Wieland; and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist Study Guide

Wieland; and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist by Charles Brockden Brown

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

Wieland by Charles Brockden Brown is a novel of supernatural horror set near Philadelphia in the mid 1700s. Narrated by Clara Wieland, it relates her brother's descent into madness, ending with his murdering his family. It is one of the earliest American novels.

Clara lives with her brother and his family on the grounds of Mettingen, the family estate. Her brother, Theodore, has married her friend, Catharine Pleyel. Clara is in love with Catharine's brother Henry Pleyel. Clara, Henry Pleyel and Wieland start hearing mysterious voices on the estate. At first they take them to be benign, warning of dangers. Clara overhears men in her closet, apparently plotting to murder her. She runs to her brother for help, collapsing on his doorstep, and the mysterious voice warns Wieland that she needs help.

An old acquaintance of Pleyel's appears. He is called Francis Carwin. Clara immediately identifies him as a villain. He offers rationales for the supernatural voices, but Wieland rejects them. Clara's love for Pleyel grows and she is distraught when he fails to appear as agreed one day. That evening she again hears voices in her closet and decides to confront them. She finds Carwin in her closet. He claims he had planned to rape her, but she is protected. He then flees.

The following day, Pleyel appears and accuses Clara of having entered a sexual relationship with Carwin. He is angry at her having dishonored herself and calls Carwin a murderer and a thief. He claims to have overheard Clara talking with Carwin during an illicit meeting, though Clara knows that the meeting had not taken place. Though he still cares for her, Pleyel severs all ties with Clara.

Clara receives a note from Carwin asking for a meeting so that he can explain himself. When Clara arrives for the meeting, she finds the murdered body of her sister-in-law, Catharine. Wieland and Catharine's children have also been murdered. Clara is horrified to learn that Wieland has confessed to the crime, claiming he acted under direction from God. Clara believes that Carwin must have led her brother into madness. Clara falls ill and is cared for by her uncle. She agrees to go with him to Europe, but first returns to Mettingen to recover her diary.

At her house, she meets Carwin. He denies any complicity in the murders but explains that he regrets his actions towards Clara. He had not intended her harm, but events had spiraled out of his control. He tells her that he was responsible for all the mysterious voices, as he has the ability to mimic people and also to throw his voice so that it sounds like it is coming from somewhere else. This only convinces Clara further that Carwin was the voice of God that Wieland claims to have heard.

Wieland, having escaped the authorities, appears and means to kill Clara too. Carwin saves her by pretending to be the true voice of God and telling Wieland that he had never commanded him to kill his family. In grief, Wieland kills himself instead.

Three years later, Clara has gone to Europe with her uncle, reconciled with Pleyel and is married. She reflects that Wieland's weakness of character allowed him to be led astray and that Carwin would not have been able to manipulate him if he had been stronger.

The companion piece to Wieland, Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist, is an incomplete tale, detailing Carwin's early life. He explains how he developed his vocal abilities after discovering the acoustic effects of echoes in a glen near his home. His aunt took him in, but he was left destitute upon her death. He accepted the kindness of a Mr. Ludloe, who took him to Europe and educated him. Ludloe was a utopian that was keen to build a perfect society. He took Carwin under his wing into a sort of apprenticeship, beginning the task of indoctrinating him into a secret society and warning Carwin that any disclosure of its secrets would result in his death. The narrative ends as Carwin begins to doubt Ludloe's intentions and begins concealing things from his past despite Ludloe's warnings not to do so.

Advertisement & Chapter I

Advertisement & Chapter I Summary

Wieland is a novel of horror and the supernatural set near Philadelphia in the mid 1700s. Related in the form of a letter by Clara Wieland, it details a series of chilling events including her brother's descent into madness, culminating in his murder of his family. One of the earliest American novels, it also satirizes the popular Gothic horror stories of Europe at the time by playing with a format familiar to readers of the era and offering scientific rationales for the supernatural appearances of the story.

The author begins with a brief note to the reader. It addresses that the rare occurrences of the novel can be explained and are loosely inspired by recent true events. It sets the time frame of the narrative as being between the end of the French Revolution and the beginning of the American Revolution and alludes to a second work, Memoirs of Carwin, the fate of which, he says, depends on the reception of Wieland.

Chapter I begins with a warning from the yet unnamed narrator of the fantastic horrors that she is about to relate and the misfortunes that have befallen her and her family. She then relates her family history. The focus is on her father and how he became a religious fanatic in Europe, deciding that he must travel to America in order to convert the natives. He had little success in this task, but purchased land near Philadelphia and settled there, marrying and building a temple of sorts on the land for his own use. His religious mania had led to him discarding the tenets of any sect and viewing religion as a solitary activity. He called his estate Mettingen. The narrator discusses her father's descent into deep depression resulting in his belief that he would soon suffer a strange and terrible death.

Advertisement & Chapter I Analysis

The author's note, or Advertisement, is important to examine in the context of this book for two reasons. First, it explicitly states that the events portrayed within are rare but have rational explanations. Put simply, the appearance of the supernatural can be explained by science. The second reason is the reference to Memoirs of Carwin. "The Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist" appears at the end of the book. It is a fragment of a story relating to the character of Carwin, who is the antagonist of the novel. That the author mentions it in his introduction to "Wieland" demonstrates that he at least had the idea for "The Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist" at the time of Wieland's publication and had probably done some work on it. Thus, even in the author's note on the text, the importance of Carwin as a character in "Wieland" is foreshadowed.

The convention of the novel, that of being narrated through a letter or series of letters, is a common convention both of the time and style of this book. It serves to make a deeper personal connection to the reader, as the reader becomes a confidante to the

narrator, being directly informed of intimate details of the narrator's life. This intimate relationship with the narrator is furthered by her not immediately identifying herself. The close relationship between reader and narrator is assumed in the text, thus drawing the reader immediately into the tale as a chosen observer. However, this creates difficulties for the reader because it is hard in the early stages to identify exactly who the characters are.

The narrator immediately foreshadows the events to come, telling that the proceedings to be narrated are terrible in nature and warning the reader of the wonder of the tale and its devastating effects on the narrator. She establishes her family history and, through her father's story, how her family came to be in their lands outside of Philadelphia. This beginning chapter focuses mostly on her father and the key elements of his religious fanaticism and depression. By establishing these elements right at the beginning, the author establishes that the characters will be out of the ordinary. A seed is also planted of mental illness in the family of the protagonists and a susceptibility to the suggestion of unusual events, depression and paranoia. The presence of such traits in the father suggests that they may also be present in the family at large.

On a more basic level, the family history explains the setting of the family estate and the presence of unusual elements to it, most notably the summerhouse built by the narrator's father for use as a personal temple. With the opening chapter, the author establishes tone, setting, and plants the seeds of elements that will become vital to the tale at large.

Chapters II & III

Chapters II & III Summary

In Chapter II, the narrator describes the mysterious events of her father's death. Late at night, he had gone to his temple, alone. Her mother could see the temple from her window and witnessed a flash of light followed by the sound of an explosion. Thinking that a gunshot had been fired, she summoned the narrator's uncle to investigate. Entering the temple, her uncle saw a bright cloud of light that vanished as soon as he entered. He found the narrator's father, naked and burned. He had apparently been struck a heavy blow on the arm. Upon regaining consciousness, her father told that he had thought someone came into the temple but before he turned around, he was struck on the arm and set on fire by a bright spark. He refused to say any more, leaving the impression that he was not telling all that had happened. Shortly afterward, her father died. This event was hard to explain. The night had been calm and cloudless, precluding the possibility of a lightning strike, and the cloud viewed by her uncle defied easy explanation.

Chapter III details the years after the death of the narrator's father. Shortly after his death, her mother also died. The narrator and her brother were sent to live with an aunt. Here they developed friendships with another family, the Pleyels. The narrator's brother married Catherine Pleyel upon adulthood and took over his father's estate. The narrator moved to a small house on the estate separate from her brother's. They adapted their father's old temple into a summerhouse where they socialized, played music, and engaged in conversation, happy with each other's company. When Catherine's brother Henry joined their group upon returning from Europe, their happy little society seemed complete.

Chapters II & III Analysis

The mysterious death of the narrator's father further sets the tone of the novel. Apparently entirely supernatural in nature, he seems to have died by spontaneous combustion. However, in what is to be characteristic of the story, sufficient doubt about the nature of this death is left in the reader's mind. The father's refusal to relate the whole story of the incident plants a seed of doubt as does the apparent blow to the arm delivered to the father prior to his being set on fire. The cloud of light remains mysterious, but despite the mysterious aspects the reader is left with the distinct impression that the whole event could have been the result of an attack by persons unknown. This impression deliberately leads the reader to question all future events in the book that seem supernatural in nature.

Moving from her family history into her own personal history, the narrator establishes that her brother and father were of similar character, although her brother was of a more scientific mind. This further plants the idea of rational explanations in the mind of the

reader. The narrator creates a vision of an idyllic lifestyle despite the tragic past. Her brother and the Pleyels, who become family through marriage, are all the company that the narrator seems to need. They create the family unit that the narrator had missed out on through her parents' premature deaths.

The creation of an almost utopian existence for the narrator this early in the story serves to further cement the notion of impending disaster. The reader has already been informed that horrific events are to occur and the author has, despite early tragedy, created a life for the narrator so ideal that the only forward movement for the story is to bring it crashing down.

Chapters IV & V

Chapters IV & V Summary

In Chapter IV, the tale begins in earnest. Six years after his marriage, the narrator's brother has four children of his own and has taken responsibility for an orphaned teenage girl named Louisa Conway. Major Stuart arrives in Philadelphia on a tour of the colonies and recognizes Louisa as his own daughter. Her mother had fled to America with Louisa while Major Stuart was serving in Germany. The Major leaves Louisa in the care of the narrator's brother while he finishes his travels. Major Stuart frequently sends letters detailing his journeys.

On a May afternoon, one such letter provokes a debate between the narrator's brother, now identified as Wieland, and Henry Pleyel. The debate carries on into the evening when they realize they had left the letter in the temple and Wieland goes to retrieve it to settle a point of the debate. He returns moments later, looking troubled. He looks perplexed when he sees his wife, Catharine, sitting there. Wieland relates that he had been on his way to the temple when he heard Catharine's voice warning him to turn back because he was needed at the house. He returned and was surprised to find Catharine sitting there. Everyone else verifies that Catharine had never left her chair.

In Chapter V, three weeks have passed since the mysterious incident of the previous chapter. Pleyel is disturbed by the lack of news from Europe. He believes that his lover there has deserted him. While walking with Wieland, they hear a voice, sounding like Catharine, telling them that Pleyel's lover, Baroness Theresa de Stolberg, had died. Pleyel relates the story to the narrator, finally identified as Clara Wieland. Soon afterward, confirmation of Theresa de Stolberg arrives in Philadelphia. Clara is saddened by her friend's loss, but glad that he has no reason to return to Europe. Wieland's mind is further troubled by these mysterious voices.

Chapters IV & V Analysis

The main thrust of the story is introduced in these chapters. These mysterious voices are the source of the supernatural incidents to follow. The previous family encounters with the supernatural make Wieland in particular susceptible to these voices and they weigh heavily upon him, particularly as the first appearance of the mysterious voice happens as Wieland is on his way to the site of his father's death. On the surface, there is no rational explanation for the voices. Catharine has plainly not been present on either occasion that the voices were heard. That the information the voice conveys proves accurate even before the news of events it imparts has reached Philadelphia only increases the belief of the characters that something supernatural is at work.

In these chapters, the notion of family is examined. To Clara, Louisa is as much a family member as any of her nieces and nephews. Catharine has become family by marriage,

but she views Henry as family too. To Clara, family is the people she is surrounded with, whether related by blood, marriage, or not at all. These are the people that are important to her. Major Stuart represents the first threat to that family unit when it appears he is to take Louisa away. Henry's imminent trip to Europe is another threat. Clara is conflicted when neither event transpires. Her feelings of relief at her family unit holding together are mixed with feelings of guilt about her happiness. After all, Clara's happiness comes at the expense of her family's to some degree. In order to keep her family together, Henry has lost his lover and Louisa remains separated from her father. Both events foreshadow the devastating collapse of the family that is to come.

Chapters VI & VII

Chapters VI & VII Summary

In Chapter VI, the villain of the piece makes his first appearance. Clara identifies him as such immediately without immediately naming him. She first spies him from a distance and notes him because of his unusual appearance. Later that day he appears at her house to request some water. Clara notes that he is an unusual looking man, his features are not attractive yet they play on her mind. Most importantly he has the most appealing voice Clara has ever heard.

The following night, Clara is woken by what seems to be a whisper in her ear, although she is alone in the room. She hears further voices in her closet and overhears what seems to be a conversation plotting her murder. Two voices argue over whether to shoot her or suffocate her. Clara flees the house and runs to her brother's where she collapses on his doorstep. She awakes in a bed at her brother's house and learns that another mysterious voice had warned the household that she was in need of help.

In Chapter VII, a few weeks have passed and Clara has recovered. She relates a dream in which her brother seemed to be luring her to her death but she is saved by a warning voice. While walking the estate Clara does indeed hear another voice. It warns her away from a particular spot on the estate, saying that it holds danger for her but she will be safe elsewhere. Clara recognizes it as one of the voices from her closet, but the voice claims to have repented its previous part in plotting to kill her. Shaken, Clara meets Pleyel who has come to search for her. She relates the tale to him.

Their conversation turns to other matters. Pleyel has met up with an old acquaintance from his travels in Europe, a man named Carwin, and invited him to join their company. From Pleyel's description, Clara recognizes Carwin as the strange man who had begged water at her house some weeks before. Pleyel also teases Clara about being in love with someone, not realizing that it is he that she loves.

Chapters VI & VII Analysis

The introduction of the story's antagonist is prefaced by vague references to the calamities that he will bring. Though at first he remains unnamed and his initial appearances are innocuous enough, the reader is warned that Carwin is the villain. This serves to immediately make the reader suspicious of all of Carwin's actions and to view him in a negative light as soon as he enters the story. Juxtaposed with the continuation of the voices, and the first truly malignant intents of such voices in the plot to murder Clara, it is unavoidable that Carwin falls under immediate suspicion of involvement.

Yet, in the main, the voices continue to be mostly beneficial. The plot to kill Clara seems to have emanated from two people lurking within her closet. Though she only hears their voices, there is no reason to doubt that people lurk within. She is able to avoid

attack because she is awoken by a mysterious whisper. The others come to her aid when warned by another disembodied voice. Weeks later, the appearance of yet another voice warns Clara away from unspecified danger. The voices largely seem to be protecting Clara and her family from harm, though they continue to unnerve her.

Clara's dream of her brother drawing her to harm foreshadows future events of the book. At this stage there is no reason to suppose that Wieland wishes Clara harm. Yet the author's note has already alluded to a famous case of the time in which a man killed his family and Wieland's later descent into madness will lead to his attacking Clara. Contemporary readers would have more easily drawn the connections, but the dream plainly foreshadows future events in the story.

As yet there has been no attempt to explain the mysterious occurrences as anything but supernatural, yet the astute reader will already have realized that, thus far, all that has happened has been the hearing of voices delivering news and warnings. That the speakers have not been seen does not mean that the voices were disembodied, merely that the speaker remained out of sight.

The hints that Clara is in love with Pleyel introduce a romantic element to the story. Until now we have seen them as friends. Indeed, Pleyel seems to have been promised to another until her apparent death. Clara's romantic feelings for Pleyel remain hidden from him, but revealed to the reader.

Chapters VIII & IX

Chapters VIII & IX Summary

Over the course of a month, in Chapter VIII, Carwin becomes a frequent visitor to the group and inevitably the subject of the voices is discussed. Carwin rationalizes all the events, stating that mimicry is common and that all can be rationally explained. Wieland cannot discount celestial intervention. Pleyel begins to withdraw from the group some, and Clara realizes that his growing feelings for her and her seeming ambiguity towards him, because she is guarding her true feelings, are the cause.

In Chapter IX, Clara anticipates Pleyel's arrival, imagining that the time is close when they will reveal their feelings for each other. When Pleyel does not arrive as arranged, she wonders if he does not love her or perhaps he has been hurt or killed. Unable to sleep that night, it occurs to her to investigate her closet. As she approaches the door, a voice from within warns her away. Clara is determined and attempts to open the closet anyway, but the door is held from within. Clara calls to the person within to show themselves and Carwin steps out of the closet. Carwin tells her that he had hidden there and planned to rape her. He had made the attempt before, but his plans were continuously thwarted by the mysterious warnings and now he saw that she was protected and he would take himself into exile. Carwin flees the house, leaving Clara shaken but unharmed.

Chapters VIII & IX Analysis

Carwin offers rationales for the supernatural occurrences at the Mettingen estate. He seems to be a skeptic. Wieland is unmoved by Carwin's arguments, preferring to see divine intervention. As we will later learn, Carwin is the responsible party for much, perhaps all, that will happen. He offers the rational explanations because he knows what they are, but he is such a skilled speaker that he does not incriminate himself. This being the case, his behavior when he emerges from Clara's closet seems strange. Here, he unnecessarily incriminates himself. He claims that he had been lying in wait to rape Clara. We later find this to be a lie, but caught in a compromising position, the usual skilled liar offers an explanation that is worse than the intentions he later claims. Indeed, the only explanation for claiming to be a potential rapist is that he wants to remove himself utterly from the group. At this point, Clara, and the reader, must take him at his word. Later, his motives must be reexamined.

Coupled with Carwin's appearance, Pleyel's disappearance takes on an ominous tone. This creates an atmosphere of dread in Clara and, thus, the reader. Already fearing the worst, Carwin's appearance and words seem to confirm a terrible fate for Pleyel. This proves to be a red herring, but is a sound technique for keeping the reader on edge.

A curious aspect of these chapters is that Clara switches her narrative voice from past to present tense when anticipating the arrival of Pleyel. It is a strange and jarring switch, but seems quite deliberate. Though the convention of the narrative is a letter explaining past events, the switch in voice serves to highlight the depth of Clara's feelings for Pleyel. In relating her anticipation for his arrival, Clara is reliving the intense feelings that the event brings. This is the only such place that her feelings are relayed in present tense. One must conclude, therefore, that her feelings of love for Pleyel are more intense than any of the negative emotions that the events of the story cause. It draws the love story of Clara and Pleyel into sharp focus, which in turn makes the events of the following chapters more devastating when the potential love affair is torn apart.

Chapters X & XI

Chapters X & XI Summary

In Chapter X, Clara hears someone enter the house. She assumes it is Carwin returning. Her door is locked and she hears the intruder enter the room that Pleyel sleeps in when he visits. There is silence for a time. Clara, from her window, sees Carwin standing by the riverbank. She assumes that he has crept out of the house again. Clara creeps downstairs and locks the outer door before returning to her room, afraid as much for Pleyel's life as for her own.

In Chapter XI, Pleyel arrives and accuses Clara of having given up her virtue by entering into a sexual relationship with Carwin despite knowing him to be a thief and a murderer. After his accusation, Pleyel storms out. Clara seeks her brother out. Pleyel has relayed his accusation to Wieland already. Clara tells her version of the previous evening's events to Wieland, convinced that Pleyel must have seen Carwin leaving the house and jumped to conclusions. Wieland informs her that this is not the case. Pleyel claims to have overheard Carwin and Clara talking on the grounds of the estate during an illicit midnight meeting. Wieland believes Clara and urges her to go to Pleyel immediately as Pleyel plans to leave Philadelphia on a long journey as soon as he can.

Chapters X & XI Analysis

The events of Chapter X serve to mislead the reader. Clara's belief that Carwin has returned to the house is not corroborated. The reader has only her own assumption to follow, yet there is no evidence that Carwin returned, only that someone entered the house and went in to Pleyel's room. Indeed, as Clara did not hear anyone leave, her assumption that Carwin had returned is as erroneous as Pleyel's assumptions about her behavior. It will later be revealed that it was Pleyel who entered the house, checked Clara's room and retreated to his own quarters. For the moment, however, the misdirection of Clara and, by extension, the reader, enhances the atmosphere of dread and mistrust, giving credence to Pleyel's behavior.

Pleyel's accusation of Clara puts to rest any remaining doubts about his feelings towards her. His anguish at her perceived fall from grace goes further than the distress a friend might show towards such behavior. His reaction is that of an aggrieved lover, though they have not yet declared love for each other openly. Pleyel's vision of Clara has been destroyed by the conversation he believes that he has overheard.

Once again it is from disembodied voices that evidence is presented. Carwin has already introduced to the group the idea of mimicry. However, the possible solution is not considered. Pleyel reacts with jealousy and anger without considering the possibilities. Given previous events, his actions can be perceived as rash and unfair,

which only serves to enhance the picture of Pleyel as a jealous lover. Reason has escaped him.

Wieland chooses to believe his sister is spite of contrary evidence because he knows her character and cannot believe such behavior of her. Pleyel knows her character too, but his own paranoia and doubts override this, leading to his error. Given the events of the previous chapters, the reader cannot help but wonder how Carwin has been complicit in leading Pleyel astray. By Clara's own words, one knows Carwin to be the villain of the piece and thus are led to automatically assign blame for such events to him without needing to know how or why until the conclusion of the story.

Chapters XII & XIII

Chapters XII & XIII Summary

In Chapter XII, Clara goes into town to confront Pleyel. On the way she takes ill and goes to Mrs. Baynton's house to rest before the exertions of meeting Pleyel. Upon entering Pleyel's presence, Clara collapses, and fears this could be taken as a sign of her guilt. Pleyel implores Clara to admit her guilt in the matter and repent her actions. This spurs Clara to speak in outrage against Pleyel and his unfair accusations. Clara vehemently pleads her innocence, but her pleas fall upon deaf ears. Pleyel is sure of what has happened and is not swayed by her words. Clara collapses again and awakes in a bed at Pleyel's house. Pleyel is beside himself with worry and asks her forgiveness for his words.

Upon her recovery in Chapter XIII, Clara seeks out Pleyel again and again states her innocence. She asks Pleyel to recount to her what he thinks he knows. Pleyel grudgingly agrees. He begins by telling her how high an opinion he had of her and how much she meant to him. He worried that Carwin might seduce Clara, but dismissed his worries, knowing the strength of her character. He relates how he had seen some words in her diary while she was writing which led him to believe that a midnight rendezvous had been arranged in the summerhouse. Pleyel decided to investigate Carwin.

Chapters XII & XIII Analysis

Chapter XIII brings another instance of Clara relating another's narrative. This narrative, Pleyel's, is much more extended than has previously been used. It is a convention used in this form of writing that, while quite ridiculous on close examination, is one that the reader accepts. Nobody in writing such a "letter", as the conceit of the book makes Clara's narrative, would relate so accurately and word for word another's narrative. However, it is a common literary technique and such a well used convention that one need not question its use within this fiction.

For the second and third times in these chapters, Clara collapses shortly after sustaining a shock. She previously collapsed on her brother's doorstep following the first incident of hearing voices in her closet. Here, she is overcome without being able to speak upon first facing Pleyel and then collapses once more when he rejects her denials of wrongdoing. Though apparently healthy, intelligent, and strong of character, it becomes clear that Clara is prone to hysterical fits in stressful situations. That this behavior strikes her friends as unusual and worrying can be attributed to the established idyllic lifestyle that preceded the events of this story. It can also be surmised that this previously absent flaw in Clara only serves to strengthen Pleyel's opinion of her fall. He has built Clara onto such a high pedestal that any crack in her perceived perfection proves devastating to him. Clara's perceived wrongdoings are magnified to Pleyel because she has committed the unforgivable sin of dashing his expectations of her.

Pleyel demonstrates his own weakness of character. He is apologetic and repentant of his accusations when Clara seems ill, but returns to conviction over them upon her recovery. He cannot hide his depth of feeling for her and it is precisely this depth of feeling which drives his harsh actions towards her upon his perception of her loss of virtue.

Chapters XIV & XV

Chapters XIV & XV Summary

Chapter XIV continues Pleyel's narrative. He resolved to speak to Clara at the risk of angering her, putting her safety before the possible affect on her feelings towards him. On the way to visit her, however, he saw in a newspaper a story offering a reward for an escaped convict from Dublin, Francis Carwin. He had been convicted of theft and accused of murder. By the time Pleyel reached Mettingen, it was late. Upon approaching Clara's house, he was stopped by the sound of her conversing with someone. He crept forward to hear their conversation. He is unable to relate the particulars of the conversation because of their intimacy and details of acts of lust and dishonor. He does note that things were discussed of which only Clara could have knowledge. He finishes his tale by relating how he found the outer door of the house open and retired to his chamber, hearing Clara return and lock the door which served as a final proof of his suspicions. His tale finished, Pleyel departs severing all ties with Clara.

In Chapter XV, Clara heads towards home, stopping at Mrs. Baynton's for a brief refreshment. There she is presented with a letter from Carwin. In the letter he begs a conference at her house at eleven o'clock that night to explain his actions. In despair and feeling that no worse could happen to her than the loss of Pleyel's affection, Clara resolves to grant Carwin his interview. She toys with the idea of arranging Carwin's arrest, but decides against it. Despite Carwin's actions, such deception is not within Clara. Clara hurries back to her house for the meeting.

Chapters XIV & XV Analysis

The completion of Pleyel's narrative reveals his mistakes to us. He had drawn entirely wrong conclusions from seeing a tiny extract of Clara's journal. From only three words, his paranoia and jealousy had concocted the idea of an illicit midnight meeting between Clara and, he assumes, Carwin. Though he never sees Clara, he believes he is hearing her speak, despite the frequent visitations from mysterious voices over the previous few months. Upon returning to the house he mistakes Clara's closing and locking of the outer door for her return, instead of her securing the house from within. Pleyel is stubborn in his conviction over what has happened despite the numerous holes in his story. Clara does not help her case any by failing to argue these points. Pleyel's treatment of Clara is unfair, yet understandable. She offers no defense, indeed cannot offer a convincing defense. Pleyel's story is full of circumstantial evidence just as Clara's rebuttal of it would be. A classic he said/she said situation is created. Pleyel's word against Clara's. There is nothing she can do to convince him otherwise without firm evidence. This she can only obtain from Carwin, hence her rash decision to agree to his request for a meeting. Given her previous encounters with him, this decision borders on insanity, yet Clara sees no other choice in the depths of her despair.

Taking Clara to the edge of reason sets up the following events in which Wieland is driven beyond reason. The reader has been led to expect that Clara is being led into madness, yet will soon discover that it is the brother who has been made mad, his descent hidden behind Clara's own woes. The author has used a bait and switch tactic. The reader has taken Clara's bait and the switch is about to take place.

Chapters XVI & XVII

Chapters XVI & XVII Summary

Upon reaching her house, in Chapter XVI, Clara is surprised to see a light within. It vanishes upon her approach. Clara enters the house. At the foot of the stairs, she turns to look behind her. She sees Carwin and a voice sounds in her ear as if whispered next to her, telling her to hold still. As quickly as he had appeared, Carwin disappears again. Clara ascends the stairs, unable to go back with Carwin behind her. Nothing seems amiss upstairs, but Clara finds a note from Carwin. In it he states that someone else was there at the appointed hour for their meeting and that he will seek another interview at a later time. In the meantime he does not know how Clara will bear such an unexpected and horrible event. Clara is puzzled by his note until her gaze falls upon her bed and she sees Catharine, dead.

Chapter XVII begins with Wieland entering Clara's room. Upon seeing Clara he becomes troubled and cries to heaven to provide a different victim, asking if he hasn't proved his faith enough. He attacks Clara. She supposes that the death of Catharine has driven him mad. Sounds from outside stop Wieland, and he flees. A group enters Clara's room led by Mr. Hallett, a friend of her late mother. He observes the scene and proposes to take Clara to Mrs. Baynton's for care. Clara objects because she feels Louisa and her nieces and nephews will need comfort. Hallett tries to hide the truth from her but is finally forced to admit that Louisa and the children are also dead. Cursing Carwin, who she believes to be responsible, Clara is taken to Mrs. Baynton's, hysterical with grief.

Chapters XVI & XVII Analysis

These chapters contain the most horrific events of the novel—the brutal murders of Catharine Pleyel, her ward and her children. Though the buildup to this event might lead the reader to suppose Carwin to be the killer, there is sufficient doubt built in by Wieland's behavior when coming upon Clara. His words give a strong hint that he has played a part in the night's event and Clara supposes him mad, his mind destroyed by discovering his wife's body. Nonetheless, Wieland's character and devotion to his family stave off such suspicion to a large degree. Through Clara's narrative, it is still Carwin who is framed as the villain of the piece. His presence at the scene and his ambiguous note serve only to incriminate him further.

Before finding the body, Clara is warned to stop by the returning mysterious voice. Though she has come to view it as a divine intervention working for her good, she continues because the alternative is to return towards the figure of Carwin. The voices continue to be beneficial to Clara's interests, though she does not always heed them.

The brutality of the murders is the first true act of horror in the novel. Before this, events have been suspenseful, certainly, but the voiced plots of Carwin have not been acted upon. Clara has been scared, but no real harm has befallen anyone. Events, however, have gathered like a storm which has finally broken. All the threat towards Clara and her friends and family befalls them in one devastating swoop. The fact the Catharine was killed in Clara's room suggests that Clara was the intended victim, but the killing of the children suggests that the entire family was always the target. The myriad possibilities create a state of confusion for the reader that echoes the loss of reason that Clara suffers in her grief.

Chapters XVIII & XIX

Chapters XVIII & XIX Summary

Chapter XVIII begins with the arrival of Clara's uncle, Thomas Cambridge. He tells her that Carwin has disappeared, though he was not the killer. The killer has been caught. If Carwin played a part in the killings, his actions are unknown. Clara voices astonishment at this, but Cambridge informs her that the killer has confessed. Cambridge is reluctant to tell Clara who the killer is, but provides her with a transcript of his testimony.

Chapter XIX immediately identifies the killer as Theodore Wieland, Clara's brother. The chapter relays his testimony. He admitted his guilt upfront. He had gone to Clara's house because she was late back from Philadelphia. The house was vacant. As he ascended the stairs a burst of light dazzled him. He beheld a figure that told him to prove his faith in God he should kill his wife. He shrank from the task at first but eventually lured Catharine to Clara's house. At first, he was unable to perform the deed. Catharine recognized the madness in him as he declared his intents and reasons for killing her. She pleaded for her life until her last breath. After the murder, the light and voice returned and informed him that his task was not complete and his children must also be sacrificed.

Chapters XVIII & XIX Analysis

The author performs his switch in these chapters. Having built up the case against Carwin from the beginning, he now reveals that Wieland is the culprit and that the clues were there all along. The family propensity for religious mania as demonstrated in the father, Wieland's rejection of rationale for the mysterious voices, Wieland's general melancholy and serious demeanor and his reaction to Clara on discovering her with Catharine's body all come together alongside Wieland's confession to create the true picture of the crime. One cannot help but suppose Wieland to be mad rather than believe the sacrifice was actually demanded by God. Common knowledge of the Bible, that the author would have expected from his audience, would immediately bring to mind the story of Abraham and Isaac, whereby Abraham was ordered by God to sacrifice his son, but on showing the willingness to do it was stopped from the actual act. If God were the architect, would he not, ultimately, have stayed Wieland's hand? The author would expect such a reaction from his readers.

The confession is the first time we have heard Wieland's voice. This is a presented transcript, so unlike Pleyel's earlier tale, related by Clara, there can be no doubt that the words are Wieland's, unedited by either bias or misremembrance. The chapter is quite different in tone to Clara's voice. It leaves no doubt as to the strong convictions of Wieland, whereas there have often been doubts from Clara and even pauses in her narrative when she steels herself to write further about events. The strong convictions of Wieland, however, also carry a slightly hysterical edge that lends credence to the idea

of madness through religious mania. Wieland's madness fights with his rational self and wins. The rational side of Wieland stopped him from killing Clara without regret and remorse. In a way this makes the horror of the deed even worse as the resulting battle between the two sides of Wieland leads to an extended and terrifying death for Catharine, where a fully mad Wieland would simply have destroyed her unquestioningly. Of course, the brutal acts that followed his initial descent into madness destroyed the remaining vestiges of Wieland's sanity. Like other madmen of Gothic horror, however, Wieland remains quite lucid and able to reason and relate his tale, feeling quite justified in his actions. Again, this only serves to increase the horror of the events.

The introduction of a father figure for Clara at this stage in proceedings is vital, as she has now lost everything that is dear to her. Without an anchor to cling onto, in the figure of Cambridge, her uncle, Clara would have no reason to continue. We know from the conventions of the novel that she did, otherwise the "letter" that relates the story would never have begun, let alone been finished. However, the tone of the narrative, in which she frequently alludes to the detailing of events as perhaps her last act now makes greater sense and creates a genuine fear for Clara as the narrative moves towards its conclusion. When the tale ends, the reader doesn't know what Clara's fate is to be.

One other point to note is that, following the established conventions of the narrative, it is only at this late stage that Wieland is supplied with a first name, Theodore. Carwin, Clara and Wieland's children, among others all remained nameless in the narrative for substantial periods. This lends credence to the conceit that the narrative is written to a friend who would know of the parties involved.

Chapters XX & XXI

Chapters XX & XXI Summary

Clara is unable to continue reading Wieland's confession in Chapter XX. She has read enough to conclude, in conjunction with events, that the confession is true. Clara faints and is revived by her uncle, though Clara remains deeply ill. She desires to finish reading the confession, but cannot bring herself to do so. She instead reads the conclusion. After the confession Wieland was found guilty. He refused to offer any reason why the death penalty should be commuted, rejecting the judgment of the court as unimportant in the face of God's judgment. Cambridge informs Clara that Wieland was not sentenced to death, but to imprisonment on grounds of madness. Clara believes that Wieland was driven to madness by Carwin.

In Chapter XXI, Clara discovers that Pleyel's lover, Theresa de Stolberg is actually alive, having faked her own death to flee to America and join Pleyel. She remains sad that her friend's opinion of her has been destroyed, but trusts that the truth will, eventually mend the wound. Clara agrees to return to Europe with her uncle. Before she leaves, however, she wishes to see Wieland once more. Cambridge is set against the idea. He ultimately has to admit that Wieland has escaped twice with the intention of killing Clara. Clara requests the use of a carriage, under the pretense of getting out of the house, and directs the carriage to Mettingen, intending to recover and destroy her diary.

Chapters XX & XXI Analysis

After the preceding horrors of previous chapters, these chapters provide a respite. They are a time for Clara to consider events. She cannot shake the notion that Carwin bears responsibility for the destruction of everyone around her and yearns for explanation and vengeance. She still feels the need of a sister to provide what little care she can for her brother, despite all his deeds. In the absence of Pleyel's protection, Cambridge serves as her guardian and implacably blocks all of her notions, seeking only to remove her to Europe to begin life afresh. This creates a situation where Clara feels the need to escape her supervision, thus putting herself at danger for the climax of the novel.

The reintroduction of Theresa de Stolberg introduces the first notion of fallibility into the mysterious voices that have delivered news and warnings at Mettingen. Having declared her dead, Theresa now appears alive. At the least, this proves the voices can have been fooled. At worst it shows them to have been deliberately false. In either case, it destroys the notion that the voices are a beneficial supernatural intervention. They are fallible and, thus, most likely human in origin.

The fact that Wieland has twice escaped in pursuit of killing Clara leaves little doubt as to what kind of climax the book is moving towards. At the end of these chapters, Clara is alone at Mettingen. In the best traditions of horror, the suspense is only heightened by

the foreknowledge that Wieland will escape to confront her. Indeed, he must do so for to deny the satisfaction of such a confrontation, the author would have to break every convention of the horror novel, and risk anticlimax and disappointment on the reader's part. Likewise, a coming confrontation with Carwin is inevitable. There can be no other outcome. The success of the story hinges on the execution and outcome of those two meetings, and everything that has come before has led to this point, where Clara is alone and her protectors don't know where she is. It should be noted, however, that as an early form of such novels, "Wieland" helps establish the precedents and rules of such novels. Modern readers have come to expect such outcomes and this heightens their suspense, for the contemporary reader, however, the suspense was anchored more in the unknown. Both are equally effective and equally potent and thus clearly demonstrate the success and longevity of both this text and the genre in general.

Chapters XXII & XXIII

Chapters XXII & XXIII Summary

Clara makes her way towards her house, passing the family graveyard on the way. She hastens past, unable to view the graves. She enters her house and retrieves the diary. Everything that had transpired in her room floods her mind and she sinks down upon her bed, cursing Carwin. Filled with despair, Clara resolves to kill herself, but before she can do so, Carwin enters her chamber. The shock causes Clara to faint and she awakes upon her bed with Carwin seated on the floor, head buried in his hands.

Clara begs him to leave. He says that he will, but wants to understand what he has done to incur her curses. Clara accuses him of driving Wieland to madness and causing the death of his family. Carwin denies knowledge of Wieland's madness and of the killings. Clara bids Carwin to leave again, but Carwin demands an explanation. Instead, Clara demands to know whose voice she heard in the closet. Carwin admits it was his. Clara cannot understand how his voice could have come from her closet and sounded like a whisper in her ear, but she takes his admission as confirmation of his guilt in the matter of Wieland's madness. Carwin admits to deceiving Clara and plotting to destroy her reputation, but maintains his ignorance of other events and claims he has come to set matters right with Clara. Clara tells him of the murders, and the information seems to shock Carwin to his core. He offers a full explanation if Clara will be patient and listen.

Carwin explains that he possesses the ability to mimic the speech of others and to throw his voice so that it appears to be coming from elsewhere. He says his use of the gift has caused nothing but trouble. Upon returning to America after traveling in Europe, he discovered Mettingen. He remained in the area but avoided contact with Clara and her family. On the night that Wieland left the letter in the temple, Carwin was exploring. He had found the letter, but was startled by Wieland's approach as he came to retrieve it. Carwin used his talents to imitate Catharine, who he was able to mimic through prior observation of the family, and warn Wieland to return to the house.

Some weeks later, he had almost been discovered again by Wieland and Pleyel. He had hidden himself in a hollow. Overhearing their conversation, Carwin had interjected, thinking to benefit his unwitting hosts, by warning of Theresa's death, thus ensuring Pleyel would stay at Mettingen instead of going to Europe. His warning was pure conjecture, but extrapolated as a strong possibility from Pleyel's own words.

Carwin revealed himself to and began a relationship with Clara's servant Judith. He denies having seduced her, but admits that his relationship with Judith gave him access to Clara's house. Hearing Judith's glowing opinion of Clara's character and, chiefly, her courage, Carwin developed the idea to test it. Shortly after meeting Clara, he planned to counterfeit a murderous scene. His plan was to portray Judith as the victim and he expected Clara to enter the closet to help her servant. Ascending a ladder to Clara's closet window, he used his vocal talents to perform the scene, but was startled to see

Clara flee before even realizing that she was not the intended victim of the false murder. Following her to Wieland's house, he found Clara had collapsed on the doorstep and alerted the household anonymously.

Carwin regretted his actions, but remained at Mettingen, using a recess near the riverbank as his home. Learning that Clara often walked near the recess and worried about discovery, he again used his vocal talents to warn Clara away from the area.

In Chapter XXIII, Carwin continues his narrative. On Clara's absences from her house, he would investigate her chamber, having developed a deep fascination of Clara. He read Clara's journal. Upon one such illicit visit, he was surprised by Clara's return and locked himself in her closet. As she came straight to her room to go to bed, Carwin was trapped there. This was the night upon which Pleyel had failed to appear at Mettingen as arranged. Rather than sleeping, Clara approached the closet. Carwin blocked the door from the other side. When she returned to the door again, Carwin called upon her to hold, but Clara persisted in trying to enter. Caught in a compromising position, Carwin decided that his best course of action would be to allow Clara to believe that a beneficent voice had saved her from his plans to injure her, hence, his claim to have intended to rape her. He understood that his foolish actions had ruined his reputation in Clara's eyes and intended to leave her with the comfort of knowing that she was protected by an unknown benefactor.

As he attempts to flee, Carwin discovered Pleyel's approach and concealed himself. Carwin counterfeited the dialogue that Pleyel took to be an illicit meeting between Clara and himself. Carwin, himself infatuated with Clara, did not at first regret his actions.

He discovered the offer of reward for his apprehension in the paper, though he denies to Clara that he is guilty, claiming that he was framed by an enemy, Ludloe. He sought an interview with Clara to make some amends and restore her reputation. At the appointed hour, he entered the house but discovered Catharine's body there instead of Clara. He realized that in the given circumstances that he would look guilty and so wrote Clara a quick note and made to flee. Before he could leave the house, Clara arrived and he attempted, by use of his vocal talents, to stop her from going upstairs, but in doing so Clara saw him and ascended the stairs anyway. Carwin fled.

Chapters XXII & XXIII Analysis

The anticipated confrontation between Carwin and Clara is not a violent one at all. Her shock at seeing him does cause her to faint, but Clara is apparently in no danger from Carwin. He makes no attempt to harm her. What follows is a lengthy explanation of nearly all of the events that have gone before. Carwin is indeed the source of the mysterious voices. His earlier reference to mimicry is only a small part of how he achieved his deceptions. It is the combination of mimicry and ventriloquism that enabled him to deceive Clara and her family at every turn. Taken at face value, Carwin's actions have been stupid and destructive, but without malice. A combination of infatuation with Clara and truly beneficial intentions along with a desire to stay hidden led to most of the

appearances of the mysterious voices. Carwin claims that he never meant harm to anyone and only occasionally meant mischief. His plans simply had unintended effects and in trying to fix those effects he made himself look even worse, but tried to leave Clara with a feeling of safety. He denies any connection to Wieland's actions.

Such has been the picture painted of Carwin by Clara that it is hard to believe him, yet even Clara is somewhat convinced by Carwin's reaction to the news of Wieland's madness and the death of his children that Carwin was not involved. If, indeed, Carwin had been involved why would he not have attacked Clara when she was vulnerable. If he had exhorted Wieland to kill Clara, why not finish the job himself? Clara, and thus the reader, don't know what to believe when Carwin speaks. This is by design. Yet Clara, even knowing the power of Carwin's voice, allows him to relate his tale. The breaking of Carwin's narrative by a chapter break at this point is designed by the author to allow the reader reflection on Carwin's tale. He is yet to address in detail Catharine's murder and subsequent events. Even if the reader believes Carwin's explanations to this point, there is more of his tale to come which may not be true. Equally, the reader is left in suspense as to Clara's opinions on Carwin's narrative.

If Carwin is lying, there is clearly sufficient truth within his narrative to explain the events of the novel. One need not doubt that Carwin is the source of the mysterious voices. Whatever his motives, there was nothing supernatural at work in the events that he relates. As he postulated earlier in the tale to Wieland, there is a rational explanation for such events. The question that remains is whether Carwin was indeed the author of Wieland's descent into madness and. If not, can there be an equally rational explanation for those events?

Chapters XXIV & XXV

Chapters XXIV & XXV Summary

In Chapter XXIV, Carwin denies having had anything to do with Catharine's death, though he wonders if his actions set in motion the events that led to it. He says that he still does not know the truth of the murders or who committed them. Carwin is interrupted by someone else entering the house. Clara, having listened to Carwin's explanations now discounts his denials, thinking it enough that he has admitted his deceits, and still believing him responsible for deceiving her brother into killing his family. Carwin is caught in indecision between fleeing and staying. Before he can act, Wieland enters the room, unkempt and dirty. Wieland thanks God for leading him to Clara before telling Clara to prepare for death. Though she had been ready to kill herself, the thought of being murdered terrifies Clara. Believing Carwin to be the perpetrator of all that has transpired, Clara appeals to Wieland, telling him that Carwin has deceived him. Wieland turns on Carwin, demanding to know whether it is true. Carwin is frozen and cannot speak. Carwin gives an ambiguous answer, half apology, half denial. Wieland tells Carwin to flee, noting that he will bear witness against Carwin when they meet before God. Carwin runs.

Chapter XXV begins with a resolution from Clara to the reader that she will end her life when the tale is complete. She returns to her story. Clara and Wieland are left alone. Wieland is confused and disoriented, appealing to God, but apparently without any response. Clara, uncertain as to what he will do, seizes a penknife that she had concealed in her clothing. Wieland seems to have recovered some of his sanity and, though devastated by his actions, is taking comfort in having acted from sound motives, even if he had been deceived. He declares Carwin to have been a daemon, having deceived Clara in human form and himself in the form of an angel. He has decided that all that has occurred still comes from the will of God, and thus Clara must still die. He gives her three minutes to prepare herself. Before Wieland can strike Clara, Carwin reenters. Clara appeals to Carwin to save her, but he retreats once more without a word. Clara realizes that she still has the knife, but still she cannot bring herself to strike Wieland and she shrinks back from his assault. Here, Clara breaks off the narrative once more, protesting her weakness of will and the need to gather herself to relate the final events.

Chapters XXIV & XXV Analysis

The story races towards a conclusion. Carwin's tale complete, the only thing remaining is the confrontation with Wieland, and it comes as no surprise when he enters, having escaped from prison for a third time. Carwin's role in the murders remains ambiguous. Given an opportunity to confirm or deny his role, his answer is a mixture of admission of guilt and denial of responsibility. It is an unsatisfactory answer for the reader, but enough for Wieland, who is stopped from killing Clara long enough to consider events.

His internal struggle is the struggle of the whole book. He has to question whether events have come from the supernatural or the machinations of a human force. A rational explanation for almost everything has been given or, at least, inferred. There is sufficient doubt to consider supernatural forces to be a factor, but the skeptic has sufficient information to rationalize all the events. Whatever explanation the reader chooses, Wieland decides that, whatever the case, supernatural or human, the events have been driven by God and thus God's will is that Wieland is to complete the destruction of his family with Clara's death. Even the return of a little clarity to his thought is unable to overturn the religious mania that has gripped Wieland. He has gone so far along the path that he has chosen that he can only rationalize far enough to justify his actions. To do otherwise would be to admit that he has murdered his family for no good cause, and his mind will not allow him to accept that.

Clara has never considered that Wieland may have acted on divine orders. For her the blame has always rested on Carwin, yet in her need she still appeals to Carwin to save her. Though it can come as no surprise to her that he does not do so, given her beliefs about him, it demonstrates the desperation of her situation that she would hope for her salvation to come from Carwin, believing, as she does, that he has plotted her death from the start.

The danger of the situation is real for Clara, as she relives it in the writing, and this counteracts the knowledge that the reader has that Clara must survive. How else can she have written the narrative. The suspense is not whether she will survive the confrontation, but what she will do when the narrative is complete. The author knows that this is where the suspense lies, hence the more frequent breaks in the narrative as the story moves to an end. Clara keeps the danger alive by promising her death upon completion of her tale.

Chapters XXVI & XXVII

Chapters XXVI & XXVII Summary

As Chapter XXVI begins, Wieland is about to kill Clara when a loud voice orders him to stop. Clara recognizes that the command must have come from Carwin. Wieland, still confused, does not. Carwin's voice commands Wieland to throw off his madness and accept that he must take responsibility for his acts. Wieland appeals to God, latching on to the seed of doubt provided by Carwin's voice and Carwin affirms that God has never issued him any commands. Wieland collapses in sorrow. Clara, seeing the full effect that his return of sanity has brought, wishes for death to free him from his torment. Clara has dropped the knife and Wieland grants her wish, seizing the blade and plunging it into his neck. Wieland dies at Clara's feet. Carwin reenters Clara's room and reaffirms his innocence in the murders, though she hardly notices him. He leaves Clara and, ignoring the danger to himself, goes to Philadelphia to summon her friends. Clara's uncle arrives and tries to remove her from the house, but Clara refuses to leave. She has decided to die there. Clara does not feel the need to forgive Carwin, knowing that he will ultimately be judged by God. With that thought, she brings her narrative to an end, reaffirming that her death is near.

Chapter XXVII is an epilogue, written from Europe three years after the preceding storyline. The narrator is still Clara, revealing that she did not end her life but has since recovered from the horrific events of her tale. She relates how, after finishing the narrative, she took to her bed, expecting to die. Her uncle came to live with her, acting as both friend and physician to her. One night, Clara fell into a deep sleep during which the house caught fire. Her uncle rescued her from the blaze. Her rescue and removal from the scene of the horrors revived Clara's spirit some and set her on the road to recovery. She agreed to accompany her uncle back to Europe, as had been previously agreed.

Clara was reunited with Pleyel when her uncle arranged a meeting between Carwin and Pleyel. Carwin admitted his deliberate destruction of Clara's reputation. Pleyel had married Theresa, but eighteen months after Clara and Pleyel reconciled, Theresa died. Upon her death, Pleyel joined Clara and her uncle in Europe. In time, romance blossomed again between Clara and Pleyel. They married.

Clara relates that Carwin had been judged by her uncle to have indirectly contributed to Wieland's mania. Carwin was so affected by events that he laid himself on Cambridge's mercy. He was allowed to leave, and escaped the persecution of his enemies by hiding in rural Pennsylvania and becoming a farmer.

She also relates how Louisa's father returned to Philadelphia from his travels only to be told of Louisa's murder. He traveled to see Clara and she discovered the story of why his wife had fled to America with Louisa. A man named Maxwell had seduced Major Stuart's wife over a long held grudge held against the Major. Informed of the manner of

man that Maxwell truly was, she fled in guilt, taking Louisa with her. When Major Stuart is visiting Clara and her uncle, he learns the truth. Stuart confronts Maxwell and a duel is to take place. On the evening before the duel, however, Major Stuart is murdered. Suspicion naturally falls upon Maxwell, who soon flees. Clara relates this tale as a parallel to the tale of her brother. Clara points to the human frailties of the victims as playing a large role in their downfall, musing that if the Stuarts, or Wieland, had been of stronger character, they could never have been deceived and tragedy could have been avoided.

Chapters XXVI & XXVII Analysis

Carwin, held from the beginning to be the villain, turns out to be the hero, of sorts. He uses his vocal talents to save Clara. Carwin's actions have been, at best, foolish and thoughtless and at worst malicious, but his final act is one of contrition. Clara does not forgive Carwin, but does let go of her negative feelings towards him, leaving judgment of Carwin to others, not least God! Carwin's part in Wieland's actions is left ambiguous. Clara believes him to have been the author right to the end, despite his protestations. She even hints that Carwin eventually admitted as much, though her words too, are unclear in their precise meaning. Her uncle absolves Carwin of direct blame, though he does believe Carwin indirectly contributed to Wieland's mania. In the end, it is left to the reader to decide the full extent of Carwin's wrongdoings and culpability.

In destroying Wieland's religious fantasy whether the reader holds it to be true that Wieland was directed by God becomes irrelevant when Wieland ceases to believe it, Carwin also destroys any remaining justification for Wieland to keep on living. The only thing Wieland had been able to cling to when his justifications began to unravel was that all had been directed by God. In imitating a divine voice and telling Wieland that all emanated from Wieland himself, Carwin opened the floodgates of overwhelming guilt that had had been kept closed by Wieland's constructed reality. The only remaining option for Wieland was suicide. In keeping of the traditions of horror, the climax comes down to the survival of the protagonist, Clara, or her potential killer, Wieland. Clara survives, as the reader knew from the beginning that she must, but the ending seems bittersweet with her determination to die upon the conclusion of the narrative.

The final chapter is an oddity. It ties up loose ends that don't really require tying up. Though a happy ending for Clara is welcome, it doesn't really serve the story. One doesn't need to know the fates of Pleyel, Carwin or Major Stuart. Their ultimate fates lie outside the scope of the tale, but the author has obviously felt the need to tie everything together as neatly as possible. The final fate of Major Stuart serves as a morality tale of sorts, but the moral is a severely pessimistic one. In essence the author argues that the victim's share the blame for their sufferings because they were not strong enough to evade deception. It is viewed as a character flaw worthy of blame that humans are imperfect. This ending is not really satisfactory, but it is thought provoking. One might not agree with the argument, but it is difficult to walk away from the story without considering it. In this way, the author drives home a theme of his story, the imperfection of human character, more explicitly at the expense of what might have been a more

satisfactory, if equally bleak ending if the final chapter had been omitted. Clara's happy ending sits ill at ease with not only the tone of the story, but even the tone of the final chapter. This is no doubt why her marriage to Pleyel is glossed over, hardly more than a footnote among the tying up of loose ends in the story.

Memoirs of Carwin the BIloquist

Memoirs of Carwin the BIloquist Summary

"Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist" is a fragment of a story that tells the background of Carwin prior to the events of "Wieland". It is written in the form of a journal narrated by Carwin. The story seems to be about the events that led to Carwin fleeing from Dublin to return to America, though the fragment ends prior to the collapse of the friendship between Carwin and Ludloe, who is mentioned in "Wieland" as Carwin's enemy.

The story begins in Carwin's childhood. He was a farmer's son in western Pennsylvania. thirsted for knowledge, but his father believed that any learning beyond basic reading and writing was worthless. Carwin's quest for learning was thwarted by his father through beatings, the destruction of his books and assignment of labor. This taught Carwin to conceal and scheme in order to pursue his education.

One day, the fourteen year old Carwin is sent to bring the cows back from pasture. The cows had broken the fence and escaped. Instead of returning to report it immediately, Carwin delays to study the broken fence. He realizes his error and decides to take a shortcut back. On the shortcut, he discovers a glen which he was previously unaware of. Scared of the dark valley, he calls out and discovers that the glen has a strange echo effect, making his voice sound like it came from another spot. His task forgotten, Carwin stays in the glen to experiment with the echo. He is punished for not returning immediately to report the missing cows, but not a severely as he had feared. Carwin begins to return to the glen frequently, beginning to experiment vocally and learning to duplicate the effect without the glen's acoustics to help him. In time, Carwin learns to throw his voice and combines it with his skill at mimicry.

Carwin's aunt takes a special interest in him, wishing to fund his education and offering to leave to Carwin her estate. Carwin's father rejects this offer through his fear of education and desire to inherit his sister's estate for himself. Carwin's father is a strong believer of the supernatural and has claimed to hear the voice of Carwin's dead mother on occasion. Carwin wonders if he might not be able to use his talents and his father's beliefs to persuade his father to agree to his aunt's offer. He chooses a stormy night to execute his deception, but before he can complete his plan, he sees that the barn has been struck by lightning and is on fire. He wakes his father, but they are unable to save the barn from the blaze. Carwin wonders if some supernatural force had led to the fire to stop him from deceiving his father.

This incident seems to lead to a change of heart in Carwin's father. He decides to let Carwin go to his aunt for education. Carwin learns that the decision was hastened by his aunt's threat to leave her estate to strangers rather than the family. Carwin spends three years with his aunt, developing his vocal talents and pursuing his educational interests. Carwin also trains a dog called Damon. By teaching it to understand visual cues he makes it appear to understand English. Carwin uses his own vocal talents to

make it appear as if the dog can also speak English. On another occasion, during a discussion on Shakespeare, Carwin makes it appear as if the voice of Ariel, one of Shakespeare's characters, is speaking to the company from above.

When Carwin's aunt dies, he is dismayed to find that she has bequeathed her estate to her servant. The servant, Dorothy, evicts Carwin from the house. He is left destitute. Having expected to inherit, he had made no other provision for his future. He rejects the notion of returning to his father. Not long after, Carwin encounters Ludloe, a rich Irishman with whom he is already acquainted. Through discussion with Ludloe, Carwin surmises that his aunt's will is legitimate, but should have been superseded by a later will leaving her estate to him. He suspects that this later will has been hidden or destroyed by Dorothy. Even if his aunt had neglected to make a new will, Carwin believes that using his powers to incite Dorothy's superstition and lead her to acknowledge Carwin as the legitimate heir would be just. He regards Dorothy as having stolen his rightful property.

Before he can execute his scheme, however, Ludloe offers to fund Carwin on a voyage to Europe. Rather than trusting to the success of his scheme to deceive Dorothy, Carwin agrees to Ludloe's offer and departs America for Ireland. Ludloe offers Carwin a set of apartments in his own house. He talks to Carwin at length about his views on the world, the value of some pursuits over others and, above all, liberty and freedom. Ludloe disdains the artificial rules imposed upon people by society, though he must himself live within them to a certain degree.

Carwin seeks advice from Ludloe on what he should do with his life. Ludloe tells him that he is unprepared to join the "theater of life" (pg. 259) and should pursue knowledge. He offers Carwin free use of his library. He treats Carwin like a son, asking no recompense for his kindnesses. Carwin decides that he needs to have a goal to direct his studies. Ludloe is delighted by this observation and steers Carwin towards a decision to travel and observe the workings of different nations. They decide together that Carwin should go to Spain. Carwin trains himself to blend into Spanish society, even going so far as to adopt Catholicism, albeit only as a cover.

Ludloe is a utopian, working towards the creation of a perfect society, and Carwin interrupts his narrative to observe that with subtlety, Ludloe was training Carwin for his own ends. Carwin admits he was open to such manipulation due to his youth and ignorance.

While in Spain, Carwin corresponds frequently with Ludloe, who continues to educate Carwin as to the evils of society and the iniquities it imposes on people. Ludloe believes that ascribing the wrongs of the world to human nature is wrong and that it is the impediment of government that stops humanity's progress. He offers a plan whereby reason is used instead of violence, justice is universally recognized and the interests of the individual are in sync with the interests of society as a whole. He recognizes that it will take extraordinary measures to institute such a society. Ludloe comes to view Carwin as a protégé and wishes him to return from Spain as soon as possible. Ludloe has latched onto an idea of Carwin's that such a utopian society could be built through

colonization of an unsettled area, though Carwin comes to believe that Ludloe had already conceived of such a scheme and was pleased that Carwin was thinking along the same lines.

A new phase of Carwin's education begins. Gradually, Ludloe begins to introduce him to the ideas of a secret society to which he belongs. He has decided Carwin is worthy of inclusion, but wants Carwin to be fully aware of the consequences of joining them. The first thing of which Carwin must be aware is the condition of "mutual fidelity and secrecy" (pg. 266), which must be maintained on pain of death. This death sentence applies to the betrayer and to the one whom he has revealed the secrets of the society. Ludloe urges Carwin to think long and hard before deciding whether he wishes to know more. Indeed, he says that his love for Carwin induces him to recommend him not to learn more, as the road ahead is a hard one, despite the great compensation for following it. He tells Carwin that if he decides to proceed, he will have to undergo many tests to prove his worthiness.

Carwin decides to proceed and Ludloe informs him that he must disclose his entire history without concealment or omission. Again, deviance from this would result in Carwin's death. Carwin struggles with this, as he does not wish to reveal his vocal talents. Carwin takes his time in deciding whether to undergo the next step of his initiation, a caution which Ludloe applauds.

While taking a walk one evening to consider his options, Carwin comes across a highwayman robbing a coach. He hears a lady's shriek of terror from within the coach. Carwin uses his vocal abilities to imitate an approaching crowd, in panic a pistol is fired by the highwayman and the frightened horses flee. Carwin does not know whether he has helped or hurt the lady by his actions. He returns to his chambers to find Ludloe waiting for him.

Ludloe tells Carwin that an opportunity has arisen which will provide Carwin with a large amount of money, stately houses, servants, furniture, and the like. Carwin replies that he must know the conditions of gaining such property. Ludloe replies that the only condition is Carwin's consent to receive them. When Carwin pushes him on this point, Ludloe admits that Carwin will gain such property through marriage. This surprises Carwin, who knows that Ludloe disdains marriage.

Ludloe tells him that the woman in question is the young widow of a Mr. Bennington. Ludloe approves of this particular marriage because it makes Carwin independent of him, thus removing any danger of obligation from Carwin's decisions regarding Ludloe's secret society.

Ludloe arranges a meeting on the pretense of Carwin cataloguing her collection of antiquities in preparation for auction. His meeting is delayed because Mrs. Bennington had been injured in a carriage accident or the very same incident with the highwayman that Carwin had witnessed. Carwin spends the intervening time in Ludloe's library. He encounters a book of maps, hand drawn. One of the maps is a land wholly unknown to Carwin. He surmises that this is the land which Ludloe knows of, though it unknown to

others, the land in which Ludloe intends to colonize and create his utopian society. Soon after, the atlas disappears.

Carwin decides to begin his background interviews with Ludloe, but to conceal his vocal abilities. He worries that Ludloe is able to detect his omissions. This seems confirmed, when Ludloe demonstrates that he knows more about Carwin than he realizes. Ludloe warns him to think over his history before their next interview in order to try and fill any gaps from their first interview. Ludloe is not rebuking Carwin. He tells Carwin that it will take many interviews to relate a complete history, as no one can tell their whole history at one time without omission. Nevertheless, Carwin hears an ominous warning in Ludloe's words. Ludloe praises him for telling the truth and at the same time has provided him an excuse for not telling the whole truth, for now. At this point, the narrative ends.

Memoirs of Carwin the BIloquist Analysis

While it is an interesting fragment that gives one insight into Carwin, this story is decidedly incomplete. That much is obvious from how the narrative simply stops in the middle of the story, but the fragment is also rife with inconsistencies, from the spelling of Ludloe's name to logical inconsistencies. For example, Ludloe seems perfectly aware of Carwin's vocal abilities on their early meeting, yet Carwin resolves to conceal those abilities from him later in the tale.

The Carwin presented here is far more sympathetic than the Carwin portrayed in "Wieland". This can partially be attributed to the fact that Carwin himself is the narrator of this tale. As such, he is hardly likely to portray himself in a negative light. Nonetheless, as his thought patterns in this story can be more thoroughly examined, they form a picture of a man more in tune with his protestations to Clara in "Wieland" than the one portrayed by Clara in the same story. This fragment lends credence to the idea that Carwin was telling the whole truth in his confession to Clara. This conclusion, however, is suspect. Due to the "Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist" remaining incomplete, a significant gap remains in Carwin's background which may well serve to alter the naïve youth met in "Memoirs" into the villain portrayed in "Wieland".

Brown explores his theme of utopian society more openly in this fragment. A small scale society is portrayed in "Wieland" by the idyllic lifestyle of the Wielands and friends at Mettingen. Here, Ludloe aims to create such a society on a larger scale. There can be no doubt that such thinking on the part of the author was influenced by the contemporary creation of the United States of America and the "more perfect union" it proposed to create. Brown is clearly a skeptic, putting more weight on the fallible nature of humans to destroy such a society than the good intentions to create one.

From what is known from "Wieland", one can assume that the missing part of "Memoirs" would have detailed the collapse of Carwin's friendship with Ludloe. Some of the gaps can be filled in with the assumption that Carwin breaks Ludloe's trust, leading to his condemnation. This supports Carwin's claim in "Wieland" that he was framed as a thief

and murderer. It might be legitimately assumed that Carwin's so-called murder victim was someone to whom he broke the confidence of Ludloe's secret, resulting in her death, as promised, and Carwin's likely death through execution after being framed for killing her.

The mysterious islands detailed in the maps that Carwin finds in Ludloe's library would seem to represent New Zealand, although the given coordinates actually correspond to Australia. Australia had only recently been discovered at the time of writing. Very little was known about it or New Zealand. It thus served admirably as a possible location for Ludloe's planned utopia. The contemporary reader might have been expected to have some vague knowledge of the fact that lands had been newly discovered in the area, but details would have been fragmentary and filled with rumor, providing Brown with a perfect location for his storytelling needs. Whether they would have featured further in the untold part of the story can only be guessed.

In the end, however, the incomplete nature of "Memoirs" can serve only as a guide to the early character of Carwin, allowing the reader to make some educated guesses as to missing events and motivations. The material that exists in unreliable because it does not come in a polished form deemed ready for publication by the author. It exists as a curiosity that, while influencing the readers opinion of Carwin, cannot be used as a canonical source to answer any questions resulting from the ambiguity left in the text of "Wieland."

Characters

Clara Wieland

Clara is the narrator of the story "Wieland." She was orphaned at a young age and brought up by her aunt. When her brother reached manhood and married, she went to live with him on the family estate. Clara is happy in the small society she creates with her family and friends. She is in love with Henry Pleyel, a friend who she grew up with. The story provides details on Clara's background, but mostly follows her over the events of a few months that destroy her idyllic lifestyle. She is an exceptional woman who inspires devotion from her friends and family. Her servant, Judith, practically worships her. Clara is intelligent, caring and courageous. She faces up to horrific events and overcomes them, though driven to the point of despair.

When falsely accused of fornication, she defends herself stoutly yet is empathetic enough to understand why the misconception about her has occurred. When cornered, she faces up to attack despite being scared. She puts the interests of her family and friends before her own, even when threatened. She is also a gentle soul, unable to bring herself to violence either to defend herself from her brother or to revenge herself on Carwin.

Clara is willful and not easily swayed when she sets her mind to something. Even when warned of danger, she follows through on her decisions once made. Through her trials she learns that perfection cannot last, but is able to find a happy ending of sorts when she reconciles and marries Pleyel. Nonetheless, the events of the story scar her and leave her with a less idyllic view of humanity, even blaming the victims for their part in the tragedies that befall them.

Francis Carwin

Carwin is the villain of "Wieland" and the narrator of "Memoirs of Carwin the BIloquist." In the former story, he is shown to be a scheming character, held responsible for putting in motion the events that lead to the murders of Wieland's family. Though he protests his innocence in the murders, his true role is left ambiguous. Carwin is an odd-looking man, gangly and awkward with unattractive features. His voice, however, is enchanting and he uses it to manipulate people. Carwin has the talent to be able to mimic other voices and to throw his voice, making it appear to come from somewhere else. He hesitates to use this talent as it has caused him pain in the past.

Carwin is impulsive, which gets him into trouble. He becomes infatuated with Clara, not romantically but out of curiosity because she is a woman of unusual character. His impulse and nosiness lead him into trouble. He puts ill conceived plans into effect to test Clara and begins a series of events that get out of his control. Despite his mischief, however, he does seem to have a strong conscience. He attempts to put things right

with Clara even at risk to himself. His role in the murders remains unclear, but he is responsible for starting Wieland on the path to madness, though he may not have intended it. Wieland's propensity for belief in the supernatural and madness is fueled by Carwin's actions, however benignly meant.

The young Carwin portrayed in "Memoirs" is somewhat different. He is naive and easily manipulated, though still has the same inquisitive nature. The Carwin portrayed in "Memoirs" lends credence to the idea that his actions in "Wieland" were irresponsible, but not malicious. The events of "Memoirs" and subsequent events left unrelated clearly leave Carwin mistrustful and suspicious and his experiences with Ludloe, the utopian, may have had an effect, whether conscious or subconscious, on his part in the destruction of Clara's miniature utopian society at Mettingen.

Theodore Wieland

Clara's brother, Theodore, is a serious, intellectual, and deeply spiritual man. He is a devoted husband, father, and brother. Despite this, he is left unsatisfied spiritually by a lifelong search for purpose from God. Theodore was deeply affected by his father's death by apparent spontaneous combustion. He is eager to see divine influence wherever it can be found. This susceptibility to the suggestion of supernatural intervention drives him down a path of religious mania and madness when the inexplicable voices are heard at Mettingen. It is left ambiguous whether the commands he follows to destroy his family come from Carwin, true divine intervention or his own diseased mind, yet it is certain that a family propensity for madness and Wieland's own character and beliefs led him to easily accept the commands of the voices he hears. He performs brutal acts of murder and feels quite justified in doing so at God's command. When his fantasy is destroyed, taking his justification with it, Wieland cannot cope with his actions and kills himself.

Henry Pleyel

A childhood friend of Clara and Theodore Wieland and brother to Catharine, Wieland's wife, Henry loves Clara. His outlook lies somewhere between Wieland's ardent beliefs and Carwin's skepticism about supernatural events. Pleyel is willing to consider rational explanations and supernatural ones. However, he trusts his own senses absolutely and is thus easily fooled into thinking that Clara has soiled her character through interaction with Carwin. He is unable to reconcile his love for Clara with her apparent disgrace and thus severs all ties with her. Despite her protestations of innocence, Pleyel believes what he has heard with his own ears until later offered the genuine explanation. Pleyel reconciles with and marries his true love Clara soon after the death of his first wife, who he married more out of his strong sense of duty and honor than out of love for her.

Mr. Ludloe, Ludlow

A mysterious man of means who takes Carwin under his wing in "Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist", he is first identified as Carwin's enemy in "Wieland". Carwin is accused of stealing from him, but Carwin protests that Ludloe fabricated the theft and also a murder charge against him. Ludloe seems to have a long reach and Carwin is fleeing from his vengeance.

More is revealed about him in "Memoirs." Ludloe is an Irish gentleman and a utopian. He is working towards a perfect society. Ludloe is an imprtant member of a secret group devoted to creating a utopian society. He takes Carwin under his wing, but swers him to secrecy on pain of death. He treats Carwin like a son. It is never revealed what comes between Carwin and Ludloe, though it might be assumed that Carwin broke Ludloe's confidence. Ludloe remains a mysterious and manipulative figure.

Catharine Pleyel

Devoted wife to Theodore Wieland, sister-in-law and friend to Clara, brother to Henry and mother to four children, Catharine is Wieland's first victim on his bloody rampage. She fights Wieland to her last breath, but cannot prevent her murder.

Thomas Cambridge

Clara's uncle. He treats her like his own daughter, becoming a true father figure during the horrific events of "Wieland." Cambridge has a higher opinion of Clara's fortitude than perhaps she deserves, but he nurses her back to health when required. He becomes her literal savior when he rescues her from a burning house.

Wieland's Father

A deeply religious man, he is unsuccessful in converting the American natives but settles in Philadelphia. He suffers a mysterious death, apparently by spontaneous combustion. His death deeply affects his children, particularly Theodore.

Louisa Conway

Louisa becomes Theodore and Catharine's ward when her own mother dies. After reconciling with her father, she is left in Wieland's care while her father travels. Her death is Wieland's most brutal murder. She is beaten so badly that her facial features are utterly destroyed. Clara loves her like a sister.

Major Stuart

Louisa's father. He is occupied with traveling the colonies when he discovers Louisa, who had been taken from him by her mother. He leaves Louisa in Wieland's care while he completes his travels, but returns too late after she has been murdered. Stuart himself is murdered shortly before a duel with the man who seduced his wife, leading to her fleeing to America with Louisa.

Judith

This is Clara's servant. She is devoted to Clara but has a relationship with Carwin that allows Carwin access to Clara's house whenever he wants.

Mrs. Baynton

This is a friend of the Wieland family. Her house is frequently used as a waypoint for refreshment when traveling to Philadelphia. Clara recovers at Mrs. Baynton's when she falls ill.

Mr. Hallett

This is another friend of the Wieland family. His intervention rescues Clara from Wieland's first attack. He also brings the news of the accusations following Carwin from Europe.

Wieland's Children

Benjamin, William, Constantine and Clara, named for her aunt, are all murdered by their father.

Baroness Theresa de Stolberg

This is Pleyel's lover and, later, his wife. Theresa fakes her own death in order to join Pleyel in America. Her scheme misfires when news of her death reaches Pleyel, causing him great pain. Pleyel marries her more out of a sense of honor and duty than out of love. Aftwer her death, Pleyel is free to reconcile with Clara.

Maxwell

This is the man who seduced Major Stuart's wife for revenge on Stuart. This caused Mrs. Stuart to flee to America, taking her daughter, Louisa, with her. When Stuart learns

the truth he confronts Maxwell and challenges him to a duel, but is murdered before the duel can take place. Suspicion falls upon Maxwell, who flees.

Carwin's Father

A farmer in Pennsylvania, he disdains education. He is a greedy man, who sendsCarwin away to his aunt in order to try and get inheritance from her.

Carwin's Aunt

This is a kindly lady who takes a special interest in Carwin. She helps in his education and pledges to leave her estate to him, but leaves Carwin destitute when her will leaves everything to her servant, Dorothy.

Dorothy

This is the servant of Carwin's aunt. She inherits her employer's estate, somewhat suspiciously. Carwin believes that she hid or destroyed the will that would have left the state to him, but cannot prove it.

Objects/Places

Philadelphia

Among the most important political and cultural centers of the American colonies and, later, the United States of America, Philadelphia lies in eastern Pennsylvania. At the time of the story, Philadelphia's population was approximately 25,000 people and it was at the epicenter of the brewing American revolution.

Biloquism

Biloquism is the ability to speak in two distinct voices. Within these stories, it refers to Carwin's ability to mimic other individuals and to throw his voice so that it appears to be emanating from somewhere else.

Schuylkill River

Running for about 130 miles, the Schuylkill River runs through Pennsylvania, eventually joining the Delaware river near Philadelphia.

Camisards

This is a group of French Protestants. In the early 18th Century, they revolted against persecution by Catholics. The name derives from the linen smock they wore in lieu of a formal uniform.

Prussia

One of the great powers of 18th Century Europe, Prussia consisted of large parts of modern day Germany and the Baltic states of Latvia and Lithuania as well as large parts of modern day Poland. Prussia was formally disbanded in 1947 after the Second World War, although in practice its dissolution had begun long before World War II.

Romish Faith

Better known as Roman Catholicism, it is one of the world's preeminent religious faiths. Dating back to the Roman Empire, its seat has been in Rome and it stemmed from the earliest branches of the Christian faith. By the 1700s, the Protestant faiths had separated from the Roman Catholic church and were more common in the British colonies of America. Britain's main rival, Spain, remained Catholic as did their American colonies.

William Shakespeare

Widely considered to have the greatest body of literary work in the history of the English language, William Shakespeare was an actor, playwright, and poet from Stratford-Upon-Avon in England. He lived from 1564-1616 and produced some of the greatest ever written works including the plays Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet and King Lear and his collection of sonnets.

Ariel

A character from William Shakespeare's play "The Tempest," Ariel is a spirit bound to do the will of the magician Prospero. In the play, Ariel acts as Prospero's eyes and ears, relating events on the island to Prospero. Ariel creates the storm that gives the play its name and foils plots against Prospero.

Ireland

The third largest island in Europe, Ireland lies to the north-west of continental Europe and due west of Great Britain. In the 18th Century, it was dominated by England and under Protestant rule despite its Catholic majority. By the early 19th Century, it would be unified with Great Britain as part of the United Kingdom until the early 20th Century led to the creation of the Republic of Ireland, which consisted of the majority of the geographical area of the island except for a small area in the north-east which remains under British rule.

Dublin

This is Ireland's capital city and the largest city on the island. It expanded rapidly in the 17th Century and became the second city of the British Empire after London. Noted for its architecture and great literary history, Dublin remains an important cultural center.

Utopia

This is the concept of a perfect community or society. Based on Plato's "Republic" the word was first coined in the 16th Century by Sir Thomas More. It derives from the Greek for "Not a place," indicating that More viewed such a concept as impossible to execute.

Spain

The second largest country in Western Europe, Spain is located on the Iberian peninsula at the southwest extreme of Europe. A leading power in the 16th and early 17th Centuries, Spain was in decline by the time of these stories. Historically Spain and

its empire rivaled the British empire. Civil wars and war with France contributed to the Spanish empire's decline into the 19th Century.

Guineas

A form of British currency, this gold coin was fixed at a value of twenty one shillings, or one pound and one shilling, after 1717. This currency would have been in use in the American colonies at the time of these stories.

Montpelier

This is a city in southern France. It is home to one of the world's oldest universities.

Themes

Rational versus Supernatural

These stories are filled with apparently supernatural events. Mysterious voices, spontaneous human combustion, divine intervention, and talking dogs are all elements of apparently supernatural events. Brown presents three characters in a spectrum of belief. Wieland believes fervently in the supernatural, Carwin is a skeptic and Pleyel is open to both faith and explanation. It seems that Brown himself is more of a skeptic. Rational explanations are offered for virtually ever supernatural occurrence in the stories. For those instances where explanations are not given, a rationale can be inferred. "Wieland" takes inspiration from the popular European tales of the supernatural during this period, but Brown satirizes the form, by creating a tale where the supernatural can be explained away.

The voices are easily explained by Carwin's ability to mimic others and throw his voice. Carwin himself admits to these counterfeits. In "Memoirs," he explains how he created the appearance of a talking dog and the voice of a Shakespearean character come to life. Though he denies responsibility for the voice that Wieland heard, it can be easily inferred that either Carwin was lying and did urge Wieland to kill his family or the voice was a construct of Wieland's own imagination. The apparent spontaneous combustion of Wieland's father is not s easily explained, but sufficient doubt is cast by the blow to his arm and the sensed presence of another to infer that a human agency might well have been involved.

This is an early literary example of the concept that the supernatural need not be involved in horrific events, humans are quite capable of creating them on their own.

The Impossible Utopia

Brown clearly disapproves of the concept of a utopian society. In "Wieland," he utterly destroys the little utopia that Clara and her family have created for themselves. Clara begins the story as someone who not only believes in the concept of a perfect community, but lives in it. By the end of the tale she realizes that such a construct can be only temporary. In "Memoirs," Ludloe, the utopian, is a sinister and mysterious figure who needs a secret society to move towards his utopian dream. Writing, as he was, around the time of the creation of the United States of America, it can be surmised that Brown's stories are a disapproval of the "more perfect union" that the founding dathers were trying to create. Brown clearly does not believe that such a construct is possible in a lasting form. In a sense, he can be said to have been proven right. The longevity of the United States of America cannot be argued, but it would be difficult to make the case that it is or has ever been a utopian society!

However, the utopian community, by Brown's own portrayal, must be admitted to be possible if only temporary. Brown presents a scenario where the heights of creating such a community can only be followed by devastating destruction. He makes a strong argument for being content with what one has, including the inevitable iniqities of life.

Human Fallibility

All of Brown's characters are flawed. Clara, though an exceptional woman, is prone to fits under stress. Wieland clearly is deeply flawed, leading him to madness. Pleyel's dependence upon his own senses allows him to be betrayed. Carwin may not have acted maliciously, but his impetuous nature and curiosity led to events that spiraled out of his control. Then again, perhaps he did act maliciously, in which case his flaws run even deeper. The stories are filled with murder, mistrust, betrayal, manipulation, distrust and secrecy. The final chapter of "Wieland" presents a rather distasteful moral, whereby the victims of crimes are blamed for their part in allowing themselves to be manipulated. Their character flaws, argues Clara at the last, caused their torment and downfall as much as the evil agents acting against them. It would be all to easy to reject this notion, except that, as portrayed in these stories, it has a ring of truth.

Wieland was susceptible to manipulation and prone to madness because of his fervent religosity and belief in the supernatural. He did not have the strength of character to reject such terrible commands as he is given because he is all too quick to believe that the commands came from God. Carwin is himself manipulated in "Memoirs", although we never find out the details, but it is clear from "Wieland" that the results were bad for him and the story argues that he shares responsibility for that. Pleyel allows petty jealousy to intrude on his love for Clara. He is too willing to accept her loss of honor in his eyes, despite everything he knows about her. He and Clara do manage to reconcile, but his character flaws cause them both pain. Brown does not argue how much responsibility people should accept when they become a victim, but he does make a strong case that the perpetrators of terrible acts would not be successful without the collusion of their victims' innate fallibility.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of "Wieland" is first person. The narrator is not entirely reliable. She is relating past events in which she was a participant, but her state of mind is clearly troubled which leads the reader to question her recollections and their accuracy. Clara changes from past to present tense when particularly passionate or troubled. Her narrative is broken by frequent interjections about the horror what is to come next in the story and her own fate when the story is complete.

The story is mostly told through Clara's own recollection of events. It is interspersed, however, with extended passages of another character's words. These are related from Clara's memory and can thus be judged somewhat suspect and influenced by Clara's own viewpoint and emotions. The exception is Wieland's confession which is copied from a courtroom transcript.

The narrative is in the form of a letter to a trusted confidante. It contains certain literary conventions that allow the reader to suspend their disbelief at the letter's length and breakdown into chapters, but the form stays essentially the same. The final chapter is a separate letter and serves as an epilogue. It is also written by Clara but in a calmer frame of mind and so can be judged to be more reliable.

The point of view of "Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist" is also the first person. The narrative is in the form of a journal. The narrator, Carwin, in this case is less emotional and appears to be more reliable, although events are filtered through his perception of them. As a fragment, inconsistencies and mistakes can be assigned to the author rather than the narrator.

Setting

"Wieland" is almost entirely set on the estate of Mettingen near Philadelphia during the mid 1700s. The exceptions to this are the early chapters, relating the Wieland family history, and the final chapter set in Montpelier, France. Mettingen is an estate consisting of two houses, a custom built temple that has been converted to a summer house, a small hut and some grounds through which the Schuylkill River winds. The primary locations of the story are the temple/summerhouse, Clara's bedroom and closet and the grounds near Clara's house. There are also scenes in Philadelphia at the houses of Henry Pleyel and Mrs. Boynton.

"Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist", though shorter and fragmentary has more locations. The early part of the story takes place in Pennsylvania on Carwin's family farm and at his aunt's abode in Philadelphia. A nearby glen to his family farm provides Carwin with the inspiration for developing his unique vocal talents. Carwin spends three years in Philadelphia pursuing his education. Upon leaving America, the setting changes to

Dublin, Ireland and the house of Mr. Ludloe. Carwin has a brief sojourn to Spain but returns to Ireland. Much of the Dublin action takes place in Ludloe's house, but some happens on the Dublin streets. Carwin's travels to Spain, though established in "Wieland" are largely glossed over in "Memoirs", confined to only two or three short anecdotes.

Language and Meaning

The language of both stories is archaic and takes some effort and concentration to fully understand. Several words, for example "shewn" or shown are archaic versions of words in common usage today. The language is not a significant hindrance to comprehension, but care must be taken to follow the text closely and ensure understanding before proceeding to the following sections. Within dialogue, the tone is most often formal, even between family and friends. The language becomes heightened in times of great emotion or stress. Whilst difficult on first glance, the language enhances the tone and depth of the novel by immersing the reader in a world that is strange to them.

The narrators have different styles. Clara quotes other characters in dialogue which allows the reader to more easily distinguish one character from another. Each character has a unique tone and speech pattern. This can get confusing when Carwin is mimicking another character, as he adopts the tones and patterns of that character. As a narrator, Carwin rarely quotes the other characters, instead giving the sense and meaning of their words. "Memoirs" thus has a more uniform style which is, perhaps, easier to comprehend, but lacks the color and flavor of Clara's narration in "Wieland."

Structure

"Wieland" contains twenty-seven chapters of varying lengths. Most are ten to fifteen pages in length, but the earlier chapters disclosing family history tend to be shorter. Long passages of explanation are often split into two or more chapters rather than running as one long chapter. Each chapter focuses largely on a single event within the narrative. The plot of the novel is quite complex, with multiple strange events weaving into a chain that leads to tragedy. The central event of the story is Wieland's descent into madness and murder of his family, but surrounding occurrences create subplots whose significance does not become clear until the explanation from the antagonist, Carwin, near the end of the story.

The story moves at a fast pace and contains a compelling story sandwiched between early passages of exposition and an arguably unnecessary final chapter that ties up unimportant loose ends and finishes with distasteful moralizing. It is a linear story, although the later chapters return to early events in explanation.

"Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist" is a single long fragment of some fifty pages. It is an unfinished manuscript and some sections seem to have been unedited. The plot is a linear one, following Carwin from childhood through his involvement with a mysterious

man and the beginnings of his indoctrination into a secret society. What the final structure of the story might have been would be pure conjecture. "Memoirs" serves to give the reader insight into the character of Carwin but otherwise should be regarded more as a curious companion piece than a finished work.

Quotes

"How will your wonder, and that of your companions, be excited by my story!" (Ch I, pg.6.)

"Their characters were similar, but the mind of the son was enriched by science, and embellished with literature" (Ch. III, pg.26.)

"The accents were clear, distinct, powerful, and were uttered, as I fully believed, by my wife" (Wieland, Ch IV, pg.37.)

"Yet I could not bear to think that his senses should be the victim of such delusion. It argued a diseased condition of his frame, which might show itself hereafter in more dangerous symptoms" (Chapter IV, pg. 39.)

"And thou, O most fatal and potent of mankind, in what terms shall I describe thee? What words are adequate to the just delineation of thy character?" (Ch. VI, pg. 57.)

"Why did I dream that my brother was my foe? Why but because an omen of fate was ordained to be communicated?" (Ch. IX, pg. 100.)

"That Pleyel should abandon me forever, because I was blind to his excellence, because I coveted pollution, and wedded infamy, when, on the contrary, my heart was the shrine of all purity, and beat only for his sake, was a destiny which, as long as my life was in my own hands, I would by no means consent to endure" (Ch. XI, pg. 127-8.)

"One idea possessed me wholly; the inexpressible importance of unveiling the designs and character of Carwin, and the utter improbability that this ever would be effected" (Pleyel, Ch. XIV, pg. 147.)

"My narrative may be invaded by inaccuracy and confusion; but if I live no longer, I will, at least, live to complete it. What but ambiguities, abruptnesses, and dark transitions, can be expected from the historian who is, at the same time, the sufferer of these disasters?" (Ch. XVI, pg. 167.)

"All happiness and dignity must henceforth be banished from the house and name of Wieland: all that remained was to linger out in agonies a short existence; and leave to the world a monument of blasted hopes and changeable fortune" (Ch. XVI, pg. 172.)

"Theodore Wieland, the prisoner at the bar, was now called upon for his defense. He looked around him for some time in silence, and with a mild countenance. At length he spoke" (Ch. XIX, pg. 186.)

"Will you wonder that I read no farther? Will you not rather be astonished that I read thus far?" (Chapter XX, pg. 198.)

"I live not in a community of savages; yet, whether I sit or walk, go into crouds, or hide myself in solitude, my life is marked for a prey to inhuman violence; I am in perpetual danger of perishing under the grasp of a brother!" (Ch. XXI, pg. 217.)

"Great heaven! What have I done? I think I know the extent of my offenses. I have acted, but my actions have possibly effected more than I designed" (Carwin, Ch. XXII, pg. 223.)

"A woman capable of recollection in danger, of warding off groundless panics, of discerning the true mode of proceeding, and profiting by her best resources, is a prodigy. I was desirous of ascertaining whether you were such a one" (Carwin, Chapter XXII, pg. 230.)

"Fallen from his lofty and heroic station; now finally restored to the perception of truth; weighed to earth by the recollection of his own deeds; consoled no longer by a consciousness of rectitude, for the loss of offspring and wife—a loss for which he was indebted to his own misguided hand; Wieland was transformed at once into the man of sorrows!" (Ch. XXVI, pg. 262-3.)

"What his agency began, his agency conducted to a close. He intended, by the final effort of his power, to rescue me and to banish his illusions from my brother. Such is his tale, concerning the truth of which I care not" (Ch. XXVI, pg. 266.)

"That virtue should become the victim of treachery is, no doubt, a mournful consideration; but it will not escape your notice, that the evils of which Carwin and Maxwell were the authors, owed their existence to the errors of the sufferers" (Ch. XXVII, pg. 278.)

"I have no reason to suppose a peculiar conformation or activity in my own organs, or that the power which I posses may not, with suitable directions and by steady efforts, be obtained by others, but I will do nothing to facilitate the acquisition. It is by far, too liable to perversion for a good man to desire to possess it, or to teach it to another" (Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist, pg. 288.)

"A voice coming from a quarter where no attendant form could be seen would, in most cases, be ascribed to supernal agency, and a command imposed on them, in this manner, would be obeyed with religious scrupulousness" (Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist, pg. 301.)

Topics for Discussion

Clara and her family briefly live in an idyllic community before the horrific events of the story. Carwin is tutored by a utopian, a man who believes in the creation of a perfect society. Given human nature, is such a society a realistic goal? Would it work better or worse on the smaller scale of a community?

Most of the "supernatural" events are given rational explanations. Which events remain unsatisfactorily explained? Can rational explanations be offered for these events? Are supernatural explanations more or less satisfactory?

Does Carwin's explanation to Clara ring true? Is he telling the whole truth? Do you believe that he played no direct role in Wieland's actions? How does the fragment "Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist" affect your interpretation of Carwin's truthfulness?

Which scenario is scarier—that (a) Wieland was directed by divine command or (b) his actions came out of madness? Why?

Is Carwin sufficiently punished for his actions? Why or why not?

What role does the background of the Wieland family play in the actions and decisions of Clara and Theodore Wieland during the story?

Is the final chapter necessary? Does it add to or detract from the story? Is it necessary to spend time cleaning up the loose ends or are they minor details that could have been left hanging?

Do you agree with the assertion that victims of crimes must shoulder some responsibility due to their innate flaws allowing the perpetrators to act against them? Why or why not?