story. Albudor's tale must be finished, too: it is a sort of comment upon the central narrative, and also provides a compensatory happy ending.

5. References are to the first New York edition of 1798. The same, unidentified, author also wrote Moreland Vale; see below, in Chapter 10, "Overwhelming Odds."

6. There are initial resemblances with Amelia, or the Faithless Briton (1798). See below in Chapter 12, entitled "Seduction."

7. See e.g., the perfunctory sketches of Bellmore (p. 16), Eliza (p. 27), and Eliza and Hargrave (p. 147). Thoughtless and malicious gossiping is mocked with the help of "humours" given allegorical names (Eliza's letter, pp. 27-37); there is satire of vanity and social affectations typical of a young lady like Miss Lovemore (pp. 170-71).

8. At one point Mr. Villars is so strongly moved that he must interrupt his story (p. 81), and the author once feels she must give up trying to express what passes expression (pp. 101-12).

9. Nothing is known either of Mrs. Patterson or of any of the alleged seventeen editions which preceded that of 1797, printed at Random [?].

10. Gauze and Beaumont plan marrying their children after the birth of Samuel but before that of Nancy; happily it is a girl that is then born to Gauze, and the two children miraculously do fall in love.

11. References are to the first edition, Philadelphia, 1801.


13. See Fiedler, Novel, p. 76.


15. Jane is not a weak character, for all that; obviously warmer and more balanced than Clara Howard, she is less intellectual and domineering. Brown used "psychological analysis" to present her but only "character traits" in his drawing of Clara, who, like Colden, remains in the background (the terms, not their application, are borrowed from Mrs. L. R. Wiley, The Sources and Influence of the Novels of C.B. Brown [Vantage Press, 1950]).

16. There are some misleading statements in the summary of Jane Talbot in Clark, Brown, p. 183. Talbot is not Jane's cousin; but Risberg, her parents' first choice, was. Jane met Colden, and they began their exchange of views, before her marriage with Talbot, though at a time when it was already decided. Talbot was estranged from his wife but did not marry Miss Jessup—he died.

17. Her pique expresses itself in sarcasm (p. 90; cf. p. 84). Jane's gentleness must not be mistaken for feebleness. It is difficult to accept Harry R. Warfel's view that Jane is "born to command" (Warfel, Brown, p. 198), yet she does insist "upon an exercise of independent judgment" (Clark, Charles Brockden Brown, p. 183). She may show symptoms of sensibility but she is of the type that does not swoon (see Loshe, Novel, p. 49). On the other hand she is hardly a "tragic" heroine; but see R. A. Miller, Jr., "Representative Tragic
Heroinés in the Work of Brown, Hawthorne, Howells, James, and Dreiser," *DA* 17(1957):2612.


19. “And whence this incurable folly? This rooted incapacity of acting as every motive, generous and selfish, combine to recommend? Constitution; habit; insanity; the dominion of some evil spirit, who insinuates his baneful power between the will and the act” (p. 287, cf. pp. 142, 75).

20. Thompson acts the part of a genuine friend and guide, though he seems to betray Colden. Mrs. Fielder, partly relying on information received from Thompson, paints Colden as “the advocate of suicide; a scoffer at promises; the despiser of revelation, of providence and a future state; an opponent of marriage, and as one who denied (shocking!) that any thing but mere habit and positive law, stood in the way of marriage; nay, of intercourse without marriage, between brother and sister, parent and child!” This system of morals is attributed to the influence of Godwin’s *Political Justice* (pp. 99-100). Colden’s guilt is like Hermsprong’s, in Bage’s novel, who is accused of having read *The Rights of Man* and having lent the book to a friend of his.


22. It is he above all who is less a character than a device for clarifying issues; see Cowie, *Novel*, p. 89.

23. Cf. Mrs. Fielder’s opinion of Jane’s zeal (p. 95) and the remarks addressed to Colden by Thompson’s sister (pp. 296-97). The reported speech and the succession of hypothetical clauses in the last-mentioned passage tend to emphasize Colden’s detached attitude; the same effect derives from Colden’s relation of his meeting with Frank, as if he had been an observer and not a participant (p. 181).

24. This confrontation has been aptly described by Fiedler, *Novel*, p. 76.

25. Like other heroines, Jane is a marathon letter-writer and can “maintain the writing posture, and pursue the writing movement for ten hours together, without benumbed brain or aching fingers” (p. 149).


27. “You know but little of Vironaldi,” returned Le Rapiere, “if you suppose that a few words uttered by a sanctified old priest, can bind him to any woman. He glories in enumerating his conquests, and makes vows merely to impose upon innocent credulity. I have been a witness to half a dozen such ceremonies since I have been in his service, and I have been the confidante of numberless intrigues” (2:8). See also Mandeville’s portrait of Vironaldi as a perfect villain (2:6).

28. Among these interpolated stories is that of Cazelli, which Mrs. Botsford tried to introduce naturally: being entreated to flee by a witness of his duel with Vironaldi, Cazelli “returned many acknowledgements for the service he intended, but politely declined it, and presented him a manuscript in Italian, in return for the interest which his misfortune had excited…” (2:148).

29. Olivia’s maid Maria, once deserted by Le Rapiere, takes the place of an American farm girl with whom he is planning to elope, and the scoundrel must buy himself off with gold and jewels in order to escape.

30. See, e.g., the stereotype portrait of Clifford (1:50). The Port-Folio reviewer may also have been thinking of the conventionality of *Adelaide* when
he described the book as "so insufferably vulgar" that he gave it up after a few pages (5th ser., 2, no. 3, [September, 1816]:259). The same issue of the Port-Folio spoke of the forthcoming publication of "The Invisible Monitor; or Memoirs of the D'Alvara Family, by Mrs. Shephard," but no trace of this novel has been found.

31. See also Mrs. Delmont's palpitations (1:78) and the scene of Vironaldi's death (2:206).

32. "She raised her languid blue eyes, and I perceived a tear glittering on their long dark lashes, like a dew-drop, tremulous among violets" (1:217); cf. 1:223, 2:227.

33. See, e.g., 1:20 and 107.

34. The book is further described on the title page: "In a Series of Letters; Giving an account of her sufferings for her stedfast adhering to her promise; and also of her deliverance from her troubles, and her marriage, in consequence of her father's commencing a virtuous and religious course of life." The moral intent of the book is also borne out by the remarks "To the Public," which stress the authenticity of the story, and the "happy family" ending (pp. 98-99).

35. There is duty and Duty for Polly, just as there seemed to be love and Love for Clara Howard.

36. She wins her mother over even faster than her father, yet must overcome her mother's family pride and view of marrying for profit (see pp. 6, 9).

37. She is advised to do so by Sophia; see letters 5, 12, 14.

38. "Your behaviour, Sir, was ever consistent with virtue, and a religious mind—whilst mine was quite the reverse" (p. 57). For the "reverse" see p. 42.

39. "She is of a dark complexion, with coarse black hair, and black eyes; which, at the first sight, show a degree of brilliance; but it needs but a small degree of physiognomy, to discover, that they are filled with malignant spite. She is full faced, and all her features rather coarse; and being pretty tall and bulky, one would be led to think, that none could like her for her person. ...She is of a ludicrous turn of mind, and affects to be a wit; which leads her to be very loquacious; though for the most part, her prattle is without connexion or sense. And this she generally makes more contemptible, by setting up a large laugh at the end of every sentence, which I think indicates brutality of manners. She is of a dictatorial temper, and therefore cannot bear to be contradicted" (pp. 86-87).

40. In letters 8 (from Danford) and 9 (to Danford), the following sentence is repeated verbatim: "We ought not to use fraud in any case whatsoever, but trust all our affairs in the hands of a kind Providence" (pp. 29, 31). Letters 1 and 2 similarly express the same thoughts in language identical or closely resembling.

41. See letter 26. Sophia's coy playing with the word "husband" is another borrowing from the Richardsonian school of writing (p. 48).

42. Allibone, A Critical Dictionary of English Literature, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1838-71), 2:1893, informs us that Miss Rush, the daughter of Judge Jacob Rush and niece of Benjamin Rush, was paid $100 for Kelroy. The book appeared in Philadelphia in 1812.

43. In passing, mention may be made here of the twelve page Eugenius and Selima; or, The Fatal Effects of Parental Tyranny, which ends on the decline of the broken-hearted lovers; "The Cruel Father," in which Malvolio victimizes his son Adolphus and the latter's young wife, and repents only after
the couple's death (R. Ladd, comp., *The History of Albert and Eliza*, pp. 55-88); "History of Amelia, or Malevolence Defeated," first published in the *Columbian Magazine* (August, 1787) and reprinted with *Amelia, or the Faithless Briton*, where the malice of Mrs. Wormwood is explained by her being the child of a wealthy miser; "Suicide Attempted," chap. 4 of William Ray, *The American Tars in Tripolitan Slavery*, a story which ends happily although the young girl in question is first tricked into marrying a man of her father's choice.

44. Mrs. Hammond's task must not seem too easy; the first candidate for the hand of Lucy proves too prudent to be caught (p. 14).

45. To match Lucy's portrait (pp. 5-6) there is one of Emily (pp. 6-7).

46. Kelroy, though deeply moved by a song, is wounded by the raucous applause of those present and provokes a discussion on the merits of not feeling and imagining too keenly and thus avoiding extremes of grief or joy (chap. 4).


48. Quinn, *American Fiction*, p. 39, pronounces Mrs. Hammond a lifelike character. In the view of Dr. Loshe the whole of *Kelroy* is rather more natural than other works of fiction of the age (p. 15).

49. Neither plot nor style quite escape blame. There are too obvious coincidences, such as the fire which destroys Mrs. Hammond's property, with the exception of a lottery ticket that wins her $50,000, some time later, or the accident which throws Dunlevy and Emily together. There are passages skillfully written, such as the one on Marney, but there are very clumsy ones, too (e.g., pp. 201-2).