

Revised 5-8 September 1924

Revised 27-July-2 August 1928

Gower and Chancer added 13-14 Sept 1928

Added to 12 January 1929

Revised 5-6 February 1934

Revised 6-9^{a.m.} January 1943

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ORMOND

1799

¹
Ormond; or the Secret Witness, was published pseudonymously by H. Caritat in New York in 1799. ^a ~~The~~ reference ~~to the work~~ in a letter dated 15 February places the day of publication as probably several, if not many, days before ~~that date~~; in fact the statement is made in such general terms it is reasonable to conclude the book was published in the latter part of January. Johnson's letter, dated 4 January, to Kent says:

"Should Ormond be published in season I will send you a copy by Mr. Boyd."

Brown was well launched on the composition by the 16th. of November 1798, ~~but~~ [✓] where he started it is not clear though ^{we know} ~~it is probable~~ he was not well enough to begin until he was in Perth Amboy in the last days of September. In his letter of 20 December he hoped to finish before New Year's day but when he wrote to his brother Armitt on the holiday he made no mention of it.

¹ Neal in his Wandering Recollections said Brown received less than two hundred dollars for Wieland, Ormond and Edgar Huntly. See our first note to Wieland.

William Coleman editor of the New York Evening Post and an acquaintance of Brown said it was "written by stinted tasks of so many¹ pages a day, and sent to the printer without correction or revision, or even reading over, till it came back to him in proof." As a method of composition that may be expensive but it is not necessarily an indication of unreasonably hasty work. Revision does not always mean improvement. In those days Brown's method--if it was his--was very common in book manufacture because stereotype plates were not used and the fonts of type were often so small only a part of the book could be kept standing in type to await the corrections of the author.

A noteworthy feature of the volume is at the end; a list of

1 19 November 1824 in a review of the Atlantic Magazine, No. 7. Coleman found the book "a formal and uninteresting production." He probably never read it!

hoff

need not

The ideas of marriage and politics ^{for they} may be derived from Godwin's Political Justice but more probably were ~~merely the~~ common talk of the day ~~when Brown wrote~~; a reflex of the French Revolution ^{also} ~~and the ideas that went with it.~~ ^{into Alvin, Alvin and Carnie.}

The finale of the first chapter and the inclusion in it of the locked strong-bound chest ^{suggest} ~~give us a hint that possibly~~ Brown may ^{have} originally ~~wrote~~ the Man at Home as a part of Ormond. Had the ^{in the Weekly Magazine} story been told of Dudley instead of ^{autobiographically} ~~in the first person~~, had the end been altered to ^{permit} ~~allow~~ of Dudley's escape from New York to Philadelphia, the Man at Home could be bodily transferred to Ormond and numbered chapter two.

John Neal in his Randolph ¹ put in the mouth of one of the characters the statement that

"His Ormond, or the Secret Witness does not correspond at all with the title.. One would believe that he had written the work, without having once thought of title; and that, then, he had put in a little note containing the only incident, where anything like a Secret Witness may be found, merely as a kind of justification for the title."

~~Such a statement is a boomerang for Neal.~~ Anyone who intelligently

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Perhaps ^{some} the reader^s may there find sufficient resemblances but
the present writer ^{does} ~~is not satisfied with them~~ and considers the
evidence greater against than for the likeness of the two characters.

Another suggestion, though not convincing is ~~perhaps~~ now a
harmless amusement. In the lifetime of the man libelled it seems
hardly ^{likely} ~~probable that the weakling~~ Brown would do what we are
now doing; lay himself open to a polite invitation to select
seconds and meet ^{a deadly pistol shot} ~~the slayer of Hamilton~~ in the early dawn to
exchange a man of honor's civilities at the distance of twenty-
five paces.

If the reader will turn back to ^{or recall} the list of details of the title
character of this story, ~~and reading them again bear them in mind,~~
he will be able to judge how true the statement may be that
Aaron Burr suggested to Brown the character of Ormond.

~~Aaron~~ Burr was claimed by some to have led a wild youth, he was
a political factor of the country, he had a family, a brilliant
war record, he tried to get a federal appointment, he was a skeptic,
a Chesterfieldian "man of the world", he disguised himself and
assumed the name of Arnot, he was a master of intrigue ^{and} a self-
possessed fascinating man. ^{That also} he ^{also} hoped to set up a republic in

-and
Mexico, ~~and he~~ fled to South Carolina to escape an indictment for
the murder of Hamilton ^{belong to his life at times after Brown}
had written ~~Ormond~~.

To do justice it ^{should} ~~must~~ be said that Burr's character ^{up to 1799} was much
greater than Ormond's as pictured by Brown and among the details
that do not correspond we have chosen to believe that if Brown
had really intended to use ^{him} ~~the character~~ he would not have missed
the apt opportunity of making Ormond a lawyer by profession. From
the American Review and Literary Journal reviews of works relating
to Burr's ~~character~~ it appears improbable that Brown had any thought
^{him} of Burr when building the character of Ormond. In an article in his
American Register ¹ Brown gives an impartial account of the Burr con-
spiracy then of public importance and interest, in which he does not
show any ~~particular~~ animus over his character as he could not help
but do had ^{his villain} Ormond been based on Burr's life. According to Burr's
private Journal ² as published in full, not in Mr. Davis' expurgated
printing, we learn ~~that~~ he was intimate with Godwin and acquainted
with Volney and yet not a syllable about Brown or ~~any~~ of his works
escapes him.

1 Vol. II, p. 88 ff.

2 Rochester, N.Y., 1903.

How this idea came to be accepted and handed on from one to another is not clear but it seems as if the introductory-letter statement that Ormond was "not a creature of fancy",--made by Brown as a part of the vraiseemblance--may be the origin of it. On the other hand it is possible ~~that~~ the claim was a part of the political strategy of the day. Much more subtle schemes than that have been put in operation to defeat a political candidate.

The unfair side of the supposed Burr origin relates to Brown as an author and man. It is easy to detract from an author's creative ability by claiming a character of his may be based on an actual personage; but when we know ~~that~~ Burr was a very good friend of Brown's old "flame" Dolly Madison the criticism exceeds its privilege and verges on the domain of libel.

In the case of Wieland we found ~~that~~ Brown's notes were to be relied upon ^{for} ~~as giving~~ the source of his information and the basis ^{of} ~~for~~ his fiction. Here, likewise, we ~~shall~~ find them reliable. In chapter XIV Brown takes the trouble to give a note to the statement that Ormond "had frequently swept his own chimneys, without the knowledge of his own servants." The note reads: "Similar

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Another suggestion, at least what was put forward as a suggestive comparison, is that made by George Edward Woodberry in an article¹ in which he called attention to the Byronic character of Ormond.

Characters similar to ~~that of~~ Byron have been common in all history; in fact seem to be a part of the diversity of ~~characters~~ of the world. Falkland and Aaron Burr were undoubtedly of the Byronic type and if we wish to be poetic we may call them veritable Laras. However, ~~for the present~~, instead of these characters owing anything to each other it is only too ^{likely} ~~probable~~ that to the one amused by critical acumen of this sort ~~there is the certainty that~~ both of them may ~~be found to~~ owe something to some preceding villain and we can readily find that villain in the person of Edward Wortley Montague.

The result of the study of these origins or similarities in ~~Ormond~~ is that the resemblance to Montague or Byron or Lara or Falkland, or who you will, ~~even to Satan himself~~, is more clearly to be found in Falkland's relation to the Welbeck of Arthur Mervyn.

Ormond shows us Brown using some of the devices of his predecessors, the "puerile superstition and exploded manners" which he

¹ Atlantic Monthly, May, 1888.

¹ *probably*
~~Ormond~~ was taken to England by Caritat, ~~either in type or sheets,~~
~~probably the latter.~~ According to the English title-page ^{it} ~~the work~~
 was printed at the Minerva Press in 1800, but it appears ~~that~~ only a
 few pages were printed there.

The book was said to be very popular and according to Allen ² the
 circulation was general, ³ whatever that may mean. ~~The first edition~~
~~is so scarce it seems probable fewer copies were made than of~~
~~Wieland.~~ It was republished in London 1800, and about 1810 and 1822, in
 Boston 1827, New York 1846, Philadelphia 1857 and 1887. Caritat listed
 a French edition of 1799.⁴

As a part of Brown's life and work it was first of all
^{notable}
 important for the reason that, as he said, Wieland and Ormond gave

1 According to Brown's letter of April 1800.

2 P. 389.

shows 3 ~~According to the catalogue of~~ The Philadelphia Library Company, for
 1807, Brown presented a copy to that institution. The New York Weekly
Museum 22 and 29 August and 5 September 1801 advertises it for sale
 by J. Harrison. 30 May 1807 Harrison's widow advertised it.

4 Evans 35246. Caritat's French books is Evans 35278. *catalogue*

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him his reputation as a literary man. That he had at last established himself ~~as the first professional man of letters~~ in spite of all the handicaps and hardships, is a fact of paramount importance.

As a literary work it shows an advance in plan but not in execution for the reason that the perfect subordination of the under-plots, a difficult matter, was only to be obtained by a careful revision ~~which so far as we know, Brown never gave to any of his prose fiction.~~

The story shows Brown casting off the glamors of the romance and taking on the journalese of realistic fiction. For the two principal characters, Constantia and Ormond, the work is remarkable. Constantia is entirely worthy of all of Shelley's love and praise.