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The Ruins of Catholicism in Gothic Literature

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The Ruins of Catholicism in Gothic Literature

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Abstract:

In this thesis I argue that Ann Radcliffe and Jane Austen used gothic conventions to champion women's rights, by situating their plots in Catholic buildings in order to displace English political issues—specifically the government violently controlling and silencing British people, especially women—into a time and place that appears to promote traditional Protestant anti-Catholic ideas, which thus shielded their radicalism from censorship. However, I will show that Catholicism further serves to amplify women's rights in the gothic. For Radcliffe, the church shows women at their most capable, encourages them to overcome patriarchal control, and then she uses some convents to advocate for women to gain an education. Austen employs Catholic spaces similarly, yet she also utilizes the buildings to bring history forward into memory—in doing so, she critiques the English government, both for its past and its present methods for suppressing the populace.

Key Words: romanticism, gothic, feminism, education religion, catholicism, gothic architecture, regency

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Introduction: The Ruins of Catholicism in Gothic Literature

Gothic literature rose, and in some ways separated, from the Romantic era. It was so named after the gothic architecture that these stories featured, which were frequently haunted, falling to ruin, and full of horrors for the protagonists to overcome. Furthermore, many of these “fabrics,” as they were called, were Catholic houses—an interesting choice, given that this genre rose predominantly in England, a Protestant country. I will demonstrate how Britain’s infamous history with Catholicism influenced the gothic, not only by creating the picturesque landscape full of ruined abbeys, but by tying Romantic-era political society to these religious institutions. Horace Walpole was the first writer of this genre to displace contemporary English settings into non-contemporary times and to place them in medieval architectural backdrops, a penchant that Ann Radcliffe and Jane Austen continued with their own gothic novels. I focus on these latter two authors, using their works as case studies to examine the genre as it serves specific political ideologies. I argue that the close association between the gothic and Catholicism offered these writers the opportunity to investigate tyranny, women’s education, and political radicalism while also seeming pro-English during a time when any dissent would be prosecuted as treason.

The late eighteenth-century gothic, which some believed would make women in real life expect threats of sexual assault, assassins, and imprisonment, was accused of being a “terrorist” genre. While it is doubtful that many readers thought they would actually find themselves in situations of such horror, some were concerned about this literature’s seemingly radical agenda, a point of view I take seriously in my thesis. I examine Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance* and *Mysteries of Udolpho* in order to show how the heroines of both novels find empowerment to fight against patriarchal schemes. Furthermore, each heroine comes into power—both in their

own confidence and in social standing—while in separate monasteries. Such places, specifically the convent of St. Clair from *Udolpho*, have a history of enfranchising women: St. Clair not only opened the first, and one of the only monasteries run by women, but she presided autonomously over her order. In comparison with *Udolpho*, *The Sicilian Romance* displays a much different encounter in a Catholic setting, one that fits with the Anglican propaganda which painted the Roman church as corrupt and greedy, yet I argue that Radcliffe uses this vile place to empower the heroine by contrast. These variations suggest that reproaching the Roman church is secondary to her desire to advocate the rights of women, and as such Radcliffe employs her criticism of Catholicism to veil the feminist radicalism deeply ingrained in her novels.

In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen champions her own heroine, Catherine Morland, who serves to open a discourse on the inequalities that women face in their education and their lives in eighteenth-century England. However, unlike Radcliffe, Austen disguises her examination of many aspects of injustice, including the political oppression of the government, with humor and irony. *Northanger*, while being a gothic in its own right, also addresses the genre itself by utilizing a narrator who breaks the fourth wall and opens discussions on novels and reading. While Catherine slips between ignorance and unwitting insight, a dichotomy which highlights the rebellious intent behind the novels she reads, she indirectly reveals the struggle Romantic-era readers face as they analyze both books and society. Austen utilizes the gothic's trademark, Catholic "ruins"—though, much to Catherine's disappointment, *Northanger* is meticulously renovated—to open a discussion on the history of abbeys in England: King Henry VIII and his infamous dissolution of the monasteries. In the second chapter, I examine the many ways

Northanger Abbey brings past oppression forward in memory and how, by calling attention to Britain's history of religious and gender subjection, the novel criticizes Georgian England.

The Creation of a Horrible Landscape

By the early nineteenth century, Catholicism had seemingly been stamped out of England: the only reminders were ruined monasteries across the land and small numbers of oppressed worshippers. Two hundred and fifty years had passed since the Church of England was founded, and it would be another forty years before the Oxford Movement resulted in a new Anglo-Catholic tradition. Officially, Britain followed a form of Christianity referred to colloquially throughout this thesis as "Anglican." In its origin, Anglicanism walked a careful line between Catholicism and Protestantism, as its Tudor founders, themselves, did not believe in dissenting faiths such as Lutheran or Calvinist teachings, but rather they wanted political freedom from the papacy (Popkin 17). Henry VIII infamously wrote *The Defense of the Seven Sacraments* twelve years before separating from Rome, effectively calling for the devout to shun Lutheranism when he stated that Luther was "totally void of Charity, swelled with Pride, cold in his Reason, and burns with Envy" (Henry VIII 190). Clearly, the king passionately believed in his religion, so his decision to convert his country did not arise from his faith, but instead was political. His initial aim was to annul his marriage to his first wife, Catherine of Aragon (Solt 13), as she did not bear a surviving male heir. However, Chad Meister and James Stump suggest that also financial and political motives—Henry's desire to claim the money and seats monasteries owned—drove him to create the Church of England (371). Most common folk still followed the Roman church, and many faced persecution and death for their religion; to maintain political control, the Anglican Tudors had to wage war against Catholicism. They initiated the

Protestant Reforms,¹ which resulted in the English Civil Wars, which brought about almost two hundred thousand dead over religion (Carlton 211). By the eighteenth century, religion and revolution were alarming topics.

The global context further complicated England's situation during the time Radcliffe and Austen wrote, as revolutions were breaking out around the known world. These conflicts were especially important for Romantic literature, with authors like Godwin and Coleridge writing much on the disruptions in France, America, and, to a lesser degree, the Irish Rebellion (Popkin 12).² Separating spiritual and secular worlds was a common goal and driving force in European revolts, and some rebellions were successful in doing so, at least for a while. However, while Anglicanism was only the *de facto* religion, supported by some secondary laws, the Church of England still controlled the nation. Socially, the church played an active role in daily life, with sacraments emerging as public practices for all classes (Sherlock 1-12). Politically, Anglicanism and Britain were intrinsically tied and often represented for the populace an oppressive and sometimes violent force, as they used multiple methods of intimidation to maintain power. Michael Gamer refers to the ongoing battles with Scotland and Ireland as "border wars," that were fought to silence the Presbyterian and Catholic populaces (186). Several acts suspending *habeas corpus* were issued, as well as restrictions requiring land ownership and Anglican membership to vote (Popkin 57). Standing armies were formed to regularly terrorize English

¹ In this context, the Protestant Reforms refer to the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, the civil wars in and between Ireland, Scotland, and England over Protestantism, Anglicanism, and Catholicism; that being said, the English Civil Wars are often included in the Protestant Reforms by some scholars.

² The Irish Rebellion is a brief rebellion in 1798, in which Irish Catholics fought against England. They were inspired by the American and French revolutions, and it was triggered by discriminatory laws against non-Anglicans in Ireland.

citizens who could potentially be considered treasonous.³ It became difficult and dangerous to express dissent against the British government, which attempted to silence radicals and the working classes who were likely, because they were hungry and harassed, to cause a violent revolution like that in France. As such, authors had to attempt to speak out without sounding blatantly or identifiably seditious, and so allegorical and deeply symbolic structures became important strategies for Romantic writers. Gothic literature promotes British female liberty behind the veil of pro-Protestant attacks upon Catholicism. However, I will argue that these geographical and architectural settings also provide a platform for criticizing English society by addressing contemporary political oppression and by featuring characters who transcend and defeat their persecutors.

Rising Horrors

As I mentioned above, critics credit Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* as the first gothic novel, which, as Andrew Smith notes, includes medieval castles and "malign aristocrats" that "becom[e] recast as symbolically representing some highly politicised issues of the 1760s" (18). Despite being set in sixteenth-century Naples, the social content mirrors Walpole's present day, a practice that would become common in later gothic works. Following *Otranto's* lead, authors generally include supernatural elements (or at least the appearance of those), gothic structures, and suspenseful action, though I choose to focus on how this genre puts emphasis on place. As I have explained above, these settings often have direct connections to Catholicism, whether the story takes place in ruined abbeys, among Catholic populations, or in functioning churches. In Radcliffe's novels, religious architectural vestiges litter the landscape; Austen's *Northanger*

³ In an *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, Its Influence Morals Happiness* William Godwin, a contemporary Romantic writer, wrote at length about how standing armies prevented the populace from revolting against the government.

Abbey pays homage to this practice by situating the plot in the titular abbey. While these novels, like most gothic texts, look to the past, these two authors also specifically situate their heroines in religious spaces and thus tie their politics to these sites. I argue that for these writers, Catholic buildings after the suppression became a symbol of Henry VIII's crimes, offering physical evidence of the violence a king can commit against his own people; therefore, when Radcliffe and Austen use such spaces they open a contemporary discussion on tyranny, though the edifice and landscape may be ancient.

Terrorist Writing

The public and critical spheres varyingly received gothic literature. *The Spirit of Public Journals* featured a 1798 review called "Terrorist Novel Writing" which asks: "Can a young lady be taught nothing more necessary in life, than to sleep in a dungeon with venomous reptiles, walk through a ward with assassins, and carry bloody daggers in their pockets, instead of pin-cushions and needle-books?" (225). In focusing on the "young lady's" neglect of domestic duties, the anonymous author reveals what I argue is the gothic's real danger—that it might radicalize a woman. Training a woman to see the injustices a fictional counterpart might face, such as being married against her will and being subjected to tyrannical imprisonment, might help her see "domestic" risks. Calling these novels "a confusion of terrors" (224) implies that there are more fears than just dungeons and daggers, and suggests that perhaps other horrors the heroines face—sexual assault and property theft—will be recognized by readers in their own lives. By asking that women keep "pin-cushions" and "needle-books," the reviewer disarms them: he insists that even pins and needles, which themselves replicate daggers, must be sheathed in soft fabrics and in the books they write, that is, needlework patterns. Therefore, I

would argue that even the simplest of women's domestic tools, which this reviewer would dull and muffle, have potential power, especially when women have real books at their disposal and not just needlework. Further compounding the reviewer's fears, many women were reading these novels. Gamer discusses how the genre's popularity rose drastically after 1795, and notes that this rise "coincides in trajectory and intensity with widespread alarm in England during these years over unrest at home" (31), a theory that supports the idea that reading such novels was linked to political unrest. Whether or not the eighteenth-century critic was aware of his own concerns about the gothic, I will argue that both Radcliffe and Austen use the genre as a way to specifically address women and their position in society. The former places women in scenarios of extreme peril, with wives being locked in the bowels of castles to die and young girls running from bandits who attempt to molest them, only to have them rise above their male oppressors; the latter author instead features a heroine who must navigate society with the lessons learned from gothic novels, which inadvertently threaten her friendships and marriage prospects, while nevertheless putting her on high alert against potential hazard from her future father-in-law. While Austen's gothic initially appears less dire than Radcliffe's, I will show that *Northanger Abbey* reveals the dangers that exist for women in a world where they have very few property or personal rights. As such, the anonymous reviewer was right in calling the gothic "terrorist" writing, but not perhaps for the reasons he actually believed.

Chapter I:
***Northanger Abbey* as a Discourse on the Gothic**

Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* offers a unique and important opportunity for understanding the gothic, for it opens a conversation on what this genre criticizes in society. By including social and political commentary into the story's direct and indirect discourse, in utilizing a narrator who breaks the fourth wall, and by alluding to contemporary and historic British politics, the hero and heroine recall the position that Catholicism held in England and the social implications of Anglican gentry owning former abbeys. The heroine, Catherine Morland, also mentions, albeit unknowingly, the resulting English Civil Wars as well as the oppression of citizens in her own time—and though her naiveté keeps her from understanding this context, her innocence serves to underline the injustices facing women. While in the next chapter, I will examine further how Radcliffe's gothic—to which Austen's novel refers—lends itself to women's rights by subtly using Catholic settings as sites for female empowerment, here I show the ways *Northanger Abbey* uses spaces infused with Catholic memories (ruined abbeys) to link former and current political traumas. Gothic elements, such as architecture, suspense, and malign patriarchs become tools to critique the negative attitudes against novel reading, attacks on progressive politics, and women's limited role in society. As such, the references to sixteenth-century religious institutions in Britain open up the possibility for examining Romantic-era suppression of civilians and specifically women.

Austen alludes to the rift between the Churches of England and Rome, both in her adult work and her juvenilia. I believe that the latter, despite being a young girl's work, exposes thoughtful and powerful opinions unfettered by the worries of publication. Significantly, *A History of England* (1791) wittily discusses Henry VIII's actions:

The Crimes & Cruelties of this Prince, were too numerous to be mentioned, (as this history I trust has fully shewn) & nothing can be said in his vindication, but that his abolishing Religious Houses & leaving them to the ruinous depredations of time has been of infinite use to the landscape of England in general, which probably was a principal motive for his doing it, since otherwise why should a Man who was of no Religion himself be at so much trouble to abolish one which had for ages been established in the Kingdom. (14-15)

Although she takes on a humorous tone, Austen tends toward serious aims. She makes her opinion towards the king clear, calling the ruined churches his only “vindication,” since now they look picturesque in the British landscape. Her illustration of Henry as “a Man who was of no Religion himself” shows that she believed him to be neither Catholic nor Protestant and astutely summarizes his destruction of this architecture as arising solely from secular motivation. Furthermore, when she says he was “at so much trouble” to abolish Catholicism, Austen reveals she understands that the violence against the religion went beyond personal gain; the king was a despot bent upon controlling his entire kingdom’s beliefs at pain of death. As I established in the previous chapter, the Tudor monarch was outspoken against Protestantism until it suited his needs: to womanize, to steal, and to oppress the country. Beyond the specific crime of “abolishing Religious Houses,” I suggest Austen also speaks of these behaviors when she uses the phrase “Crimes & Cruelties.” Many scholars discuss this passage in terms of Austen having Stuart (and thus Catholic) sympathies;⁴ and while this seems accurate, I argue that Austen’s adult works focus more on addressing general injustice. In *The Hidden History of Northanger Abbey*,

⁴ Claire Harman examines Austen’s marginalia, in which Harman shows she wrote fondly of Oliver Goldsmith’s *The History of England* in favor of Charles I and his Catholic piety.

Roger E. Moore argues that Austen's radicalism shows that she "laments the socio-economic impoverishment of the English nation occasioned by the loss of religious houses" (57). He believes that Austen sympathized with Catholicism and that she disapproved of the Dissolution of the Monasteries. While he claims that she dislikes religious reform, I argue that this antipathy lies squarely in her Anglicanism. By alluding in *Northanger Abbey* to the suppression of the Roman church she juxtaposes Henry VIII's tyranny to the terrorism occurring in the eighteenth century. In so doing, she criticizes the history which allows Anglican gentry to own stolen abbeys, but it does not do so to promote Catholicism; rather, she does so to argue against inequality.

While *Northanger Abbey* largely takes place in a former monastery, it consistently ties itself to the Church of England: Catherine, a clergyman's daughter, hopes to marry a parson, Henry Tilney. Despite her youth she attempts to uphold values that come from Anglican codes of conduct. Though she doesn't have the skill to interpret people's motivations or comprehend duplicity, her moral code never changes throughout the story. She instinctively senses dishonest behavior, and though she cannot always immediately identify it, she reacts to it. When she meets John Thorpe, she cannot understand his verbal inconsistency as he quickly and transparently contradicts himself. He moves from assuring her that James' gig will surely crash, speaking so confidently and brashly that he alarms Catherine, though the second she begs to turn back to save her brother he retracts his prediction, insisting that the carriage "will last above twenty years" (64). His callousness and artifice manage to awaken her suspicions:

Catherine listened with astonishment; she knew not how to reconcile two such very different accounts of the same thing; for she had not been brought up to understand the

propensities of a rattle, nor to know to how many idle assertions and impudent falsehoods the excess of vanity will lead. (64)

These “two such very different accounts” baffle her, but she also becomes wary of Thorpe because of them. The narrator simultaneously ascribes his disingenuity to his vanity. In saying she had not “been brought up” to comprehend such egotism, this scene hints at Anglicanism by placing it in the context of her upbringing. She cannot comprehend a “rattle”—a colloquialism for “linguistic excess” (Sherlock 11)—because of her own virtue. This term, which specifically comes from liturgical teachings that Austen most certainly would have been familiar with, immediately connects this moment with her own religion. Furthermore, the ideals of modesty and honesty, celebrated in Anglican traditions (among others), make “idle assertions” and “impudent falsehoods” uncomfortable for her, though she doesn’t consciously understand why anyone would act in this way. Idleness—meaning “vain, frivolous” (OED 825) in this context—shows that Thorpe selfishly lies about himself, simply for his own vanity. In *Speaking Up for Catherine Morland*, Joanne Cordón argues Catherine is only “direct, open, and honest” and “cannot follow the cultural code that encourages women to hide their desires” (49) because she represent a “masculine” aspect of society, a statement I would I disagree with. Instead, I argue that the heroine’s virtue comes from her upbringing. Like Laura Mooneyham White, I would assert that Catherine’s aversion to vanity reveals how Austen infuses religion into her societal expectations, stating that the author’s “association of linguistic excess with selfishness, imposture, or mental instability” (13) has root in Georgian Anglicanism, even though Catherine may cherish the *ruins* of Catholicism. Historically, Anglicanism and Catholicism struggled to coexist, as the factions fought violently against each other; theoretically, one cannot sympathize

with both, but Austen masterfully mixes positive imagery from the two religions—and in doing so, gives herself a platform for her radicalism.

We see Austen's radical agenda dramatized in Catherine's naiveté, which exposes how England incapacitates women, especially in terms education. While she specifically enjoys the gothic, she adores and consumes many novels—which briefly lead later in the novel to an embarrassing encounter with her love interest, Henry. Early in *Northanger Abbey*, the narrator opens a conversation on the novel's treatment in society, including the contradictory way young ladies were trained to consider such books:

“And what are you reading, Miss—?” “Oh! it is only a novel!” replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame.—“It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda;” or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humor are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language. (37)

The narrator bitingly exposes the irony that a lady should be ashamed to read “the greatest powers of mind” in “the best chosen language.” Catherine follows suit with this expected behavior, being “humbled and ashamed” (47) when she discusses novels with John Thorpe, who belittles the form, and later she immediately surmises that “gentlemen read better books” (102) when she talks about novels with Henry Tilney. Austen's narrator here extols the novel as a genre: while the three books mentioned were written by successful female authors, featuring titular heroines, and were extremely profitable,⁵ Catherine and the narrator recognize that

⁵ *Cecilia* (1782) by Frances Burney was reprinted 27 times during her lifetime; *Camilla* (1796) by the same, earned her £2000; and *Belinda* (1801) by Maria Edgeworth was also reprinted several times during her life.

conservative thinkers attribute a social shame to reading novels. Though men, including Tilney, happily read such works, the heroine supposes that “gentlemen” avoid the gothic genre—implying that the novels are socially tied to gender. By associating women’s reading of fiction with disgrace and linking that to Catherine’s erroneous idea that men simply never read them, *Northanger Abbey* draws attention to her limited understanding and education, as well as that of other women like her. And yet, regardless of such criticism of women reading novels, Catherine’s world knowledge comes solely from fiction, which implies that novels the sole educators for some women in Georgian England. As I will show, setting the work in a formerly Catholic institution subtly ties the novel to female education, as some monasteries were historic sources of literacy for women. By linking Catherine’s education at Northanger to the purported gendering of gothic readership, Austen draws attention in multiple ways to how the gothic specifically focuses on validating and educating females. It not only takes on an especially active role in subverting prejudice against female authorship by proliferating these writers in popular culture, but also empowers the women who read it, sometimes explicitly and sometimes indirectly. As I discuss in the next chapter, early convents were a source of education for all classes of women,⁶ which I demonstrate that Radcliffe utilizes to champion the dream of a women’s college. I suggest likewise that *Northanger Abbey* furthers the aim to educate women—by validating novel reading, and asking readers to think deeply about the subtext of the plots. By writing a book, specifically a “horror,” Austen insists that novels and the women who read them must be respected—regardless of how superficial and vapid society thinks either.

⁶ Nuns’ primary vocation in their isolation was theistic writing, which was often published by the church, especially the Poor Clares who are featured in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Goodrich 4).

While *Northanger Abbey* may superficially appear to be a traditional bildungsroman and courtship novel, following Catherine as she grows from a child to a marriageable woman and ending with her inevitable wedding to the man she loves, her development is not complete or even linear; though she learns more about the world than that which lies outside of the narrow parish her father curates, she nevertheless fails to learn how to interpret—to read deeply. Michael Giffen states Austen’s works primarily focus on “social being and social becoming,” with emphasis on “achieving physical and emotional [salvation]” through Christian values (7), and while this may be true for her other novels, *Northanger* does not fit this description since Catherine does not fully “become.” However, I believe her deficiencies serve a different purpose in terms of Giffen’s argument. As I will explore later in this chapter, she has moments of enlightenment in which she critically examines a situation, yet she returns to her previous ignorance. Her lack of growth keeps her from being a traditional heroine: as the narrator states, “No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be an heroine” (15). Instead, her ongoing naiveté has the positive impact of making her an agent for social commentary about England’s politics. With each development and reversal, she indirectly and unknowingly exposes a problem within British society. And when she does achieve insight—such as when she acknowledges that “in suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarcely served against his character or magnified his cruelty” (230)—she follows narrow precedents of gender for women by keeping her opinion to herself.

In a climactic scene, Catherine faces a crisis of self, as her gothic education seems to come into conflict with the beliefs of the man she loves, Henry Tilney. While at Bath, when she

first hears of Northanger Abbey, she imagines a haunted ruin, barely habitable and filled with secrets—what, that is, she has learned to expect from gothic novels. Because Radcliffe has taught her that these buildings and that military men like Montoni can do nothing else, Catherine supposes that the abbey holds “atrocities” and that the General’s severity is perilous. The critical moment comes when Tilney catches her searching for evidence that his father murdered his mother—an idea she derives from her preoccupation with the terrifying and from General Tilney’s aggressive behavior, his seeming disinterest in his wife, and his methods for controlling his children. In this passage, Henry comments on her supposition, remarking,

Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around—Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? (186)

When he tells her that they are “English” and “Christian,” his irony exposes how these are not in fact synonymous standards. After equating religion and country, he also asks her to compare English Christianity to the gothic ideas she has entertained—to “consult [her] own understanding.” If by this, he means the understanding gleaned from being a clergyman’s daughter, certainly her Anglican upbringing seems as crucial as her novelistic one, as the history of Catholicism is tied to the gothic. Beth Wallace argues that “Catherine’s imagination seems less hyperactive and more historically attuned” (169), which I believe to be true for both the hero and heroine; Henry’s political awareness leads him to ask rhetorically and poignantly “do our laws connive at [such atrocities]?”—which, of course, they do. As Elizabeth Bristol explains,

eighteenth-century laws stated that “a man may lawfully own and retake his wife” (54) creating legal precedents that allowed a husband to treat his wife barbarously, even allowing him to commit her against her will to an asylum—the very same cruelties we see featured in the gothic. Historically too, English law destroyed the monasteries, thus bringing Northanger Abbey eventually into the Tilneys’ hands. The British created the circumstances that brought about the genre’s horrors. King Henry’s Suppression Acts specifically took the land, property, and wealth of Catholic churches and put them directly under the ownership of the king. When Austen’s *Henry* refers to these laws, the novel asks both Catherine and the reader to acknowledge the influence the Tudors unwittingly had on forming the gothic landscape from which the story draws inspiration: the working abbeys in Radcliffe’s novels and the ruined, but now clean and modern Northanger Abbey. Given this context, I cannot consider names of her characters a coincidence: Henry and Catherine clearly tie back to the aforementioned king and his first wife, but names such as John, Isabella, Eleanor, and James also recall players in the Henrician Reformation.⁷ These parallels create a wider connection between the fall of Catholicism and the loss of freedoms in Austen’s own society.

In positing reactionary ideas in ironic form, Tilney has asked Catherine to wield her mind for critical thought, and from here she tries to understand society on a more complex level, although she fails to understand his ironic subtext and ultimately takes his words literally. In the following passage, Catherine ponders what Henry has said. By doing so, she gives the text, through indirect discourse, opportunities to talk directly about the relationship between the gothic, politics, women’s rights, and religion. That is, Austen ensures that her novel’s narrator

⁷ Isabella and Eleanor (the names of course of Catherine’s female friends) were both allies of Catherine of Aragon, the former her mother and the latter her best friend. Bishop John Fisher (John Thorpe) was among the first Catholic priests executed during the Reformation. King James VI and I (James Morland) was the first Stuart king in England.

remains vocally aware of the era's social and political context, and uses this awareness ironically, even if Catherine does not. When Catherine misunderstands Tilney's mockery, the true purpose of the gothic becomes more evident—she, just like other readers of this genre, needs to read the subtext. Once she is alone to mull over his “advice,” she in fact disregards his submerged warnings and reaffirms her fantasies, which, oddly, turn out to resemble his subtler meanings:

Charming as were all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and charming even as were the works of all her imitators, it was not in them perhaps that human nature, at least in the midland counties of England, was to be looked for. Of the Alps and Pyrenees, with their pine forests and their vices, they might give a faithful delineation; and Italy, Switzerland, and the South of France, might be as fruitful in horrors as they were represented. Catherine dare not doubt beyond her own country, and even of that, if hard-pressed, would have yielded the northern and western extremities. But in the central part of England there was surely some security for the existence even of a wife not beloved, in the laws of the land, and the manners of the age. (188)

Though she venerates Henry and has faith in the “absurdity of her curiosity and her fears” (187), significantly Catherine here veers from obedience and instead of blindly believing him, she starts to think for herself: apparently no country, even her own, is above reproof. Though she thinks Tilney said England could not possibly accommodate gothic terrors, she has the courage to disagree (though in private), explicitly doubting England's “northern and western extremities.” The supreme irony is that the hero and heroine actually agree, and in doing so they reinforce the gothic as an honest, if fictionalized, account of society. The west and east in the United

Kingdom, a relatively new commonwealth at the time, were in turmoil. Riots and treason historically came from Scotland, Wales, and Ireland in the form of ongoing “border wars” (Gamer 186).

Moreover, the areas she mentions in her ruminations were also among the most Catholic before and after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. These “extremities” experienced, and fought against the most injustice from England; thus, when Catherine “yields” their security, she calls attention to the despotism against religion taking place outside of a novel. Her thoughts on Radcliffe’s “charming” works reveal a series of truths about the gothic genre, through the situational irony of her own misunderstanding. She draws back to Henry VIII and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon in pointing out there should be “security for the existence even of a wife not beloved” in Britain’s central counties. The renovated abbey in which Catherine Morland sits in fact bears evidence for how insecure women were in Britain. Even a queen faces uncertainty, should her husband tire of her—Henry discarded five wives, some by pain of death, the result of which was a religious upheaval that led to one of the most unprecedented schisms from Rome. Contemporarily, women had no legal protection and through “partial laws and custom of society” (Wollstonecraft 5) could be locked up, quietly killed, or sent off if their husbands should grow tired of them. Henry Tilney and Catherine both serve as outlets, in their own disparate ways, for expressing the criminality of England.

Chapter II: Catholicism and Female Enfranchisement

Radcliffe treats the Roman faith varyingly in her gothic novels, to effects which I argue reveal her political interests. *A Sicilian Romance* follows a narrative that parallels the propaganda the Tudors promoted to villainize Catholicism and to validate the Dissolution of Monasteries⁸: in the novel, every ecclesiastic ruler proves his immorality while ruling his church. However, *Mysteries of Udolpho* shows a peaceful convent, a place for the innocent to find sanctuary and the guilty to seek and find moral absolution. While the main variation between the places is gender—*Sicilian* features men leading the sects yet women run the convent in *Udolpho*—the implications reach further than simply sex. And, despite the differences, each place serves a similar purpose in the respective heroine’s life: empowerment. Catholic institutions provide the perfect situation for this for two reasons. First, Protestant judgment of Romanism was accepted and entrenched in gothic literature and English religious discourse in general. Thus, a woman standing up to Catholic abuse would be seen to be demonstrating loyalty to the Church of England; because this protest is allowed, Radcliffe can make these rebellious moments do double duty. Under the cover of Emily or Julia’s Protestant loyalty, they can additionally declaim women’s rights to a rational mind and to liberties both civil and economic. For example, Julia, albeit temporarily, rises to combat the Abate as he unjustly attempts to intimidate her and Emily not only gains confidence at the convent she resides at, but she meets the woman who ultimately endows her with a fortune. As such, Radcliffe is not merely protesting Catholicism, but in a move safe from government censorship, she is also using these houses to provide an architectural

⁸ Jessie Childs explains that not only was Catholicism criminalized during the Elizabethan Era, but that “social stigma against the validity of the [Catholic] values” (81) was reinforced, especially with the dissemination of Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*.

site for critiquing Romantic-era tyranny and especially for offering occasions where women can emancipate themselves from the control of men.

In *A Sicilian Romance*, Radcliffe represents the crooked men who dominate monasteries as materialistic, grasping, and thus willing to collude with the novel's patriarchal villains. In other words, these are perfect foils for embodying the Georgian obsession with women's obedience and passivity. Julia flees her home, rejecting her father's orders to marry the Duke de Luovo. The spurned lover determines to hunt her down and force her into marriage; while pursuing her, he and his army seek shelter in a monastery, where they find the religious correlative to their own patriarchal excess:

[t]he Superior, whose habit distinguished him from his associates, appeared at the head of the table. He was lifting a large goblet of wine to his lips, and was roaring out, "Profusion and confusion," at the moment when the duke entered. His appearance caused a general alarm; that part of the company who were not too much intoxicated, arose from their seats; and the Superior, dropping the goblet from his hands, endeavoured to assume a look of austerity, which his rosy countenance belied. [...] The table was quickly covered with luxurious provisions, and orders were given that the duke's people should be admitted, and taken care of. He was regaled with a variety of the finest wines, and at length, highly elevated by monastic hospitality, he retired to the apartment allotted him, leaving the Superior in a condition which precluded all ceremony. (90)

The imagery of the Superior at the head of the table holding up a goblet recalls the Sacrament of the Eucharist, a connection which is reinforced as he calls out "Profusion and confusion."

Profusion can mean both "the action of pouring out; spilling, shedding, esp. of blood" (OED

1583) and “the action or an act of lavish expenditure” (OED 1545), which, in context, links the Eucharist—the blood of Christ—with a gluttony inherently incompatible with Christianity. This word implies the monk understands the irony of being drunk on consecrated wine, yet still enjoys the duplicity. This revelry expands when he then says “confusion,” which implies chaos, but also evokes the ritual of transubstantiation⁹—a concept of contention between Protestants and Catholics, since the former saw it as sorcery. Justo L. Gonzales discusses that the “mystery” of transubstantiation gave priests too much power, leading to abuse that contributed to Martin Luther protesting the Roman church (324). By connecting excess (especially a glut of wine) with the transubstantiation, Radcliffe invalidates its supposedly magical and miraculous nature, while echoing the Anglican propaganda condemning Catholic rituals by implying a devious intentionality behind transubstantiation. In this text, the priests use the enigma and power of Christ to give themselves indulgent luxuries and knowingly to toast its power in their drunkenness.

We read in the previous passage that drunkenness undermines the Superior’s attempts at “austerity,” or rather the authority his position should offer him. Having “elevated” the Duke with “monastic hospitality,” the Superior now cannot accomplish the “ceremony” of wishing Luovo a goodnight—inebriation “preclude[s]” it. Radcliffe, while stating that he was too intoxicated to be a host, simultaneously labels as a “ceremony” the custom of bidding goodnight to a guest; in doing so, she recalls a priest’s official capacities—and as such, underlines the incompatibility between debauchery and his office. Instead of being a site of moral guidance, the monastery blindly accepts these men simply because of the Duke’s aristocratic position, without

⁹ The act of turning the Eucharist materials into the actual body and blood of Christ through consecration.

questioning his business. Considering the connection between the “fine wines” the monks provide the party and the sacred nature of consecrated wine, “monastic hospitality” implies that the Superior blesses the mission, and thus the monastery symbolically compounds its failures of faith with the Duke’s crimes against Julia. David Slater claims that Radcliffe only sees “Catholic clerics as instruments of tyranny, and the Catholic Church more generally as the enemy of what she would have understood to have been the characteristically Protestant” (57). I see this as only partially true, since I argue that Catholic associations in her books serve a purpose beyond critiquing that religion.

Heroines of gothic novels frequently find themselves in monasteries, where they achieve inspiration in acts of rebirth that enable them to address conflicts they are having with authority figures: they strive to escape patriarchal control. When Julia seeks a convent for protection from the Duke de Luovo, she finds the Abate there full of vice as well and unwilling to protect her, except under the conditions he stipulates. He threatens her sanctuary, and in so doing provokes a reproof from her:

These false aspersions roused in Julia the spirit of indignant virtue; she arose from her knees with an air of dignity, that struck even the *Abate*. “Holy father,” said she, “my heart abhors the crime you mention, and disclaims all union with it. Whatever are my offences, from the sin of hypocrisy I am at least free; and you will pardon me if I remind you, that my confidence has already been such, as fully justifies my claim to the protection I solicit. When I sheltered myself within these walls, it was to be presumed that they would protect me from injustice; and with what other term than injustice would you, Sir, distinguish the conduct of the marquis, if the fear of his power did not overcome the

dictates of truth?" (132)

Julia becomes bold and powerful, standing up to the man whose generosity—in fact, the Christian kindness that should inspire him to help the needy—she depended on for safety. The impetus for her sense of injustice is his “false aspersions” against her, and, as in the previous scene with the drunken Superior, Radcliffe employs a word with both spiritual and secular definitions: aspersion can mean both “the action of besprinkling” (OED 1570) and “the action of casting damaging imputations, false and injurious charges, or unjust insinuations” (OED 1633). The latter definition fits this situation, yet besprinkling recalls Baptism, another Catholic sacrament. Connecting this moment with Baptism situates Julia in a moment of rebirth, empowering her to become a woman who can stand up to injustice. Ironically, the Abate brings Julia to advocate for herself, if only through the self-righteous indignity she feels at being mistreated. In this scene she frequently repeats the word “I”—stating “I am at least free,” and “I remind you”—which not only separates her from and positions her against the Abate, but as she continues to say “I solicit,”—an active verb following the pronoun—we see her growing autonomy. This growth gives her the authority to call the Abate hypocritical and unjust, which effectively identifies him as a false Christian. As she did with the drunken Superior, Radcliffe here uses English anti-Catholic condemnation to describe the Abate, yet I argue she does so not only to criticize Catholicism but further to figuratively baptize Julia as the moral superior over corrupt tyrants, specifically men in powerful positions. The religious houses were meant to protect women, especially from sexual violation, yet Julia must advocate for herself to obtain any security there—and she does save herself, as not even a sanctuary could. Radcliffe uses Julia’s challenge to religious corruption to highlight the heroine’s individual strength, which in turn

serves to expose how well a woman can advocate for herself and win against patriarchal control. Slater argues that “the nuns and monks who populate [Radcliffe’s] novels almost invariably inspire her virtuous heroes and heroines with feelings of righteous indignation” (55). While I agree that this applies well to *A Sicilian Romance*, I believe some of the author’s clerics also inspire the heroines through companionship and support, an idea I turn to next.

The representation of Catholicism in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* diverges from its treatment in *A Sicilian Romance*. The monastery in the former has an opposite atmosphere as those in the latter, yet galvanizing results occur for the heroine in both. The protagonist, Emily, goes to the convent of St. Clair,¹⁰ where her recently deceased father has been buried. While there she considers remaining permanently by taking vows of her own:

During her stay at the convent, the peace and sanctity that reigned within, the tranquil beauty of the scenery without, and the delicate attentions of the abbess and the nuns, were circumstances so soothing to her mind, that they almost tempted her to leave a world, where she had lost her dearest friends, and devote herself to the cloister, in a spot, rendered sacred to her by containing the tomb of St. Aubert. The pensive enthusiasm, too, so natural to her temper, had spread a beautiful illusion over the sanctified retirement of a nun, that almost hid from her view the selfishness of its security. (64-5)

At multiple points the narrator reveals the way Emily is drawn to such retirement, not because of her religious faith, but because of secular filial control: for her, the sacredness of the abbey comes specifically from her father’s—St Aubert’s—tomb. Although Emily experiences a kindness and tranquility at the convent that she has not known since her mother died, she

¹⁰ Stylized here as “St. Clair” to maintain continuity with the spelling in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, but I acknowledge that religious scholars typically spell her name as “St. Clare.”

ultimately considers that staying there and devoting herself to God—seemingly one of the most honorable vocations in Christian society—would be selfish, a belief that reveals one, but not all, of her desires. She also wants to devote herself to family, for Emily loves Valancourt, and as such she does not want a celibate life: she wants to marry. If, however, the heroine had wanted to be a recluse, the choice of St. Clair's would have been a progressive and positive choice.

Though, of course, convents in general had the potential to offer female autonomy, as taking vows was often the only way for a woman to gain sovereignty over their lives, this particular house was unique. By choosing St. Clair as the patron of the monastery, Radcliffe specifically refers to the Order of Poor Ladies, the first all-woman monastic order in Christian history. Their respectability came from Catholic ecclesiastical structures, yet the rules of this sect were the first to have been written by a woman, and their abbesses served under no man other than the Pope—who still had little control over them. Furthermore, Clair's history rejects filial control; she ran from her father to avoid marriage, claiming “no husband but Christ” (Meister and Stump 244), and later fought for independence from the Franciscans so she could run her order independently under the rules she herself wrote (245). The autonomy St. Clair's represents supports Radcliffe's endorsement of female authority since most convents submitted to papal control, and operated under a male abate. Thus, Radcliffe seems to be offering to her heroine two choices, both of which offer self-determination: a safe, private life of seclusion or one of joy and companionship in marriage. She ultimately marries Valancourt, with the authority and wealth she inherits from a nun at St. Clair, Sister Agnes.

In addition to offering sanctuary to Emily, St. Clair's allows Sister Agnes, the formerly conniving Lady Laurentini to repent her sins and, eventually, to empower the protagonist

financially, and to make her family history known to her. Identified initially as Sister Agnes, Laurentini took the cloth to repent the murder of the Marchioness de Villeroi; when she discovers that Emily is the Marchioness' niece (a fact heretofore unknown to the reader or to Emily) she chooses to leave most of her estate to Emily. Laurentini's act of penance gives the heroine the financial ability to repurchase her father's former estate, as well as to assist her and her husband's friend, Madame Bonnac (who likewise receives her own bequest from the nun). While, as an unmarried woman, Laurentini was in a unique position to bequeath money and property in her will, the abbey also participates in this endorsement of a female "entail" by executing her wishes. I argue that moral integrity of the house ensures that Emily receives her inheritance after it inspires Laurentini to leave her money to those she wronged, as she made her will only after entering "into this holy community" (661). Effectively, the convent of St. Clair secures Emily's future. In *Mysteries of Udolpho* the Catholic church serves to enfranchise women, whether by helping Laurentini and Emily to find peace, or by literally facilitating them by encouraging them to support each other emotionally and financially; it symbolizes the power women have when they are free from filial control. Despite this representation, Radcliffe is not, of course, pro-Catholic; I'm arguing instead that her gothic is politically motivated insofar as she uses Roman churches as a platform to examine the rights of women, as well as to contemplate the potential for cloisters to empower women.

Emily divides her inheritance from Laurentini in such a way that it likewise uplifts other women. After her marriage she quickly takes control of her assets:

The estates, at Tholouse, were disposed of, and Emily purchased of Mons. Quesnel the ancient domain of her late father, where, having given Annette a marriage portion, she

settled her as a housekeeper, and Ludovicio as the steward; [...] The legacy, which had been bequeathed to Emily by Signora Laurentini, she begged Valancourt would allow her to resign to Mons. Bonnac. (672)

By purchasing her father's "ancient domain," Emily fulfills the traditionally masculine role of protecting and maintaining the family estate; because of the autonomy another woman gave to her, she is able to subvert the history of primogeniture. Ellen Malenas Ledoux suggests this action implies that "the Gothic castle can just as easily symbolize matriarchal, rather than patriarchal, power" (338). Even though she "begs" her husband for permission to bequeath her estates as she chooses, we must remember that she has chosen a man she is confident will support her wishes. And in fact, there is the suggestion that her "begging" is actually pro forma behavior. Her matriarchal power goes even further as she ensures that her companion-servant likewise gains some independence. Not only does she give Annette a home and a job, but she also gives her a higher ranking position than her original role as chambermaid—she patronizes and raises the class of another woman, as Laurentini had done for her. Emily not only uses her legacy to subvert masculine roles, but to empower other women, and in doing so embodies the goals Radcliffe champions in the gothic.

The convent of St. Clair demonstrates the serenity women could experience while supporting each other, a concept that Radcliffe's *The Italian* fully realizes. Although the heroine, Ellena, runs from another woman—her lover's mother, who conspires to kill her—she follows the pattern established by the other novels I examine when she takes refuge in an abbey:

The society appeared like a large family, of which the lady abbess was the mother, rather than an assemblage of strangers; [...] [s]he encouraged in her convent every innocent and

the liberal pursuit, which might sweeten the austerities of confinement, and which were generally rendered instrumental to charity. The *Daughters of Pity* particularly excelled in music; not in those difficulties of the art, which display florid graces, and intricate execution, but in such eloquence of sound as steals upon the heart, and awakens its sweetest and best affections. It was probably the well-regulated sensibility of their own minds, that enabled these sisters to diffuse through their strains a character of such finely-tempered taste, as drew crowds of visitors, on every festival, to the church of the *Santa della Pieta*. (348)

I argue that this “society” is one of Radcliffe’s ultimate dreams for women: to live a community, managed by a kind, strong woman, dedicated to education. The narrator says the convent is “like a large family,” lead by a “mother,” which infuses maternity, and thus inherent femininity, into the convent. As a result, the “daughters” (a word that also underlines the gender of the nuns) learn any liberal pursuit. Liberal, a word meaning both “directed to a general broadening of the mind” (OED 1390) and “free from restraint” (OED 1500), highlights women’s abilities to be educated when free from oppression. This church, under the female guidance of the abbess, has excelled in tutoring the inhabitants. Furthermore, these sisters cultivate what Charlie Bondhus labels a “well-regulated sensibility,” an affect he calls “a privileging of emotionality,” which, he says, “is almost always connected to virtue and the pleasing feeling of having taken the morally correct action” (15). His definition implies that their sensibility, that education has “well-regulated,” led them to be virtuous and morally superior. Radcliffe credits the abbess with making *Santa della Pieta* a safe, inspiring place, while also carefully separating the leader from religion. Though the Superior “conformed to the customs of the Roman church,” she does so

“without supposing a faith in all of them to be necessary to salvation” (347). Her lack of coercion shows that religious conformity, a condition normally inherent to a convent, is not a prerequisite to entering this sanctuary. Therefore, any woman—Catholic or not—could access the education and well-being in this place. As such, I believe Radcliffe wanted all women to learn and to gain independence, and that convents, and thus the Catholic churches, were a way for her to write such a wish into her novels.

**Conclusion:
The Roman Church as a Radical Veil**

Catholicism and England have a long, sordid history, yet the implications of the religion's presence in gothic literature reaches beyond conflicts concerned with dogma and ritual to engage in secular politics, though as Henry VIII demonstrates, these were often conflated. As I have shown, Ann Radcliffe and Jane Austen use Catholicism to amplify dissent; their novels feature women questioning and fighting institutional and patriarchal limitations on women's educations and social roles. Radcliffe's monastic scenes display women at their most capable, encouraging them to rise against oppressors; she also uses a convent to advocate for formal educational establishments for women. Austen presents Catholicism similarly, yet she additionally employs Catholic spaces to bring history forward into memory—in doing so, she critiques the British government, both for its past and its present forms of despotism.

Some scholars would disagree with my reading of Radcliffe, as many consider her a writer with no interest in radicalism. David Durant calls her a “conservative writer in what is now considered a revolutionary movement” (519), and argues that she clings to happy endings and family structures. While Durant ignores the nuances of Radcliffe's plots, the subtext of his disapproval gives us insight into why scholars consider her conservative. She does follow traditional narrative structures, but her works were clearly progressive and subversive as they promote a change in gender roles existing in Georgian England. However, she had extreme rivals late in her career—foremostly, Matthew Lewis, whose gothic greatly differed from her style. I venture that those scholars who consider Radcliffe “conservative” do so in part when they compare her novels to the violence and depravity of *The Monk*; they ignore the delicate symbolism behind Radcliffe's texts because compared to harsh content, her works seem tame. I

acknowledge that she camouflages her radicalism under sometimes contradicting, and thus difficult to decipher, metaphors: she moves between virulent criticism against contemptible monks and a softened treatment of nuns throughout her novels. My argument—that Catholic spaces serve to amplify and empower women—addresses how she can both reprimand the Roman faith and respect it, though many still read her as a conservative writer simply for her subtle and formulaic style.

The difference between Radcliffe and Lewis's works has been long discussed in scholarly circles, and their dichotomy represents a larger issue which I would like to engage with, though I have not had the space in my thesis to address it: the difference between male and female gothic writers and their treatment of Catholicism. While I cannot go deeply into this matter, I want to bring forward several points to consider. First, for Lewis Catholic spaces represent a place where violence and depravity escalate to extremes heretofore introduced in the gothic. In *The Monk*, cloisters provide a hiding place for sin, thus making the innocent suffer and ultimately die in graphically lewd and devastating ways. Conversely, Radcliffe's texts insinuate assaults without explicitly exhibiting horrors. Instead, she uses the Roman church as a site to compare amoral men to virtuous heroines, and in so doing allows women to triumph over the villains due to their righteous superiority. However, Lewis does not epitomize all male gothic writers; earlier in this thesis, I alluded to Walpole, who represents the Catholic church in a favorable light in *The Castle of Otranto*. Regardless, he never validates women in his use of the institution, which suggests that Radcliffe and Austen innovated the gothic to advocate feminist ideals.

During the Georgian era, there were movements that brought Catholicism back into a semi-official capacity in England, which later culminated in the 1833 Oxford Movement.¹¹ While Radcliffe and Austen never openly supported the Roman church—the former in fact predominantly criticized it—I argue that they represent a society that was slowly beginning to accept Catholicism. Despite her predominate distaste for the church, Radcliffe’s *The Italian* features *Santa della Pieta*, a visionary place that counters anti-Catholic propaganda, which may change a reader’s mind to appreciate the religious sect. While knowing exactly what the public felt is impossible, it is undeniable that acts such as the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 occurred relatively soon after the publication of these novels; Austen and Radcliffe may have mimicked their society in creating relatively supportive narratives around Catholicism, but they also may have guided it.

An additional matter I want to broach is the status of Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* as a parody. I maintain that it is a true gothic—the plot retains the genre’s characteristic themes of terror, mystery, and medieval settings—however, throughout its history it has been called a parody. As I have shown, the book is actively different from most gothics, foremostly as it takes place in Austen’s contemporary era, in England, as opposed to a distant setting both in time and place. However, I believe the reading of it as a parody goes deeper. Mary Spongberg suggests “it is possible that the advertisement was an ironic gesture on Austen's part” (635), saying that the author intentionally marketed *Northanger* as a parody. Spongberg proposes she did so perhaps to ridicule a society which was rejecting the gothic in favor more historically accurate stories, or perhaps to protect her novel from critical scrutiny. Considering it was published posthumously, I

¹¹ The Oxford Movement was a return to Catholicism in the Church of England, which argued the Anglican church was simply a branch of the Roman church, and thus under papal supremacy. The followers—largely upper-class noblest—who supported this idea eventually formed a large, and socially accepted, Anglo-Catholic church.

cannot agree with this assessment. Instead, I argue some consider the book a parody because the self-aware narrator focuses specifically on novels—or rather, the element which makes the text a discussion on understanding the gothic. While Henry Tilney’s sarcasm and Catherine Morland’s confusion create an indirect discourse on gothic themes, the narrator forces the reader to acknowledge the novel as a complex and insightful tool for understanding society. I believe using the word “parody” to label *Northanger Abbey* allows scholars to address with the metadiscussion existing within the narrative.

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