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Written for English 4510, my paper, "Deterring a Critical Catharsis: An Inquiry into the Rhetoric and Ethics of Punishment in *Wieland; or the Transformation*," analyzes the ways that Charles Brockden Brown's novel investigates a society's motives in determining appropriate criminal punishment. I reflect on how these motives, expressed through rhetorical appeals, parallel our modern society's motives in criminal punishment. Four steps guided my research process and the sources I selected to support my argument. These four steps built on one another as I worked to support an argument with both primary and secondary sources.

First, in my beginning research process, my experiences as a secondary Criminology major directed my research decision-making within a Literature Studies context. Chapters XVIII and XIX in Brown's novel describe a courtroom scenario where the jury needs to decide how the murderer Wieland ought to be punished. I combined this subject matter in the courtroom scenario with my knowledge of contemporary problems facing the justice system gained from my internship experiences at social work agencies and legal settings in the Milwaukee. Through this combining of real world experiences with the novel's rhetorical conventions, I selected criminal punishment as my research topic. Thus, I approached my research in an interdisciplinary manner to assess whether Brown's novel reflected modern discussions on criminal punishment in both literature and in our society more broadly. Looking first to contemporaneous scholarly opinion on this topic, I surveyed the Project Muse database and searched within the Literature Research Area subcategory. ProjectMuse offered many academic journals with articles by experts in the discipline, from which I selected Professor Laura Korobkin's article as my paper's starting point.

After establishing Korobkin's research as my starting point, I sought to place the novel into a historical context to show its relevance and parallels to our current legal system. Specifically, in five of the novel's final nine chapters, I recognized several scenarios representing three different punishment models—punishment by public opinion, formal punishment by the government, and self-inflicted punishment (suicide). Because the assignment required students to consult at least three historical primary texts written from 1780-1800, I utilized databases introduced to our class by Professor Amy Blair. Included in a larger "Research Guide" created by former Raynor Memorial Librarian Susan Hopwood, databases like Early American Imprints (Evans Series) and the ProQuest American Periodicals Series provided access to digital copies of newspaper articles, magazines, books, and legal documents. Without these databases, these sources would have otherwise been difficult to locate and access expeditiously. While searching the databases, I deliberately looked for sources discussing the three punishment models which I identified and that showed relationships to the punishment models or methods implemented by our contemporary society.

Using Early American Imprints, I found two crucial primary sources: a newspaper article from 1781 titled "An Account of a Murder Committed by Mr. J—Y—, upon his Family, in December, A.D. 1781," and a political document from 1792 titled, "Considerations on the Injustice and Impolicy of Punishing Murder by Death." The newspaper article discusses another murder similar to the crime committed by Wieland. I originally searched for this newspaper article after finding a secondary source about "Murderous Fathers in Post-Revolutionary Print Culture." This secondary source hypothesized that Charles Brockden Brown used the story of Mr. James Yates as a basis for his novel's plot. Other secondary sources confirmed this hypothesis and also stated that the article's author, a woman named Anna, wrote the article based on another person's childhood memory. Reading the article, I realized the article's potentially inaccurate childhood recollection. Analyzing this inaccuracy helped me draw a parallel to the unreliable narrator in Brown's novel as well as to a society determining punishment based on unreliable public opinion or testimony in a trial. The second source, written by reformer Dr. Benjamin Rush, helped me delve deeper into societal motives for formal punishment by the government. I searched for Rush's texts because of my previous exposure to Rush's punishment theories in a 'History and Philosophy of Crime and Punishment' course at Marquette my junior year. Reading Rush's text in its original context and in the frame of the late eighteenth century excited me as I was able to see that the novel's position on the death penalty closely paralleled this very important eighteenth century reformer's opinion on the death penalty. Most importantly, Rush's article helped shape my paper's purpose, which aimed at revealing some key alternative motivations behind why a society punishes besides the simple perpetration of a wrongdoing.

In my third step after finding Rush's text, I searched the ProQuest American Periodicals Series for texts that could speak to another formal punishment model—imprisonment. This search proved difficult, as I soon realized very few articles described the Early American prison system. Through this search, I learned to revise my research process. Instead of quickly assessing a source based upon its title alone, I looked for authors known to study my selected topic. This approach meant that I needed to search the Early American Imprints database using the browsing tool to search by author rather than by topic or genre. Through this approach, I found an article from 1790 titled "Extracts and Remarks on the Subject of Punishment and Reformation of the Criminal." The Philadelphia Society, an organization that Benjamin Rush belonged to, wrote the document. I found this document useful because it included two letters describing two prisons in 18th century England and the reasons for imprisonment as a viable option for criminals. I used only these two letters from the source, as the remainder of the document focused largely on the death penalty. Thus, I learned to engage in multiple search strategies and extensive source reading before dismissing a source based upon its title or genre.

For my last step, I directed my search toward finding primary sources discussing criminals who commit suicide, or self-inflicted punishment. Early in my research, I had read an excerpt from the third chapter in Professor Bridget M. Marshall's book, *The Transatlantic Gothic Novel and the Law*. The chapter claimed that Charles Brockden Brown likely read works by English legal scholar William Blackstone while he prepared to pursue a legal career. So, I searched the ProQuest American Periodical Series for Blackstone's opinions on suicide. His legal description of suicide and its legal consequences in Book IV, Chapter 14 of his *Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books*, offered a blueprint to assess Wieland's suicide in the novel, other characters' complacency in the situation, and why late 18th century society punished individuals who committed suicide.

Overall, my paper's organization reflects the chronology of my research process. At my paper's conclusion, I identify and articulate parallels between ethical decision-making in punishment from 1780-1800 and our own society's ethical decision-making in punishment. I reflect on the sources gathered to identify problems in our contemporary society's decisions. Even though I researched and wrote as a student largely informed by my background in Literature and Criminology, I believe my paper's content and the questions it poses hold practicality and relevance to multiple disciplines and our daily lives.