

ANTI-CATHOLICISM IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NOVEL

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## ABSTRACT

Thesis under the direction of Jessica Richard, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of English.

Scholarship on anti-Catholicism in England abounds for the eras surrounding the eighteenth century, but for the eighteenth century itself, it remains limited. Of the research that does examine this period, the majority concerning literature pinpoints satire, poetry, sermons, and treatises as the key literary products and/or perpetrators of anti-Catholicism in England, while discourse on the novel is lacking. More specifically, the relationship between the evolutions of both anti-Catholicism and the novel genre has not been explored. The purpose of this thesis is to begin a discussion of that relationship, and while I cannot perform a comprehensive analysis of anti-Catholicism and the eighteenth century novel as a whole, I am presenting three examples – within Richardson's *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, Inchbald's *A Simple Story*, and Lewis's *The Monk* – which establish distinct connections between the developments of both the novel form and anti-Catholic ideas, in the hopes of opening doors for further study in this area.

## INTRODUCTION

Scholarship on anti-Catholicism in England abounds for the eras surrounding the eighteenth century, but for the eighteenth century itself, it remains limited. This is primarily due to the fact that, as Colin Haydon states, “the century long seemed uninviting, falling between the heroic times of persecution under Elizabeth and the Stuarts and the Catholic revival of Newman and Wiseman.”<sup>1</sup> Of the research that does examine this period, the majority concerning literature pinpoints satire, poetry, sermons, and treatises as the key literary products and/or perpetrators of anti-Catholicism in England, emphasizing political artists like Swift and Hogarth and the opposing Catholic responses of Alexander Pope. Surprisingly, within this scholarship, discourse on the novel is lacking. While the subject of anti-Catholicism is often connected to scholarship on the birth of the Gothic genre (and may be referenced occasionally in the midst of a broader discussion of a non-gothic novel), the relationship between the evolutions of both anti-Catholicism and the novel genre has not been explored. The purpose of this thesis is to begin a discussion of that relationship, and while I cannot perform a comprehensive analysis of anti-Catholicism and the eighteenth century novel as a whole, I am presenting three examples which establish distinct connections between the developments of both the novel form and anti-Catholic ideas, in the hopes of opening doors for further study in this area.

I have chosen three novels written and published in the latter half of the eighteenth century, each produced during a significant historical moment in the evolution of the novel and/or Protestant-Catholic relations: Samuel Richardson’s *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, Elizabeth Inchbald’s *A Simple Story*, and Matthew Lewis’s *The*

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England. c. 1714-80* (Manchester, UK: Manchester UP, 1993) 1.

*Monk*. In addition to illuminating particular historical moments critical in the development of both the novel and anti-Catholic ideas, each of these texts represents a different form of novel composition and each presents a unique perspective on the traditional novelistic themes of courtship and marriage. By exploring these elements in each novel, this study argues that, first, “the eighteenth century constituted a bridge, not a hiatus, between the better researched ‘No Popery’ troubles of the Stuart and Victorian eras,”<sup>2</sup> second, that the use of religious themes was a means of reinventing the novel form, and third, that the novel played a significant role in tracking and influencing religious thought throughout this transitional period.

My initial research in this study was focused on the unique historical connections of each novel to the evolution of anti-Catholic ideas throughout the eighteenth century. *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, published in seven volumes between 1753 and 1754, was written and published during a brief span of time in which the threat of Catholicism, both within England and extending from bordering countries, was extremely low. In the wake of successful battles against the Catholic Continent and the Jacobites, this novel expresses sentiments concerning Catholicism that would previously have been unheard of in Protestant literature, resulting in unusual relationships between Protestants and Catholics and a sense of comfort with the state of religion in England. Significantly, following this novel there is a lack of emphasis on the Catholic problem within the novel genre, which may be a result of this same period of security on the part of Protestants.

Issues of Catholicism return to the novel during the 1790s due to the disturbance caused by the French Revolution. Although *A Simple Story* is a minor novel of the eighteenth century, it is important to this project as it provides several unique historical

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<sup>2</sup> Haydon 2.

perspectives. While the first half of *A Simple Story* was written between 1777 and 1779, corresponding with the adoption of the English Catholic Relief Act of 1778,<sup>3</sup> the novel was not published until 1791, during the tumultuous onset of the French Revolution. In light of the Relief Act, the distinctive plot of a Catholic priest who becomes a landowner and English Lord makes this novel absolutely necessary in a study of developing ideas during this period. The revisions and additions made before the novel's publication in 1791 also provide interesting insight into the increasingly tense Protestant-Catholic relations during the century's final decades. It is also important to note that *A Simple Story* is the only novel written by a woman, outside of the gothic genre, that directly deals with the issue of Catholicism in England, particularly in relation to the marriage plot. Also, Elizabeth Inchbald's connections to the Catholic radicals in England provide a glimpse into the conflicted Catholic situation during this period and may account for the unique characterizations of her two protagonists (one Protestant and one Catholic) in the first half of the novel and the strange transformation of her hero/antagonist in the second.

Finally, this project would be incomplete without an analysis of the rising gothic genre that bloomed during the final decade of the eighteenth century and would continue developing throughout the nineteenth century. Although earlier representations of anti-Catholicism in the English gothic tradition are shown in the works of Horace Walpole and, more significantly, Anne Radcliffe, I have chosen to focus primarily on Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, published in 1796, due to the novel's extreme approach to the Catholic problem and transformation of the gothic form. Pulling from the turmoil and

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<sup>3</sup> The English Catholic Relief Act of 1778 provided legislation "rescinding restrictions on Catholic ownership and inheritance of land." It was a part of a group of relief acts that eventually led to the Gordon Riots in 1780 (Jim Smyth, *The Making of the United Kingdom, 1660-1800* (London: Pearson Education Ltd., 2001) 190).

fear caused by the French Revolution, the gothic novel was used both in England and on the Continent to demonize the Catholic Church, contributing to the virulent anti-Catholicism that rose again during the nineteenth century. Lewis's transformation of this genre in his extreme uses of violence and the supernatural established this text as the greatest and most influential of the gothic tradition during this century. I propose that this transformation to extremist Gothicism paralleled (and encouraged) the transformation of anti-Catholic beliefs that so violently affected the Victorian period.

The second point of exploration in this study concerns the development of the novel form throughout the latter half of the century. I am evaluating how different novel forms affected the presentation of certain viewpoints surrounding Protestant and Catholic conflicts, as well as examining how the use of religious themes allowed writers to further evolve the techniques of novel composition. Richardson gives us an elaborate example of his well-established epistolary form in the seven-volume *History of Sir Charles Grandison*, which is primarily comprised of letters from and to Harriet Byron, the novel's Protestant heroine. Following the later publications of acclaimed novelists like Richardson and Fielding, authors were struggling with the development of the novel, unsure of how to produce works comparable to those of these two predecessors without repeating the same plots and techniques over and over. As Hammond and Regan note, "the very newness of the species – the novel's claim to novelty – had also left it with a problematic, if not oxymoronic identity, as a discrete literary genre that was nevertheless defined by a continual process of renewal."<sup>4</sup> Prior to the radical changes brought through the gothic tradition, a unique example of narrative form can be found in Elizabeth

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<sup>4</sup> Brean Hammond and Shaun Regan. *Making the Novel*. (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 124.

Inchbald's novel, *A Simple Story*. Inchbald seemingly adheres to the novel structure that developed out of the epistolary form – the third person narrative; however, the unusual breach between the first and the following two volumes of the novel (a period of about seventeen years within the plot) distinguishes her use of this form from that in any other novel of this period. Finally, a drastic transformation of the novel is provided through the revitalization of the medieval romance in the gothic form. Following in the footsteps of Horace Walpole and Anne Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis exceeds their attempts in this genre, creating one of the most controversial and influential gothic texts before the turn of the century.

The final subject of my research concerns the various uses of the courtship and marriage plot in these novels. In studying these novels together, I realized that one of the things that made the novel a highly effective medium through which to examine ideas concerning the identity of the church is this traditional novel theme.<sup>5</sup> In order to effectively explain this connection between the novel and the evolving Christian church, I must give some background on the idea of the church as the bride of Christ.

The concept of the church as the bride of Christ was commonly recognized throughout European history. The idea originates within the Bible itself; for example, in order to dispel lingering beliefs that he was the Messiah, John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the “Christ” and the “bridegroom,” calling himself a “friend of the bridegroom” who was sent to prepare the way for Christ.<sup>6</sup> Jesus also calls himself the “bridegroom,” while explaining the need for “the children of the bride-chamber” to fast during his absence but

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<sup>5</sup> In poetry and drama of the seventeenth century, the metaphor of marriage was also used in reference to the restored monarchy in England, presenting another reason why the use of the marriage theme could easily be recognized by British readers as having deeper political and social significance. Carol Barash, *English Women's Poetry, 1649-1714* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996) 41-46.

<sup>6</sup> John 3:29 (KJV).

not during His time on earth with them.<sup>7</sup> During the early growth of the Christian church, Paul definitively describes the church as the “bride of Christ” in his letter to the Ephesians, likening the relationship to that between an earthly husband and wife: “the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church...Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church.”<sup>8</sup> Finally, one of the most recognizable examples is shown in the Apostle John’s record of his visions in Revelation: following his description of the Judgment and creation of the new heaven and new earth, he writes “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”<sup>9</sup> This “new Jerusalem” is the sanctified bride, made up of all of the members of the true church.

It was this idea of the “true church” that posed a problem between the Catholic and Protestant faiths following the Revolution. In *The Bride of Christ*, Paul Carus delineates,

The notion that Christ as the Viceroy of God on earth had a bride remained constantly in the minds of people as much as the idea of the anti-Christ. The world was regarded as divided into two camps, the kingdom of God governed by Christ, identified with the Church under the leadership of the Pope, and the empire of unbelief which composed the entire pagan world and also the heretics of Christianity.<sup>10</sup>

For Catholics, only members of the Catholic Church were considered to be a part of the “true church.” It was through the traditions and rituals of the church itself – its litany,

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<sup>7</sup> Mark 2:19-20 (KJV).

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 5:23-25 (KJV). In 2 Corinthians Paul had previously evoked this image, declaring to the church in Corinth, “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (11:2 KJV).

<sup>9</sup> Revelation 21:2 (KJV).

<sup>10</sup> Paul Carus, *The Bride of Christ* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1908) 14.

sacraments, and various means through which parishioners could be absolved of their sins – that Catholics could become sanctified and joined eternally with Christ. Protestants, on the other hand, subscribed to a more personal belief system. Rather than designating a specific sect of Christianity as “the church,” they supported the idea that the “true church” or “bride” was made up of a body of believers evaluated not on their dedication to a particular denomination but on the state of their individual souls.<sup>11</sup> As portrayed in *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, this distinction is significant and, in this case, reason enough that Charles and Clementina cannot wed: Clementina’s brother, a Catholic bishop, tells Charles, “You will call to mind, Chevalier...that your church allows of a possibility of salvation out of its pale—Ours does not” (Richardson II. 182). Therefore, while Catholics believed that all those outside the church were condemned, Protestants believed that the salvation of members of the Catholic faith was *possible*. However, due to the superstitious beliefs and ritualistic practices observed amongst Catholics, which in the opinion of Protestants aligned their beliefs with those of pagan mythologies,<sup>12</sup> true Christian belief within the Catholic community was deemed less likely, and Catholicism itself was considered to be a danger to both Protestants and those who were not yet believers in Christ.

A key element in defining the identity of the “true church” is *sanctification*. As Paul’s letter to the Ephesians states, “[Christ] gave himself for [the church]; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but

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<sup>11</sup> “during the middle ages the bride of Christ is usually thought to be the Church, while among Protestants it is generally the soul.” (Carus 15).

<sup>12</sup> Carus 6-10, 25-52.

that it should be holy and without blemish.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the bride of Christ must be sanctified in order to participate in the holy union. As mentioned earlier, the Catholic idea of sanctification was bound within the traditions and rituals of the Church. Because of this, Catholics naturally would believe that all those outside of the Catholic faith – who had not performed traditional acts of penance – were condemned to spend eternity apart from Christ. On the other hand, because of the perceived connection between Catholic superstition and ritual and various pagan belief systems, the birth of the Protestant church – which could be described as a purified form of its predecessor – could be presented in itself as a “sanctification” of the church, purging the ritualistic traditions of Catholicism and opening the doors to personal accountability to God.

Because of these discrepancies, the questions of “which church is the true church?” and “what is true sanctification?” resonated throughout literature since the Reformation. In one of his *Holy Sonnets*, John Donne pleads with Christ saying,

Show me dear Christ, thy spouse, so bright and clear.  
What, is it she, which on the other shore  
Goes richly painted? or which robbed and tore  
Laments and mourns in Germany and here?

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Betray kind husband thy spouse to our sights,  
And let mine amorous soul court thy mild dove,  
Who is most true, and pleasing to thee, then  
When she’ is embraced and open to most men.<sup>14</sup>

Begging the holy bridegroom to reveal his bride, Donne expresses his personal confusion concerning the identity of the true church, emphasizing the lingering questions affecting English people during the seventeenth century, long after the full establishment of Protestantism under Elizabeth’s reign. During the eighteenth century, the British people

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<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 5:25-27 (KJV).

<sup>14</sup> John Donne, “Holy Sonnet 18” *John Donne: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) p. 288, ll. 1-4, 11-14.

seemed to be more uniformly divided, subscribing wholeheartedly to either one belief system or the other. But the question still lingered: “who is right...whose church is the true church, the true bride of Christ?”

This is the question that I find embedded within the courtship and marriage plots in Richardson, Inchbald, and Lewis’s novels. In each case we are presented with hopeful “brides,” symbolic representations of the church-in-waiting. Through the developments in the brides’ courtships, their personal decisions, and the resulting marriages, Richardson, Inchbald, and Lewis evoke images of either the sanctified or unsanctified church – presenting various symbolic answers to the question of the true church’s identity.

In *Sir Charles Grandison*, the Protestant hero is faced with a choice between two equally compelling and virtuous women – the Protestant Harriet Byron and the Catholic Clementina della Porretta. In *A Simple Story*, again the hero is faced with a choice between a Protestant and a Catholic, but in this case, our hero is a Catholic priest-turned-lord and the initial heroine is a feisty Protestant coquette, an unusual pairing that provides for the unique break in Inchbald’s plot. Finally, in *The Monk*, Lewis establishes the character of a male bride – Ambrosio, a monk courted by both God and Satan – in contrast to a victimized couple (together a representative bride) attempting to move away from Catholic superstition. Through an analysis of the progression of these courtship/marriage plotlines, the prior points of my research – historical connections and novel composition – come together to give evidence that the eighteenth century is a significant period in the development of religious belief between the Stuart and Victorian eras, that authors used religious themes as a means through which to reinvent the novel

form, and that the novel was important both in representing and influencing religious thought during this period.

CHAPTER ONE:

*THE HISTORY OF SIR CHARLES GRANDISON*

In the wake of the popular and somewhat controversial publications of *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, two novels exemplifying devoutly moral heroines and their struggles to repel depraved and lustful men, Richardson was urged to give an account of a man morally comparable to the women of these earlier novels and in contrast to the former male villains.<sup>15</sup> Unaware of where and how his new creation would conclude, Richardson constructed the character of Sir Charles Grandison – a superior example of virtue and tolerance, granted the ability and situation to transform the society around him into a positive reflection of his own moral values. Significantly, Sir Charles’ goodness extends beyond his personal virtue, as his relationships with members of the Catholic Church evoke an unusual tolerance for the frequent “enemy” of Protestant England both within his own family and the surrounding community. Through these relationships this novel provides a unique glimpse into the evolution of Protestant-Catholic relations during this particular moment in eighteenth century England.<sup>16</sup>

An exploration of the tolerant ideals illustrated in this novel is essential to the study of anti-Catholicism during this period because, although this peaceful era was brief, it opened the doors for political decisions concerning English Catholics that would later give rise to a re-awakening of popular anti-Catholicism in England. In this chapter I will be looking specifically at three elements of Richardson’s novel in order to establish its place within the Protestant-Catholic discourse of the mid-eighteenth century. First, I will be assessing the novel’s interaction with contemporary historical contexts, specifically addressing reactions to the failed Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 and to the dual setting of the

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<sup>15</sup> Jocelyn Harris. “Introduction.” *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*. Vii.

<sup>16</sup> Useful readings of Sir Charles Grandison can be found in Sylvia Kasey Marks’s *Sir Charles Grandison: The Compleat Conduct Book*, Stephanie Fysh’s *The Work(s) of Samuel Richardson*, David Blewett’s *Passion and Virtue*, Margaret Anne Doody’s *A Natural Passion*, and *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth Century Novel*.

primary plotline. Second, I will evaluate the use of the epistolary form in privileging the Protestant over the Catholic in the novel. Third, I will establish a framework of symbolism relating to the themes of courtship and marriage – presenting Sir Charles as a representation of Christ, the holy bridegroom, and Charles’s potential brides, Harriet and Clementina, as representations of their respective churches and possible brides of Christ – in order to better comprehend the relationship between Protestants and Catholics in the mid-eighteenth century and to establish a structure through which I can study the continuing development of anti-Catholic themes in novels of the late eighteenth century.

Richardson wrote *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* in seven volumes, all published between 1753 and 1754. The “tolerant” quality of his representation of Protestant-Catholic relations directly parallels the state of England during this decade and specifically mirrors the beliefs and practices of many intellectuals and elite members of society. England, at this point, did not feel the threat of encroaching Catholicism, as they had in the past. As the stronghold of Protestantism since the Elizabethan period, the British consistently felt in danger of invasion by the Catholic powers of the continent and the possibility of an overthrow of the Protestant monarch, most recently in Jacobite attempts to restore the Stuart line. Following the successful defeat of the Jacobites (and the supporting French) in the Battle of Culloden, which definitively ended the 1745 Jacobite Rising, the state of Britain seemed secure and the threat of Catholicism diminished.<sup>17</sup> *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* provides an example of transformed

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<sup>17</sup> Haydon 165.

Protestant thought during this period, which developed primarily within elite, intellectual, and urban social circles.<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, prior to fully portraying the image of the tolerant English Protestant, Richardson's retrospective portrayal of Sir Charles's experiences in Italy during the Forty-Five calls attention to the earlier causes for fear of Catholicism and gives evidence of the movement toward the current secure state of mind in Britain. While in Italy, Sir Charles wrote to Dr. Bartlett saying,

Hardly any thing else was talked of, in Italy, but the progress, and supposed certainty of success, of the young invader. I was often obliged to stand the triumphs and exultations of persons of rank and figure...Every new advice from England revived the disagreeable subject; for the success of the rebels, it was not doubted, would be attended with the restoration of...Catholic religion: And Clementina particularly pleased herself, that then her *heretic tutor* would take refuge in the bosom of his holy mother, the church...(II. 124).

While the young Charles handled this situation with tremendous grace in light of Italian intolerance, we are made aware of strenuous fear that weighed upon the English due to the perceived enormity of the Catholic Continent's power. Tormented even by the woman he loved, the Catholic Clementina, Charles was forced to flee to Germany and, following a second brief period in Italy, eventually made his way back to England. This backward glance evokes even greater respect for Sir Charles's example of tolerance in the latter half of the novel, particularly after the della Porrettas make their way to England.

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<sup>18</sup> Due to the altered political conditions and the rising influence of Enlightenment ideals, the concept of tolerance became popular amongst many political and intellectual sects of society, mostly contained within urban settings. Many rural areas remained unchanged in their anti-Catholic beliefs (Haydon 164). The latter is a problem which I will discuss later in this study.

In the results of Charles's first two experiences in Italy, in the second of which he was called back from Germany in order to soothe and prepare to marry the grieving Clementina, Richardson gives evidence of the importance of setting in connection with the threat of Catholicism in the novel. In both situations, Charles is eventually forced to leave Italy due to the irreconcilable conflicts concerning his Protestant beliefs – first, due to their incessant support of the Jacobite Rising, and second, due to their intolerance over his refusal to convert to Catholicism in order to marry Clementina. While our hero never wavers in his resolve, during Charles's second stay in Italy the della Porrettas are shown to be powerful in their demands and firm stance against compromise.

In light of this initial characterization, I wish to point out a contrast between the della Porrettas as they are seen in Italy and the later characterizations of them while in England. While Charles seems to have significant influence over those around him throughout most of the novel, during his stay in Italy, he cannot persuade the della Porrettas to agree to the tolerant terms of his proposed marriage to Clementina. Knowing Sir Charles's means of rational and moral persuasion revealed prior to this retrospective glimpse into his youth, it seems unusual that he cannot convince the della Porrettas of his fair reasoning. Unable to break their resolves, Charles leaves Italy and his beloved Clementina.

The strength of the della Porrettas, however, does not extend beyond Italy; in fact, in certain moments it is even weakened within their own Italian borders due to Clementina's love for Sir Charles. While Clementina's family stands firm in their decision not to allow a Protestant to marry into the family, Clementina's resolve wavers, sending her into bouts of depression and madness. Even after her personal refusal to

marry a Protestant, which exhibits a renewal of her own personal strength, she descends into depression again for fear of an arranged marriage. It is her flight from Italy that brings both Clementina and her family to England, where the roles of power are then reversed. Sir Charles becomes a mediator between the della Porrettas and the unhappy Clementina, ultimately leading his former beloved to consider marriage to the Count of Belvedere, as is her family's wish. Within these characterizations the novel implies that, while Catholics abroad cannot be controlled, those within England can be regulated under power of Protestant leaders. As Colin Haydon delineates, "It is important to appreciate that the image of the cruel, dangerous Papist was projected, not on to Catholic neighbours, but on faceless Catholics, Catholics abroad or at a distance...stereotypes are suspended by personal contact."<sup>19</sup> While Richardson does not portray the della Porrettas as cruel, he does emphasize the strength that they possess within their own Catholic borders in contrast to the lack of it within Protestant England. Through this representation, the novel again affirms the contemporary feelings of comfort and security concerning the state of Britain and the Protestant faith.

Building upon the rising tolerance within England, *Sir Charles Grandison* does propose a new possibility for tolerant relationships between Protestants and Catholics; however, in a careful analysis of the primary characters and the developments of their relationships, one can see that the dividing line between the two religious groups is not being removed but merely redefined. Therefore, although the Grandison and della Porretta families continue to pursue benevolently tolerant connections, the novel does not envision equality for both groups within the English borders. Our first example of the

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<sup>19</sup> Haydon 11.

prevalence of Protestantism over Catholicism in the novel can be seen within the novel form itself.

Many critics have suggested that Richardson uses the epistolary form to make his characters seem “real.”<sup>20</sup> Although the reader is not usually exposed to actions precisely as they occur, this form still allows for great strength of emotion from the writer, as the words gush out onto the paper just after something significant has come to pass. In this way, the reader becomes privy to intimate and unchecked reactions that might not be visible from the character had the information not been “penned” by his or her own hand. As we see in Harriet Byron, Richardson’s narrators are frequently “breathless” in their writing – frantically “scribbling” during and in-between conversations with other characters in order to redirect as much information as possible (as accurately as possible) to the intended reader(s). Harriet is criticized repeatedly by Charlotte Grandison for her “nasty scribbling” and being “eternally at [her] pen” (I. 396), but it is in this constant “scribbling” that Harriet connects with the reader, pulling them forward in her breathless relations of the strange history unfolding before her. Her haste in revealing information and the context in which it is written – a personal letter – encourages the reader to assume that she is communicating truth, or at least her true reactions and opinions.

The most significant effect of this novel’s epistolary form concerns the reader’s perceptions of Charles Grandison and his two love interests. Due to the fact that the primary narrator of the novel is Harriet Byron, describing the events, histories, and circumstances around her through her letters, we are naturally disposed to favor her when Sir Charles is caught between two lovers. Our interest is invested in her character through more than two volumes of the text before we even learn of Clementina’s

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<sup>20</sup> Joe Bray. *The Epistolary Novel: Representations of Consciousness* (London: Routledge, 2003) 58.

existence (and this, again, through a letter by Harriet). This early reception of Harriet is vital in Richardson's story because of the extreme similarities between Harriet and Clementina. The privileging of Harriet through an early emphasis on her character biases the reader in her favor when Clementina is presented as an alternate bride for Charles. In light of the Protestant-Catholic conflict in England, the privileging of Harriet over Clementina can be seen as an elevation of the Protestant church over the Catholic church.

The novel begins with a letter to Harriet from Lucy Selby, to whom the majority of Harriet's later letters are directed. The fact that the first letter is directed to rather than from Harriet is significant because it provides us with an initial introduction to the heroine's charms from an outside perspective, thereby ensuring the reader that later comments upon Harriet's character, revealed in her own letters, are accurate. Lucy informs the "lovely girl" that her "three Lovers," Mr. Greville, Mr. Fenwick, and Mr. Orme are in despair due to her imminent departure for London (I. 7). Various compliments of these admirers are transcribed here as well as the relation of a common fear amongst the gentlemen of an increase in the number of her suitors in the metropolis, through which the reader begins to imagine the high quality of Harriet's beauty, manners, and desirability. The text is then dominated by Harriet's excessively detailed account of her London experience, occasionally interrupted by short responding letters from her family at home. Her pure nature, beauty, and decorum become more visible to the reader through her interactions in London society, as it seems that everyone she meets falls in love with her. Like the socialites of London, the reader is also supposed to be "falling in love" with Harriet through the letters, in preparation for the introduction to her competition, Clementina.

In the third volume of Richardson's text, long after Harriet has revealed her passion for Sir Charles, we are finally introduced to the impediment to their amour – his first love, Clementina della Porretta. Although we first hear the name Clementina in the spoken words of Sir Charles and later are given the majority of the history of her connections with him through the letters of Dr. Bartlett, it is important to remember that all of this information is given to the reader within the context of Harriet's letters.

Our first introduction to Clementina occurs through Harriet's relation of a conversation that she has with Sir Charles concerning his "affair of intricacy...that hangs in suspense," namely his difficult and unresolved connection with the della Porretta family (I. 443). The tragic story moves Harriet to "a violent burst of tears" the moment that Sir Charles leaves the room (II. 132); but she is not merely moved out of pity for Sir Charles and his Italian paramour; she struggles between sadness for their unhappiness and a more selfish sadness for the loss that she feels sure will befall her. Her recognition and disdain for these selfish feelings maintain her virtuous image, while the presence of the feelings themselves evoke a more tangible humanity in her character that is equally appealing to the reader. We identify with these feelings but are simultaneously impressed by her determination to control them. Harriet's emotional response thereby frames our new awareness of Clementina and her connection with Sir Charles.

Our second and more detailed exploration into Clementina's character occurs through the letters of Dr. Bartlett, paraphrasing and quoting letters written to him years before by Sir Charles, and all significantly enclosed in Harriet's letters to Lucy. Harriet's interjections and surrounding sentiments keep her at the forefront of the reader's mind

during the detailed revelations of Sir Charles's earlier love affair. In this way, we remain more intimately connected to Harriet, regardless of our esteem for Clementina.

As shown above, by envisioning Harriet and Clementina as symbolic representations of their respective churches, we can posit that Protestantism is being privileged over Catholicism in the novel. I propose that we can take this symbolism further, examining the courtship/marriage plot of the novel as a symbolic representation of the concept of Christ as a bridegroom and the church as his bride. Within this structure, the age-old question of "which church is the true church?" can be answered through the development of Sir Charles's relationships with both Harriet and Clementina, as they respectively represent Christ, the Protestant church, and the Catholic church.

In this symbolic framework, I must first establish the construction of Sir Charles's character as a Christ-like figure.<sup>21</sup> As stated above, one of Richardson's primary motives in creating this character was to present a male counterpart to the virtuous female heroines of his previously acclaimed novels. Interestingly, as we follow the early plot of the novel, prior to our introduction to Sir Charles, familiar elements lead the reader to equate Harriet with Richardson's former heroines, Pamela and Clarissa – each is virtuous and striving to preserve her chastity, and each is pursued relentlessly by a lustful man who is willing to do almost anything to force the object of his desire into submission. It is in the midst of the recognizable "Richardsonian abduction" scenario that this novel redirects its emphasis, introducing a hero worthy of one of Richardson's virtuous heroines, Sir Charles Grandison.

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<sup>21</sup> A helpful exploration of Sir Charles Grandison as a "God-like" character and model of virtue can be found in Margaret Anne Doody's *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson*.

Again the epistolary form plays a part in our reception of a character, as we are very suddenly introduced to Sir Charles in the midst of a crisis. Aware that something has happened to Harriet, and recalling the treatment of Richardson's previous protagonists, the shockingly swift alleviation of danger revealed in Charlotte Grandison's letter to Mr. Reeves simultaneously surprises, relieves, and interests the reader. Due to Harriet's incapacitated state, we are introduced to Sir Charles and his virtuous nature through four different accounts, those of his servant and his sister and himself (in the letters of Mr. Reeves), and finally that of Harriet Byron in a letter to Miss Selby.

While each account reveals similar qualities of goodness, virtue, and courage, compassion for the heroine naturally heightens anticipation for her version of the story. Several details presented in Harriet's story convey initial Christ-like characteristics in Richardson's hero. Harriet recalls that after she was securely placed in Charles's carriage, she overheard him advise his opponent's servants saying, "Coachman, drive not over your master. Take care of your master" (I. 167). Not only are we immediately impressed by Charles's courageous and physical rescue of Harriet, but Charles's care for the man he has overcome conveys a strong sense of Christian virtue, applying the Biblical instruction to "love your enemies."<sup>22</sup> He also immediately avows his honorable intentions in rescuing her, as Harriet recalls, "...with all the tenderness of a brother, [he] soothed me...In accents of kindness, he told me, that he had there at present the most virtuous and prudent of sisters, to whose care he would commit me" ( I. 167). His honest assertion of virtue is validated by his prior acts of good will, unlike the deceitful proclamations of Sir Hargrave and Richardson's previous villains Lovelace and Mr. B. We are also equipped

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<sup>22</sup> Matthew 5:44 (KJV).

to affirm his honesty due to the prior accounts of Harriet's rescue, and can thereby undeniably attest his status as a virtuous hero within this initial encounter.

Not only is Charles depicted as a virtuous and steadfast hero in his relationships with the virtuous characters around him, including Harriet, the Danbys, and Emily Jervois, but he is proven to be far more than a "good man" through his continuous patient dealings with the villain, Sir Hargrave Pollexfen. Throughout the novel Sir Hargrave attempts to enact revenge on Charles for the "insult" of saving Harriet from his malicious scheme. However, Sir Charles's unwavering commitment to the belief that his skills in dueling are a system of "self-defense, and self-defense only" exasperates Sir Hargrave but affirms his good character to all others around him (I. 265). During Charles's alternative proposal to a duel with his relentless pursuer – a breakfast together – our hero gains the admiration and support of all of Sir Hargrave's friends. Following Charles's rational explanation of his belief in the "doctrine of returning *good* for *evil*," – also a biblical principle<sup>23</sup> – Hargrave's companion Mr. Jordan claims that he "never saw a hero until now," and the rest of the company beg Sir Hargrave to give up his vendetta against Sir Charles (I. 264). The characterization of Sir Charles as a man unlike any other further establishes him as the epitome of a virtuous man, of undeniable Christ-like character.

Sir Charles is also portrayed as a Christ-like figure in his unwavering commitment to the della Poretta family even after their ill-treatment of him. Although it is apparent that Harriet's hopes of marriage to Sir Charles are not totally unfounded, when his former promises to the della Porretta family concerning his proposed marriage to Clementina are again brought to light, he asserts, "I never yet made an offer, that I receded from, the circumstances continuing the same," claiming that were they even to renounce her

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<sup>23</sup> Luke 6:27-28 (KJV).

inheritance, he would remain faithful to his promises (II. 455). He is also gladdened by the fact that he had not made any formal statements to Harriet, which would have “involved her in [his] uncertainties” and inevitably led to heartbreak (II. 455). His dedication to fulfilling his promises is another evidence of Christ-like character.<sup>24</sup> Also, his complete selflessness and the desire to make the lives of those around him better elevates him above all of the other characters in the text, even his noble heroines.

Probably the most significant proof of Sir Charles’s Christ-like character is the positive influence that he has on those around him. Charlotte, who did not know her brother for many years due to his travels abroad, explains his influence on her life saying, “Till I knew my brother...as I now know him, I was an inconsiderate, unreflecting girl. Good and evil which immediately affected not myself, were almost alike indifferent to me. But he has awakened in me a capacity to enjoy the true pleasure that arises from a benevolent action” (I. 143). During his travels Charles was welcomed into the della Porretta family due to his influence in the life of the youngest son, Jeronymo, who considers him “not only the preserver of his life, but as the restorer of his morals” (I. 122). The cause for Sir Charles’s extended stay abroad is also aligned with his superior virtue as “the reason Sir Thomas gave was, that his son’s morals and his own were so different, that he should not be able to bear his own consciousness, if he consented to his return to England” (I. 322). His father could not indulge in his frivolous and sinful lifestyle in the presence of his emphatically upstanding son; therefore, he sent him away to tour Europe, eventually even refusing correspondence between Sir Charles and his sisters in an effort to extinguish his guilt in living a life so contrary to his son’s righteous example. Harriet establishes Sir Charles’s character fully within the Christian identity in

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<sup>24</sup> Romans 5:20-21

her record of a discussion with Dr. Bartlett concerning “The great and glorious truths of Christianity,” a topic that led naturally into the discussion of her beloved, due to the fact that “Sir Charles Grandison, without making an ostentations pretension to religion, is the very Christian in practice, that these doctrines teach a man to be” (I. 440). As we can see, even to the other characters in the novel Sir Charles is recognized as an ideal representative of Christ.

In order to further develop Harriet and Clementina as symbolic representations of the Protestant and Catholic churches, or prospective brides of Christ, Richardson must also demonstrate their virtuous natures. Proverbs 31 claims that the ideal woman is a woman of virtue: “Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.”<sup>25</sup> It is obvious to any reader that Harriet and Clementina are the two most virtuous women portrayed in the novel. In fact, in their virtues, they are almost identical. These similarities are of great importance in establishing Clementina and Harriet as the two sectors of the Christian church, as the foundations of the Protestant and Catholic faiths are the same.

Upon Mr. Reeves’s description of Harriet’s virtuous nature, Charlotte exclaims that Sir Charles “rescued an angel of a woman” (I. 143). The Countess Dowager of D initiates a plan to unite Harriet with her son, the Earl of D, before even meeting her due to her high praises in good society: “Your niece Byron’s beauty, and merits, as well as sweetness of temper, are talk’d of by every-body. Not a day passes, but we hear of her to her great advantage” (I. 214). Amidst the almost constant praise of Harriet from the members of the Grandison family and their company, perhaps the greatest compliment

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<sup>25</sup> Proverbs 31:10-12 (KJV).

given to her is from Sir Charles, following his reading of a packet of her letters. Charles passionately exclaims, “Such a noble heart! Such an amiable frankness! No Prudery! No coquetry! Yet so much, and so justly admired by as many as have had the happiness to approach her...I adore, madam, the goodness, the greatness of your heart. Woman is the glory of all created existence: - But you, madam, are *more* than a woman” (II. 92). The fact that her highest compliment issues from the ideal Christian character in the novel elevates her character far above the others surrounding her. Furthermore, Sir Charles’s designation of her character as *more* than a woman, which he deems the “the glory of all created existence,” qualifies her as a fit companion for him, the ideal man.

Clementina is similarly characterized through the praise of those around her and those who have merely heard of her goodness. Sir Charles describes her as “lovely in her person, gentle in her manners...she is pious, charitable, beneficent...Her father used to call her, *The pride of his life*” (II. 119). He later calls her “a young Lady of exemplary piety” (II. 128). Through Sir Charles’s account and the information presented in Dr. Bartlett’s letters, Harriet also comes to respect Clementina for her virtue and steadfast spirit. She writes to Lucy saying, “What a noble young Lady is Clementina! What purity is there in her passion...such a noble struggle did I never hear of, between Religion and Love. O Lucy! You will be delighted with Clementina: You will even, for a while, forget your Harriet; or, if you are just, will think of her but next after Clementina!” (II. 163). This growing respect for Clementina leads Harriet to fear the possibility of losing Sir Charles, but it simultaneously causes her to rationalize the idea that Clementina and Charles deserve each other.

Similar comparisons are made throughout the text, reaffirming the quality of each of these women, especially in relation to the virtue of Sir Charles. After Harriet's rescue, Charlotte aligns her new friend's virtue to her brother exclaiming, "what an happiness is it, that such a lady, in such a distress, should meet with a man as excellent, and as much admired, as herself!" (I. 136). Harriet, likewise, compares the character of Clementina to that of Sir Charles saying, "her conduct, you will find, is not inferior to his; firmly persuaded, as she is, of the truth of her religion" (II. 174). When made aware of Sir Charles's love triangle, his sister, Lady L proclaims, "A Clementina and Harriet...two women so excellent! What a fate is *his*! How must *his* heart be divided!" (II. 352). Both are also called "sister" by Sir Charles prior to their more amorous relationships, and even after he is married to Harriet, Sir Charles comments on their similar natures calling them "Sweet sisters! Lovely friends...Kindred souls" (II. 157, III. 454). In light of all of these comparisons, we can see that Harriet and Clementina are aligned throughout the novel, both representing an ideal Christian woman and both excellent choices to be Sir Charles's bride.

There is, however, one significant difference between these two women, and it is the factor that bars Charles from marrying Clementina and allows him to marry Harriet. We are made aware early in the retelling of his experiences with the della Porrettas that Sir Charles does not oppose a marital union with a Catholic woman. He will not, however, convert to Catholicism. Like Clementina, who was "So remarkably stedfast in [her beliefs], that it was with the utmost difficulty [her family] could restrain her from assuming the veil" (II. 124), Sir Charles is "entirely satisfied" in his own faith and could not renounce it, regardless of the price. Rather than turning his back on her following her

family's demands that he convert in order to marry her, Sir Charles proposes a compromise: they will each remain devoted to their own beliefs, and in the case of children, the boys should be raised Protestant and the girls Catholic. While Charles would find this arrangement completely acceptable, the della Porrettas cannot - and for a very specific reason. In a conversation between Sir Charles and Clementina's older brother, a Bishop of the Catholic Church, the latter unveils the problem. He states, "You will call to mind, Chevalier...that your church allows of a possibility of salvation out of its pale—Ours does not" (II. 182). According to the OED, "pale," in this sense, refers to "A realm or sphere of activity, influence, knowledge, etc.; a domain, a field." To be "out of its pale" or, in more common terminology, "beyond the pale" would be defined as "outside the limits of acceptable behaviour; unacceptable or improper."<sup>26</sup> Here we find the breaking point in the matrimonial hopes of both Sir Charles and the della Porrettas – while Charles believes that the "true church" is comprised of all Christian believers, the della Porrettas, and the Catholic Church as a whole, believe that their church is in itself the "one true church" and that all people outside of it are "heretics" – as Clementina frequently calls Sir Charles (II. 124). Therefore, Clementina cannot be allowed to marry the Protestant Sir Charles because, in her belief, his soul is condemned.

It is in this issue that we can discern the text's assertion that the Protestant faith represents the true church or bride of Christ. Sir Charles is willing to marry Clementina because he can accept a compromise between their denominational differences. As I explained in the introduction, Protestants believed it was possible for virtuous members of the Catholic church to be members of the "true church," which was not based on denomination but on the state of individual souls. Therefore, Charles can accept a

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<sup>26</sup> Oxford English Dictionary. "Pale."

compromise between them because, as her virtue proves, she is a Christian. Clementina, however, cannot allow herself to marry him because she does not believe that Protestants can be members of the true church. The intolerance of Clementina and her family is thereby revealed to be the weakness in the Catholic faith.

In light of this understanding, Harriet again takes precedence over Clementina, and thereby, the Protestant Church triumphs over the Catholic. As shown earlier in the discussion about the novel's form, Harriet has been privileged from the beginning of the text, causing the reader to assume that she has some precedence over Clementina before there is any evidence of it. Likewise, the Protestant faith is elevated over the Catholic, through the symbolic positioning of these two heroines. Harriet and the Protestant faith that she physically symbolizes both share the same defining quality that elevates them into the position of the "bride" – they both believe that all people professing faith in Christ's salvation of their souls are members of the "true church," regardless of their denomination. In this way, the Catholic faith is not seen as completely wrong, but simply an earlier version of the Christian faith from which a "purer" form of faith evolved. By removing the elements of superstition and ritual that linked Catholicism to earlier pagan traditions, the Protestant Church becomes the sanctified "bride of Christ," just as Harriet, Clementina's Protestant double, ultimately marries Charles in Clementina's place.

The tolerant attitude of the Protestant faith is reflected as a theme throughout the text in Sir Charles and Harriet's continuing relationships with the members of the della Porretta family. Harriet's nurturing of the excessively melancholy Clementina and Sir Charles's dominant role in the reconciliation of Clementina to her family establish both their acceptance of the Catholic family and their superiority over them. This, in turn,

represents a possible course for the future of the Protestant Church – gaining status and dominance within the English world, but remaining compassionate to other sects of what they believe to be the “whole true church.”

As previously discussed, this image of superiority is significant in light of the historical moment in which the novel was published. In the wake of recent victories over Catholic threats, English Protestants are less concerned about the possibility of any Catholic expansion, thereby allowing a more tolerant attitude to be explored. However, while conveying the sense of peace experienced during this period, as Doerkson explains, the seemingly tolerant sentiments in the novel are not revealing an actual change that has taken place in Richardson’s society; rather, they present an idea of a possible England: “The England of Richardson’s novel...is distinct from the England of the Reader.”<sup>27</sup> While pro-Catholic trends were developing amongst sects of the political and intellectual elite, more rural parts of England remained attached to the anti-Catholicism of the previous eras.<sup>28</sup> For this reason, the Protestant tolerance of the mid-eighteenth century does not last, and as I will discuss in the following chapters, the renewed threat of Catholic expansion resurrects former sentiments and stereotypes concerning Catholicism, leading to a surge of anti-Catholic thought and action in the Victorian Period.

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<sup>27</sup>Teri Doerkson, “Sir Charles Grandison: The Anglican Family and the Admirable Roman Catholic.” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 15.3-4 (2003) 543.

<sup>28</sup> Haydon 164.

CHAPTER TWO:

*A SIMPLE STORY*

As previously shown through a study of *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, a certain level of tolerance had emerged between Protestants and Catholics during the mid-eighteenth century, particularly in relation to those pursuing the evolving ideas of the Enlightenment. However, this did not extinguish large scale anti-Catholicism within Britain; as Jim Smyth explains: “it is one of the paradoxes of the later eighteenth century that, as anti-Catholicism declined among the ‘enlightened’ of polite society, it retained – even tightened – its tenacious grip upon popular culture.”<sup>29</sup> During the period following the defeat of the Jacobites in 1746, with the threat of the spread of Catholicism seemingly buried, attempts were made to reverse the penal laws limiting the Catholic population of England, Scotland and Ireland. This idea was even favored by ruling parliament and the king due to the fact that “with a view to the need to police and defend the empire, His Majesty’s ministers in London began to cast a covetous eye upon rich untapped reserves of Catholic manpower.”<sup>30</sup> However, the repeals eventually put into action – in 1772, 1778, and 1782<sup>31</sup> – did not help integrate the Catholic population into British society, but instead, stirred up hostility amongst the Protestant population. Smyth explains, “Neither the pragmatic considerations of the generals and ministers, nor the more secular outlook of the ruling elites, affected a corresponding shift in wider public opinion, and the first attempts to implement Catholic relief met with fierce resistance.”<sup>32</sup> An obsessive interest in monitoring the growing population of Catholics in the British Empire<sup>33</sup> and a

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<sup>29</sup> Smyth 186.

<sup>30</sup> Smyth 188.

<sup>31</sup> Smyth 188.

<sup>32</sup> Smyth 189.

<sup>33</sup> “Catholic numbers (actual, alleged and imagined) did figure in the debates about relief. The size of Catholic communities in Scotland, England and Wales had grown steadily, though modestly from c. 80,000 in 1700 to 110,000 in 1778...Some non-conformists in particular were convinced that Catholicism was on the march” The idea that the papal population had grown during this period was much debated – many insisting that it had greatly multiplied, and others insisting that it had decreased (Smyth 189).

resurrection of traditional Protestant fears and Catholic stereotypes perpetuated the renewal of anti-Catholic ideas, extinguishing the peaceful feelings of the 1750s and 60s. Building upon the 1779 anti-Catholic attacks in Scotland, the formation of the Protestant Association under Lord George Gordon, and the Gordon Riots of 1780, the sleeping giant of anti-Catholicism was aroused, soon to be invigorated by the French Revolution, and thereby to launch Britain into the virulently anti-Catholic Victorian Era.

It was during this period of resurgence that Elizabeth Inchbald wrote her first novel, *A Simple Story*. In this chapter, I will explore ways in which this novel emerges as an attempt to revalidate the claim of the Catholic Church as the one “true church” or “bride of Christ.” I will begin by looking at the unique characterization of the male protagonist in light of the historical changes in society, while also exploring the effects of these changes on the unusual novel structure developed by Inchbald. I will follow with an examination of the courtship/marriage plot which, in the first half of the novel, appears to be an inversion of the marriage plot found in *Grandison* – the Christ figure, previously shown in the figure of Sir Charles, is now portrayed through the Catholic Dorriforth, a priest-turned-lord who must also choose between a Catholic and Protestant to determine his bride. This plot, however, does not conclude in a similar manner. Rather than leaving us with the image of the happy marriage (which occurs at the end of the second volume), Inchbald leaps forward seventeen years, introducing a greatly altered image of our hero and a new heroine in the second half of the novel. In examining this unusual combination of courtship/marriage plots, I argue that we can again see a symbolic representation of the Protestant and Catholic churches; however, in this case, the answer to the question “which church is the true church?” is not so clear.

Through *A Simple Story*, which is refreshingly innovative in composition and plot, it was said that Inchbald had “struck out a path entirely her own,”<sup>34</sup> specifically in the creation of her male protagonist, a Roman Catholic priest-turned-lord. In light of this unique character and the tumultuous period in which he was conceived, it is significant to understand that Inchbald herself was a Catholic.

The first half of *A Simple Story* was written between 1777 and 1779, but was not published until 1791, after much revision and the addition of two continuing, and more conventional, volumes.<sup>35</sup> Due to the dates of her original composition, Gary Kelly claims, “Mrs. Inchbald’s first novel is better described as ‘pre-Jacobin,’ and yet it was this novel which had the most profound influence on the other English Jacobin novelists.”<sup>36</sup> The composition of the first half of the novel was effectively aligned with the English Catholic Relief Act of 1778, which provided legislation “rescinding restrictions on Catholic ownership and inheritance of land.”<sup>37</sup> In light of this, we can see the significance of Inchbald’s protagonist Dorriforth, a Catholic priest who surprisingly inherits the title Lord Elmwood, becomes a wealthy landowner, and is released from his clerical vows in order to perpetuate his family line. Because of this unconventional protagonist, *A Simple Story* is considered to be the “first English Catholic novel.”<sup>38</sup> The first half of the novel follows Dorriforth’s movement from the clergy to the gentry and his courtship of his young Protestant ward, Miss Milner.

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<sup>34</sup> Barker quoting a review of *A Simple Story* in *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 1791. Gerard A. Barker, *Grandison’s Heirs: The Paragon’s Progress in the Late Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985) 87.

<sup>35</sup> Barker 97.

<sup>36</sup> Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805* (UK: Oxford UP, 1976) 65.

<sup>37</sup> Smyth 190.

<sup>38</sup> Roger Manvell, *Elizabeth Inchbald* (University Press of America, 1987) 72.

In the introduction to the novel, J.M.S. Tompkins claims that one of the possible reasons for the extended break between the original composition of the first half of the novel and Inchbald's return to it in the late 1780s could have been the fear caused by the Gordon Riots of 1780, which were in response to the Catholic Relief Act. However, following the second Catholic Relief Act in 1790, which legalized the public celebration of Mass and opened job opportunities to Catholics, Tompkins writes, "It must have seemed to her that there was an audience ready for authentic scenes of Catholic life in an English setting."<sup>39</sup> Joining her original two volumes (with some minor, but significant alterations) to two volumes of another novel that she had been working on, Inchbald published her novel in 1791, to immediate acclaim.<sup>40</sup>

The unique novel structure that resulted from this gap between the initial composition and the publication of *A Simple Story* provides for an extremely complex characterization of the male protagonist, first known as the Catholic priest Dorriforth and later as the bitter Lord Elmwood. While it has been posited that her career as an actress and playwright may have influenced her decision to complicate this character in such an unusual way,<sup>41</sup> I would also like to suggest that the struggles faced by Catholics in the midst of this confusing period played a part in the contrasting light and dark characterizations of Dorriforth/Lord Elmwood in the novel.

In the first half of the novel, the characterization of Dorriforth can be likened to that of the virtuous characters in *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, in terms of his morality and willingness to care for others. Interestingly, both of the novels begin in such a way that one of the two religious sects – Protestant or Catholic – is destined to be

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<sup>39</sup> J.M.S. Tompkins, "Introduction" *A Simple Story* (UK: Oxford UP, 1967) xii.

<sup>40</sup> Tompkins xi.

<sup>41</sup> Tompkins xv.

favored through the characters with which they are associated. In *Grandison*, Richardson favors the Protestant heroine, Harriet, through the excessive praise of those around her within the first short pages of the novel and continues throughout by maintaining her as the predominant narrator. Likewise, Dorriforth is immediately glorified upon our introduction to him. Inchbald first describes Dorriforth as:

...a Roman Catholic priest—but nicely discriminating between the philosophical and the superstitious part of that character, and adopting the former only, he possessed qualities not unworthy of the first professors of Christianity—every virtue which it was his vocation to preach, it was his care to practice; nor was he in the class of those of the religious, who, by secluding themselves from the world, fly the merit they might have in reforming mankind. He refused to shelter himself from the temptations of the layman by the walls of a cloister, but sought for, and found that shelter in the centre of London, where he dwelt, in his own prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance (3).

This lengthy description establishes Dorriforth as a man of impeccable virtues, and more significantly, as a Catholic man of impeccable virtues. Inchbald purposefully separates his character from the negative stereotypes of Catholic clergy, emphasizing his lack of superstitious belief, his willingness to live amongst “sinners,” and his personal constancy to the virtues that he teaches. By dispelling the common arguments against Catholics, and by vigorously emphasizing his unquestionable lifestyle, Inchbald makes the audience sympathetic to the priest, regardless of their religious affiliation.

While this idealized image of the virtuous Dorriforth is maintained throughout the first half of the novel, there are brief moments during which, in retrospect, we can see glimpses of the darker Lord Elmwood of the novel’s second half. Early in the novel, Miss Milner discovers the existence of young Harry Rushbrook, Dorriforth’s nephew,

who has been shunned by his uncle through no fault of his own. Inchbald writes that “Although Dorriforth was that good man that has been described, there was in his nature shades of evil...” (33). She continues, giving evidence of his flaw: “The child of a once beloved sister, who married a young officer against her brother’s consent, was at the age of three years left an orphan, destitute of every support but from his uncle’s generosity: but though Dorriforth maintained, he would never see him” (34). Tompkins notes that Dorriforth’s objection to his sister’s husband was the latter’s Protestant faith. Having read the second half of the novel, we can recognize this decision as almost identical to that which separates him from his daughter for over a decade. In this brief moment, we are given a glimpse of the bitter man that he will become.

The second half of *A Simple Story* maintains a more conventional eighteenth century tone and plotline, paralleling the novel *Evelina*, both of which present a bildungsroman narrative of a young girl left without a mother and estranged from her father. Due to his wife’s infidelity, Elmwood has taken on a much darker character, as Inchbald explains, “Dorriforth, the pious, the good, the tender Dorriforth, is become a hard-hearted tyrant” (194-5). Receding into the stubborn nature that had previously banished his nephew from his sight, Lord Elmwood “vowed in deep torments of his revenge, not to be reminded of her by one individual object; much less by one so nearly allied to her as her child...Firm in his resolution, the beautiful Matilda was, at the age of six, sent out of her father’s house” (197-8). When he eventually does see his daughter again, over a decade later, much of his harsh nature still remains, and although brief glimpses of his former character are revealed in their reunion (as I will discuss later), he maintains the stern “Lord Elmwood” persona throughout the remainder of the novel.

While some critics assert that “Catholic interest” seems to disappear in the final two volumes of the novel, as the religious persuasions of the two lovers, Matilda and Rushbrook, are not made clear,<sup>42</sup> I would like to suggest that this new representation of Lord Elmwood is actually introducing an altered Catholic image, aligning his character with the darker Catholic portrayals developing in the Gothic genre. As will be fully described later in my discussion of *The Monk*, many Protestants believed that the repressed life of members of the Catholic clergy could often lead to a sudden plunge into latent desires or evils. I believe that in this dual-plot novel structure, we are presented with a similar Catholic image. While Dorriforth represses much of his obstinate nature in the first half of the novel, overlooking the majority of Miss Milner’s coquetry and disobedience, in the second half of the novel he employs this latent anger as a barrier against his daughter. He becomes the recluse that he had refused to be during his ministry, but rather than closing himself off from the world, he separates himself from the child that he fears may one day resemble her Protestant mother.

Inchbald’s complex novel structure and the characterizations within it illuminate the internal battles being faced by English Catholics in this period of alternating relief and persecution. Due to the fact that some interactions with the Protestant church might prove harmful, as symbolized in Miss Milner’s betrayal, Catholics could feel the need to separate themselves from the uncertainties lingering in the outside world. However, as we see in Lord Elmwood’s reunion with his daughter, the novel does provide a means of reconciliation, while simultaneously portraying the Catholic Church as the “true church,” in its final emphasis on the virtues of “A Proper Education” (338).

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<sup>42</sup> Tompkins suggests that the influence of Inchbald’s more liberal friends (Godwin, Holcroft, etc.) led to a more tolerant view of Christianity and a desire to appeal to a broader audience (Tompkins 209n).

In order to explain the significance of Matilda's new education, I must first delineate the significance of her character in relationship to her mother's. Looking again at themes of courtship and marriage in the novel, I would like to suggest that Miss Milner and her daughter, Matilda, both symbolically represent, at different times, the Protestant church, thereby stepping into the previously established framework which aligns the courtship plot with the concept of the church as the bride of Christ. I will therefore examine both of these characters and their respective outcomes in order to present a possible image of the "true church" within the novel.

In contrast with Richardson's novel, *Inchbald* immediately introduces the idea of inter-religious marriage through a brief explanation of Miss Milner's parents' relationship. Her father, a Catholic tutored by *Dorriforth*, and her mother, a Protestant, had come to an agreement that resulted in Miss Milner being raised as a Protestant: boys would be raised as Catholics and girls raised as Protestants. Interestingly, this is the same proposition made by *Sir Charles* to the *della Porrettas* in his effort to marry *Clementina*. The reason that this agreement seems more acceptable, and was indeed common in similar situations, is due to the setting of the novel. Just as *Grandison* had been comfortable with this arrangement, so were people in many sects of England.<sup>43</sup> The Catholic objections of the *della Porrettas* do not apply here because, as English citizens, many Catholics observed the same social rules as the predominant Protestants. In light of this, because the Milners do not have a son before *Mrs. Milner* dies, their only heir is a Protestant. Determined to adhere to his deceased wife's wishes, *Mr. Milner* has his daughter educated in a Protestant boarding school and makes a specific request of *Dorriforth*, when she is to be left in his care, that she be allowed to maintain that religion (4).

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<sup>43</sup> Tompkins 4n.

Upon her first introduction in the novel, Miss Milner's character is quite shocking. Far removed from the conventional eighteenth century heroine, she is not concerned, or perhaps even aware, of the appearance of her virtue. Inchbald writes, "there was but one passion which at present held a place in her heart, and that was vanity; vanity defined into all the species of pride, vain-glory, self-approbation—an inordinate desire of admiration, and in immoderate enjoyment of the art of pleasing, for her own individual happiness, and not for the happiness of others" (19). In comparison with the virtuous characterization of Dorriforth in the first few chapters, Miss Milner appears to be far more intolerant of Catholicism than he is of her religion. Dorriforth attempts to justify his faith before Miss Milner within their first conversation, following her ignorant comment: "in some respects I am like you Roman Catholics; I don't believe from my own understanding, but from what other people tell me" (16). He responds, "what we teach is truth; for you find you would be deceived did you not trust to persons who know better than yourself" (16). He continues further to establish a neutral ground between them saying, "let not religion be named between us; for as I have resolved never to persecute you, in pity be grateful, and do not persecute me" (17). His tolerance for the opposite belief system, and the example he attempts to make of it here, is akin to Sir Charles attempts both at home and with the della Porrettas.

Her immediate and un-repentant ridicule of her new acquaintances during this same initial meeting also brings the reader unease, confusing us as to whether we are supposed to sympathize with or despise this supposed heroine:

The kind Miss Woodley ejaculated a short prayer to herself, that heaven would forgive her young friend the involuntary sin or ignorance—while Mrs. Horton, unperceived as she imagined, made the sign of the cross

upon her forehead to prevent the infectious taint of heretical opinions. This, pious ceremony, Miss Milner, by chance, observed, and now shewed such an evident propensity to burst into a fit of laughter, that the good lady of the house could no longer contain her resentment, but exclaimed, ‘God forgive you,’ with a severity so far different from the idea the words conveyed, that the object of her anger was, on this, obliged freely to indulge that risibility which she had been struggling to smother... (17).

Her inconsiderate nature, shocking enough in itself, appears even more uncouth when contrasted with Dorriforth’s tolerance and patience. Through these initial presentations of her character, the idea of her eventual union with Dorriforth seems completely unimaginable, even without regarding his current condition as a priest. Throughout the first volume of the novel, Miss Milner’s behavior continues to widen the gap between her character and that of her guardian; however, her refreshing and entertaining nature helps her gain favor with both the reader and Dorriforth.

Although Miss Milner realizes her passion for Dorriforth just before he is conveniently released from his vows in order to accept his inheritance as the new Lord Elmwood and to continue his family line, she is not immediately recognized as a candidate for courtship. Inchbald introduces a rival for his affections, the Catholic Miss Fenton. Inchbald describes her as “a young lady of the most delicate beauty, elegant manners, gentle disposition and discrete conduct...frequently, sometimes inadvertently, held up by [Dorriforth] as a pattern for [Miss Milner] to follow” (37). Engaged to the initial Lord Elmwood, she naturally becomes Dorriforth’s first choice as Lady Elmwood when he attains the title, as the former priest has not yet investigated his latent passions. Her virtue, propriety, and the probability that she is Catholic (we are not directly told) all qualify her far and beyond Miss Milner as the most appropriate bride for the new Lord

Elmwood. However, by this point, the reader is entirely invested in Miss Milner's interest, and by the time that Dorriforth gains his new title, we are thrilled to see a means through which they can marry. By privileging Miss Milner's character Inchbald makes us sympathetic to her, regardless of her flaws, and it is assumed that Miss Fenton is merely an obstacle that their relationship must overcome. Miss Milner's flaws make her exciting, and in comparison, Miss Fenton appears rather dull. In light of this, we can see that Inchbald is approaching the construction of these characters in a similar but reversed pattern to that seen in *Grandison* – we want Lord Elmwood to marry outside of his faith. In fact, at this point, religion does not seem to be a significant issue.

Very early in Lord Elmwood's courtship of Miss Milner, she begins to provide evidence of the relationship's downfall. Her actions during their courtship cause Lord Elmwood to envision a dark future for marital life: "the horror of domestic wrangles—a family without subordination—a house without oeconomy—in a word, a wife without discretion, had been perpetually present to his mind" (142). Even the reader, who still sympathizes with Miss Milner, recognizes that the character of the bride during the courtship reflects what will follow in the marriage. As Lord Elmwood begins to realize, Miss Milner's defiant and flirtatious nature might not be able to be controlled.

These flaws in Miss Milner's nature present an interesting representation of the Protestant church through the Catholic perspective. Her flirtatiousness with other men could be seen in comparison with the openness of the Protestant church to the idea of "salvation out of its pale,"<sup>44</sup> as described in the previous chapter. Such a "welcoming" nature, in this context, is shown to be a hindrance to the growth of a proper relationship, whether spiritual or romantic. Also, in consideration of the eventual breakdown of Lord

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<sup>44</sup> Richardson II. 182.

and Lady Elmwood's marriage, this lifestyle is shown to be ultimately destructive – in the same way it could destroy the purity of the relationship between Christ and the church.

The sudden marriage of Lord Elmwood and Miss Milner is surprising in light of the emotional battle being waged over her lack of virtue. In a slightly awkward resolution to their romantic angst, Mr. Sandford, Lord Elmwood's confidante and tutor who has opposed this marriage from the very beginning, suddenly confesses, "I can submit to think I have been in error; and I now firmly believe, it is for the welfare of you both, to become man and wife.—My lord, take this woman's marriage vows; you can ask no fairer promises of her reform; she can give you none half so sacred, half so binding" (191). While rather abrupt and a bit confusing, his outburst and sudden change of heart does carry an element of Catholic logic: he assumes that under the vows of marriage, Miss Milner will be forced to reform her ways, and eventually make a proper wife for Elmwood. This is akin to the idea that monastic vows can purge one of earthly desires. Believing that Miss Milner has the potential to be both the virtuous wife that Elmwood desires and the passionate woman that he has fallen in love with, Sandford commands, "Lord Elmwood, this moment give her up forever; or this moment constrain her by such ties from offending you, she shall not dare to violate" (191). The terminology used here reflects that which would be used in reference to one giving his or her life over to the church. By expressing a desire to "bind" and "constrain" her nature through "sacred vows," Sandford is aligning her life with Elmwood with that of a nun to a convent. The problem in this conception relates to the issue of latent desires, previously discussed concerning Dorriforth's transformation into the bitter Lord Elmwood – many Protestants believed that "cloistering" was unnatural and could lead to dangerous expulsions of latent

passions and desires in unguarded moments.<sup>45</sup> In light of this, it is not surprising that as Lady Elmwood is unattached to the beliefs of her husband, when left untended, she breaks from her cloistered life and commits adultery with a former beau.

Passing over the first four years of marriage – “the most perfect enjoyment of happiness” (196) – Inchbald begins the second section of her novel with the breakdown of the doomed marriage. Miss Milner’s affair with Lord Frederick places her in a unique position symbolically: although she is a Protestant character, through her infidelity she becomes a symbol of the “whore of Babylon,” a term frequently used at this time to describe the Catholic Church. She becomes a fallen wife, unsanctified and unworthy of her righteous companion. The transference of this image from the Catholic to the Protestant church can be seen as a bold retaliation against Protestant claims of being the “bride of Christ.” Not only is the Protestant in this situation not worthy to be the bride of Christ, but she becomes a whore, unfaithful to the most faithful of husbands, and through this process she not only separates herself from his love, but she separates her child from his care.

The novel’s second heroine, Matilda, is a character far more akin to Richardson’s Harriet Byron than to her own mother, Lady Elmwood. She embodies what Barker calls the typical “sentimental heroine that dominates much of late eighteenth-century fiction and drama” – passive, innocent, and somewhat naive.<sup>46</sup> Tainted by her mother’s mistake, Matilda is barred from connection with her father for over a decade of her life. Even after she is brought to live in his house after Lady Elmwood’s death, Matilda is hidden

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<sup>45</sup> Steven Blakemore, “Matthew Lewis’s Black Mass: Sexual, Religious Inversion in *The Monk*,” *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 30 (University of North Texas: 1998) 524.

<sup>46</sup> Barker 98.

away from Lord Elmwood. What he is unable to perceive due to his stubbornness is the distinction from her mother in her goodness and virtue. In grief over her destructive behavior, Lady Elmwood had encouraged Matilda to become well educated in the hopes that her daughter would develop into the virtuous woman that she had failed to become. Inchbald writes,

[Matilda] had acquired a taste for all those amusements which a recluse life affords—She was fond of walking and riding—was accomplished in the arts of music and drawing, by the most careful instructions of her mother—and as a scholar she excelled most of her sex, from the great pains Sandford had taken with that part of her education, and the great abilities he possessed for the task (221).

Through the emphasis on the role of Matilda's "proper education" in her growth into a virtuous young woman, it is possible that Inchbald is "harking back to Mr. Milner's mixed marriage and advocating a Catholic education," insinuating that Miss Milner's Protestant education was either a cause or a catalyst of her downfall.<sup>47</sup> Rather than being driven to illicit behavior by her "recluse life," Matilda "acquires a taste for it," as she has been properly instructed by the Catholic tutor, Mr. Sandford, on how to maintain a virtuous lifestyle. Her mother, on the other hand, was ineffectively educated in a Protestant boarding school, which left her "with merely such sentiments of religion, as young ladies of fashion mostly imbibe...[her] heart employed in all the endless pursuits of personal accomplishments, had left her mind without one ornament" (5). It is her lack of a proper education, therefore, that leaves her unable to bury her selfish and flirtatious ways after her marriage and ends up leading her into immorality. Matilda's character flourishes under proper tutelage, giving her "excellent understanding, a sedateness above

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<sup>47</sup> Tompkins 388n.

her years” and leads her to “seldom [do] wrong,” all of which impresses her tutor, Mr. Sandford, who had been Miss Milner’s harshest critic.

Matilda’s eventual reunion with her father provides a renewal of the courtship/marriage plot that had previously been destroyed by Lady Elmwood’s unfaithfulness. Following Matilda’s abduction by Lord Margrave, – reminiscent again of Richardson’s abduction scenes – Lord Elmwood bids Rushbrook to go for his pistols, finally willing to “prove [him]self a father” and acknowledge his loving and protective feelings for his daughter. Finally we see a renewed glimpse of his former self, again a comparison with Sir Charles Grandison, as he rescues his daughter from a Hargrave-like villain without violence. The recognition of his undeniable bond with Matilda, that swiftly brings him to his daughter’s rescue, is, in a way, a means of resurrecting Lord Elmwood’s ability to relate to that part of his family.

I would like to suggest that in Lord Elmwood’s salvation of Matilda, we can see proposed salvation of the Catholic Church by the heavenly Father. Recognizing the innocence of a reformed Catholic faith, like that of Dorriforth in his time as a priest (he shunned superstition and seclusion from society) and presumably that which has been taught to Matilda, God reclaims the Catholic Church as his own. Therefore, like Matilda, who is groomed to be a proper bride for Lord Elmwood’s heir, Rushbrook, the Catholic Church is able to step back into the place of the “true church” or bride of Christ.

Through the complexity of the characterization of Dorriforth/Lord Elmwood and the simultaneously unique novel structure of *A Simple Story*, Inchbald illuminates the tumultuous state of Catholic life in England during the late 1770s and 1780s due to the growing tensions between pro and anti-Catholic groups. Within the courtship/marriage

plotline, however, I find a redemptive message that could provide a symbolic model for the contemporary Catholic Church as the “true church” or bride of Christ. Unfortunately, as revealed in the following chapter, the rise of the Gothic novel and the fear and uncertainty brought in the wake of the French Revolution soon buried many of these pro-Catholic sentiments, leading to a reawakening of heated anti-Catholicism as England entered the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER THREE:

*THE MONK*

As described in chapter two, following the Catholic Relief Acts of the 1770s England experienced a resurgence of anti-Catholic action, exemplified in the Gordon Riots of 1780. Soon after, this heightened sensitivity to religious conflict was drastically compounded by the onset of the French Revolution and the reawakening of the fears of rebellion that had overwhelmed England for over a century following the Protestant Reformation. It was during this period of turmoil and terror that the gothic novel fully emerged in English literature, reconnecting with the romances of the early modern period and paving the way for the evolution of Romanticism in the nineteenth century.

In this chapter I will be examining Matthew Lewis's gothic masterpiece *The Monk* and its relation to the developing novel form and growing anti-Catholic sentiments in England. My initial explorations will involve the historical changes influencing both this newly evolving gothic form and the increasingly virulent conflicts between Protestants and Catholics. I will then engage in a new study of the themes of courtship and marriage within the novel, focusing on the symbolic representations of the "bride of Christ" in the characters of Ambrosio, Agnes and Raymond. I argue that by contrasting the experiences of these symbolic brides – the monk Ambrosio and the "protestant-esque" characters Agnes and Raymond – we can see renewed vigor in the literary demonization of the Catholic Church (extensively seen in sixteenth and seventeenth century literature), as each character, in his or her individual confinement within the Catholic belief system, is nearly or completely destroyed. I also assess the possibility that through the "domestic" characterizations of Agnes and Raymond, one can ascertain a portrayal of the Protestant church as the reigning "bride of Christ."

Prior to the French Revolution, such a large scale political crisis had not been witnessed by Britain since the Glorious Revolution in 1688.<sup>48</sup> In light of this, it is perhaps natural that sentiments relating to their own earlier conflict were revitalized through the French disturbance. As the British people imagined the Revolution of 1789 through memories of the Revolution of 1688, latent fears and stereotypes of Catholicism were revived in England, regardless of the fact that the current overthrow of Catholic power was occurring on foreign soil.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, England was faced with a renewed fear of radical politics and ideas that could possibly lead them into a similarly terrifying conflict.

An interesting development that emerged during this crisis was the establishment of the English gothic novel as a distinct literary genre. Although this form is most frequently described as originating in England during the mid-eighteenth century in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the religious turmoil extending through the late 1780s and 1790s accelerated the evolution of gothic ideas through the re-imagining of the Catholic evils portrayed in the literature of the early modern period. As Maggie Kilgour delineates in *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, "While the nature of the past, and its relation to the present, was debated throughout the eighteenth century, it gained new life with the French Revolution, as the Terror proved fertile for a literature of terror."<sup>50</sup> Pulling from earlier Catholic stereotypes that had begun to recede during the Age of Enlightenment, the gothic tradition re-demonized the Catholic Church, and although gothic novels of this period were primarily set in Italy, the hostilities toward Catholics on

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<sup>48</sup> Smyth 198.

<sup>49</sup> Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (NY: Routledge, 1995) 23.

<sup>50</sup> Kilgour 23.

the Continent continued to affect the relationships between Protestants and Catholics in England.

Following the popular early novels of Anne Radcliffe, including *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Matthew Lewis shocked the English public with his excessively violent novel *The Monk*. Influenced by the German *Sturm-und-Drang* writers during his travels, Matthew or “Monk” Lewis, as he came to be known, composed his controversial masterpiece in just ten weeks, breaking away from Radcliffe’s tame gothic form through his extensive portrayal of the supernatural and virulent demonization of the Catholic religious structure. Unlike Radcliffe, Lewis constructed supernatural occurrences and beings in his novel that could not be rationalized or humanized. His predecessor reproached his work, defining her novels as “terror” novels, in contrast to his “horror” novel, explaining that while her work “expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree” his work “contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them.”<sup>51</sup> Contemporaries like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and T.J. Mathias also criticized Lewis’s work, citing his extreme use of the supernatural, his “anti-establishment agenda,” and his gruesome approaches to sexuality and violence as offensive and threatening to British society.<sup>52</sup> As Andrew Cooper delineates, *The Monk* appeared to validate all of the fears that critics had concerning the popular reception of the gothic genre – threatening young readers and women with its inappropriate content and confused gender roles, encouraging resurgences of supernatural belief, and inspiring

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<sup>51</sup> Anne Radcliffe, “On the Supernatural in Poetry” *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 16, 145-52.

<sup>52</sup> Andrew Cooper. “Gothic Threats: The Role of Danger in the Critical Evaluation of *The Monk* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*,” *Gothic Studies* (Manchester UP) 22-28.

revolutionary sentiments.<sup>53</sup> Due to the fear evoked through accounts of the bloody revolution in France, critics protested Lewis's novel, believing that his "anti-establishment" subject matter could encourage rebellion beyond the re-invigorated anti-Catholic ideas, eventually threatening the political state of Protestant England.

However, despite the extensive criticism hurled at Lewis, the genius of his writing style and the popularity of his text did not go unnoticed. Coleridge, one of his harshest critics, recognized this genius as a further danger in the novel, as it presented an enticement to reading the seductive and offensive work.<sup>54</sup> While many critics during this period portrayed his novel as "anti-establishment" and dangerously revolutionary, I would like to suggest that the only establishment that he is attempting to deface is the obvious – the Catholic Church itself. In accordance with Lisa Naomi Mulman's argument concerning the religious statements made by Lewis's work, I would like to suggest that the novel builds a positive case for the domesticity of Protestant life through the secondary courtship/marriage plot of Agnes and Raymond. By giving extensive examples of the dangers of the cloistered Catholic lifestyle,<sup>55</sup> Lewis demonizes the repressive nature of the Catholic Church, contrasting the Catholic social structure with a new domestic construct, exemplified in the beliefs of Raymond and Agnes, that aligns with Protestant belief. Through a comparison of the courtship/marriage plot that engulfs and ultimately destroys the monk Ambrosio with that of Raymond and Agnes, we can see that in the midst of the condemnation of the Catholic "establishment," a Protestant-esque social structure is being validated.

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<sup>53</sup> Cooper 18-34.

<sup>54</sup> Cooper 28.

<sup>55</sup> "Cloistering becomes a metaphor for the repression of flesh, body, nature (all ultimately reduced to and identified with sexuality)" (Kilgour 143).

The primary example of the courtship and marriage plot in this novel is far less conventional than those of the preceding novels. Influenced by ancient myths about the “three sins of the hermit”<sup>56</sup> and the more recent literary genius of writers including Marlowe, Milton, and Goethe, the story of the seduction of a holy man by a devil, or the descent of a formerly holy being into hell, was not unfamiliar to Lewis’s audience. In the waning years of the Age of Enlightenment, however, Lewis’s violently sexual reinterpretation of this ancient plot through the courtship of Ambrosio by the disguised demon Matilda reinvented the novel form, embedding the supernatural images of older romantic traditions within a literary structure that had traditionally favored realism.

Prior to Ambrosio’s entrance into the novel, Don Christoval’s description of the abbot to Antonia and Leonella elevates his character to the status of a near-heavenly being. Christoval describes the mystery behind the minister’s origins explaining that, as no one has ever attempted to claim Ambrosio as his or her abandoned child, the monks, who found him as an infant at the abbey door “have not hesitated to publish, that He is a present to them from the Virgin” (17). Christoval also emphasizes the abbot’s purity by revealing that the entirety of his thirty years “has been passed in study, total seclusion from the world, and mortification of the flesh” (17). It is only recently, at the age of thirty, that he has left the seclusion of the Abbey, in order to fulfill his duties as the new Abbot of the monastery. In these examples – first in the image of him being brought forth by the Virgin and then in his age at the start of his ministry<sup>57</sup> – we can recognize an initial parallel with Christ in the construction of Ambrosio’s character, which could perhaps lead one to see in him a symbol of the bridegroom of the church. However, I

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<sup>56</sup> Archer Taylor, “The Three Sins of the Hermit,” *Modern Philology*, vol. 20 (Chicago UP, 1922) 61-94.

<sup>57</sup> Jesus was also thirty when he began his ministry. Luke 3:23.

would argue, that rather than being constructed as a symbol of the actual bridegroom of the church, he is simply being compared with Christ in order to establish his potential value as a virtuous leader of the Church. A distinct difference exists in Ambrosio's character that separates him from a likeness to Christ that could make him an effective symbol of the bridegroom: he has never overcome temptation. As described in Luke chapter 4, following the baptism of Jesus and God's declaration that Christ is His Son, "Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil."<sup>58</sup> Unlike Ambrosio, prior to beginning his years of ministry, Christ wrestled with the weakness of human nature, under the heavy blows of Satan's temptation, and triumphed. Thus He surpasses the frailty of Adam and fallen man, and, requiring no personal sanctification, is proven worthy of His position as the Savior of lost souls. In this position, the bridegroom is able to provide salvation and sanctification for his bride, the Church.

Despite this disparity between Ambrosio and Christ, disabling him from symbolizing the bridegroom, the comparative references that link Ambrosio with Christ are still significant in establishing his character within the novel. Don Christoval proclaims that "All Madrid rings with his praises...he is known throughout all the city by the name of the 'Man of Holiness'" (16). He emphasizes the abbot's virtue, delineating the commonly believed ideas that "In the whole course of his life He has never been known to transgress a single rule of his order; the smallest stain is not to be discovered upon his character" (17). It is in this idealized depiction that we can recognize Ambrosio as a symbol of the Bride of Christ. As the most elite representation of what the Catholic

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<sup>58</sup> Luke 4:1-2.

Church exalts, Ambrosio thereby becomes to the people a symbol of the ideal church itself – the image of the Bride of Christ.

The image of Ambrosio as a virginal bride-to-be can also be seen in the parallel between his character and that of Antonia, who, unbeknownst to either, is his sister. Don Christoval continues his description of Ambrosio stating, “He is reported to be so strict an observer of Chastity, that He knows not in what consists the difference of a Man and Woman. The common People therefore esteem him to be a Saint” (17). Antonia reveals the connection between her position as a virginal maiden with Ambrosio’s position as a monk in her response: “Does that make one a Saint...Bless me! Then am I one?” (17). In Steven Blakemore’s examination of sexual and religious inversion in *The Monk*, he thoroughly examines the femininity of Ambrosio’s character, explaining that a stereotyped feminization of monks was common in the Protestant community. Blakemore claims that this is evidenced frequently in Protestant literature, as vows of chastity required of the monastic population were “traditionally considered ‘unnatural’ by Protestant and anticlerical writers.”<sup>59</sup>

The most effective, and ultimately detrimental, representation of Ambrosio as the effeminate potential bride of Christ can be seen through his relationship with the ever-changing temptress/demon Matilda.<sup>60</sup> Although Matilda refers to the church as Ambrosio’s “bride” and later describes him as “affianced to the Church,” she is merely encouraging him to believe that he is the figure of the groom, what would be, in effect,

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<sup>59</sup> Steven Blakemore, “Matthew Lewis’s Black Mass: Sexual, Religious Inversion in *The Monk*,” *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 30 (University of North Texas: 1998) 524.

<sup>60</sup> Matilda is initially known to Ambrosio as a male character, Rosario, but later reveals herself as an infatuated admirer using the boyish guise to be close to him. It is not until the monk has sold his soul to the devil that he discovers her true identity – a demon sent to win his soul for Hell (440).

the dominating presence in the relationship (59, 80). In reality, he has always been in the position of the bride – his vows bind him to a submissive position in relation to the church, as his entire life is to be devoted to God’s service. Matilda desires him to believe that he holds a position of power in the relationship in order to entice him to leave the church.

Ambrosio’s feminine position is exemplified in contrast to Matilda’s masculinity. Originally identified as a male, Matilda, in the guise of the monastic prodigy Rosario, manipulates Ambrosio during their time together in order to weaken his resolve before she reveals herself as a woman. Winning the abbot’s trust through feigned devotion and piety, “Rosario” becomes his favorite and comfortable companion. During their first conversation it is revealed that “Rosario’s” worldly experience sets him apart from Ambrosio. As the monk questions his mention of worldly sufferings, the novice laments, “Aye, Father; Sufferings, which if known to you would equally raise your anger and compassion! Sufferings, which form at once the torment and pleasure of my existence!” (44). He expresses fear of losing the friendship of Ambrosio if his faults are ever revealed, slyly bidding the abbot to soothe his apprehensions – a clever trap to which the unsuspecting monk quickly falls prey. Ambrosio replies, “How has my conduct justified this fear? Know me better, Rosario, and think me worthy of your confidence...Reveal them to me, and believe that if ‘tis in my power to relieve them...” (44). The wily youth then pulls his elder further into his web, interrupting him with adulation, proclaiming, “Ah! ‘tis in no one’s power but yours!” (44). Here, for the first time, we see the demon’s attempt to make the monk believe that he is the dominant figure in his “marriage” to the church. Rather than naming God as the one who has the power to

relieve a person's struggles with former sin, Rosario implants the idea into Ambrosio's mind that the abbot *alone* holds that power. As stated previously, it is in this manipulation that an affirmation of the feminized role of the abbot is revealed – not only is he the subordinate party in his relationship with the church, but his naiveté aligns him with the likes of Antonia, who, as she claimed before, knows nothing of the dangers of the world. Ambrosio's openness toward Rosario – as he is completely unaware that a being within his haven could fabricate a story or give false praise – leaves his mind and heart unguarded against such cunning schemes. The disguised demon is portrayed as playing a common masculine game in an attempt to seduce a naive female by using Ambrosio's lack of knowledge of the world against him. The fact that this manipulation occurs within the confines of the monastery again reinforces the idea of this lifestyle as “unnatural”<sup>61</sup> and ultimately dangerous.

The dangerous nature of the “unnatural” Catholic lifestyle as revealed in *The Monk* can also be seen in the narrative parallel to that of Ambrosio: the story of Raymond and Agnes. Lisa Mulman proposes that the narrative of these two lovers is closely linked to Protestant belief, due to the fact that their connection to the world has allowed their viewpoints to be “socially constructed”<sup>62</sup> rather than entombed by the Catholic cloister. As the union of Agnes and Raymond, after the torment of many trials, is ultimately successful, Mulman claims that Lewis is emphasizing the positive nature of the “Protestant domestic order” over the obviously detrimental severity of Catholic belief.<sup>63</sup> I believe that this evaluation of their relationship can be taken much further by examining

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<sup>61</sup> Blakemore 524.

<sup>62</sup> Lisa Naomi Mulman, “Sexuality on the Surface: Catholicism and the Erotic Object in Lewis's *The Monk*.” *Bucknell Review: A Scholarly Journal of Letters, Arts and Sciences* 42.1 (1998) 101.

<sup>63</sup> Mulman 107.

the cause and condition of the trials that nearly kill them both and the ultimate breakthrough that redeems their relationship in comparison with the experience and eventual damnation of Ambrosio.

Raymond and Agnes are established as possible “anti-Catholic” personas initially through their common disdain for Catholic rigor, ritual, and superstition. In the relation of the history of Agnes and “Alphonso d’Alvarada” (Raymond’s alias) to Agnes’s brother Lorenzo, Raymond establishes his disdain for superstitious belief, informing his friend that “[Their] Parents were unfortunately Slaves to the grossest superstition,” which had “destined [Agnes] to the Convent from her cradle” (130). Lorenzo’s shock at his sister’s intended fate seems to indicate a similar removal from traditional Catholic belief – perhaps evidence of the movement of the younger generation toward the more rational beliefs of Protestantism. Raymond continues, giving evidence of Agnes’s common disdain for the ritualistic practices at the convent, explaining that, when confined in a convent school for her youth, “a secret instinct made the young Recluse sensible that She was not born for solitude: In all the freedom of youth and gaiety She scrupled not to treat as ridiculous many ceremonies, which the Nuns regarded with awe” (131). The concept of a “secret instinct” insinuates that there is purpose, perhaps heavenly direction, in her resistance to observing ritual and the idea of vowing herself to the church. Agnes’s abhorrence of superstitious belief is later revealed following “Alphonso’s” query concerning a possible belief in the story of the “bleeding nun.” Agnes hastily replies, “How can you ask such a question? No, no Alphonso! I have too much reason to lament superstition’s influence to be its Victim myself” (141). The burden placed upon her by her mother’s overwhelming superstitions has fortified her reason against such

belief. The rationality of their beliefs enables them to symbolize growing Protestant ideals – which would emphasize personal beliefs, a domestic social structure, and relationships built upon virtue and propriety.<sup>64</sup>

In light of these beliefs, it appears that together these characters can be read as symbols of the rising Protestant faith, or the sanctified bride of Christ. Significantly, in this text we are not presented initially with the “bride” after her sanctification; rather, in this case, both Raymond and Agnes must pass through the trials of the poisonous Catholic influence and find redemption in order to become the bride that the Catholic Church, as symbolized in Ambrosio, fails to become.

Prior to Ambrosio’s fatal seduction by Matilda, Raymond and Agnes are both trapped by the confining “unnatural” world of the Catholic Church, and like Ambrosio, fall victim to sin. In these examples, the novel emphasizes the Protestant belief that Catholic “cloistering,” or the repressing of natural human desires, can lead to an unintended release of those desires, resulting in sin that would not have occurred in a proper domestic setting.

While Agnes has continuously been battling the confining clutches of the cloister for years, Raymond’s confinement is thrust upon him suddenly in his attempt to free Agnes from Lindenberg Castle. Despite his lack of superstitious beliefs, the beliefs of his ancestors are thrust upon him in the appearance of “the bleeding nun,” the ghost of Beatrice, his murdered great-great-Aunt. Her appearance separates Raymond from Agnes and thrusts him into a nightmarish realm of superstition in which he is haunted by the same ghostly spirit day and night. This image portraying the involuntary confinement of someone who is not superstitious symbolically implies that the Catholic Church is not

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<sup>64</sup> Mulman 107.

only a danger to believers but to anyone close enough to be touched by its sinister ideas. Not only is Raymond being tormented by a supernatural being, but he comes to realize that he has unknowingly and unwillingly committed himself to this being through vows very similar to those pronounced in a wedding ceremony.<sup>65</sup> Upon meeting the veiled ghost, believing it to be Agnes, Raymond cries:

Agnes! Agnes! Thou art mine!  
Agnes! Agnes! I am thine!  
In my veins while blood shall roll,  
Thou are mine!  
I am Thine!  
Thine my body! Thine my soul! (155-56)

Much to his horror, the following night he is greeted by the apparition – obviously not his beloved Agnes – with a similar recitation:

Raymond! Raymond! Thou art mine!  
Raymond! Raymond! I am thine! Etc. (160)

The shocking quality of these grotesque scenes represents one of the reasons that this novel was so controversial; however, contextualized within the anti-Catholic mindset, the idea that one can be so unknowingly trapped by superstitious belief and Catholic vows is an extremely powerful critique of the church – almost guaranteed to encourage fear of the growth of the Catholic population in England.

In a chronically weak condition, Raymond is unable to free himself from the visits of his tormenter, until the spirit is exorcized by a mysterious immortal, the Wandering Jew. In response to the interrogation of the visitor, Beatrice confirms the nature of Raymond's undesirable commitment to her, saying, "His own lips have made over to me his body and his soul: Never will I give back his promise, never shall He know a night

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<sup>65</sup> Steven Blakemore also provides a similar reading of this scene in his article "Matthew Lewis's Black Mass: Sexual, Religious Inversion in *The Monk*," in *Studies in the Novel*, published in 1998, emphasizing Raymond's effeminate characterization throughout this scene.

devoid of terror, unless He engages to collect my mouldering bones, and deposit them in the family vault...let thirty Masses be said for the repose of my Spirit, and I trouble this world no more” (172). Seeing now his path to freedom, Raymond is compelled to perform one final ritual in order to resume his life – literally burying and putting to rest the superstitions of his ancestors.

Ironically, in the course of Raymond’s salvation from Beatrice, the spirit reveals that she, likewise, had been led to her destruction in response to the “unnatural vows” of a marriage to the church: “no sooner did her warm and voluptuous character begin to be developed, than She abandoned herself freely to the impulse of her passions, and seized the first opportunity to procure her gratification” (173). Although Beatrice breaks her vows intentionally, unlike the more practical Agnes, the relation of this circumstance foreshadows the encroaching fall of Raymond and Agnes due to her enforced confinement in the Convent of St. Clare. The consummation of their premarital relationship occurs despite their previously honorable intentions, as Raymond relates, “in an unguarded moment the honour of Agnes was sacrificed to my passion” (186). In this example we again can see the negative effects of Catholic confinement; as Blakemore delineates, the Protestant critique of the “unnatural” vows of the cloister accused Catholics of making innocent young men and women unnecessarily vulnerable to sexual sin.<sup>66</sup> Hence, the cause of Raymond and Agnes’s fall can be attributed to her forced entrance into St. Clare’s. Had they been allowed to pursue “Protestant domesticity,” they would not have sinned, but would have simply consummated a legal marriage.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Blakemore 524.

<sup>67</sup> Mulman, Blakemore.

The intersection of the two narratives – following the impregnation of Agnes but preceding the seduction of Ambrosio – marks a key moment in the development of the paths of both representations of the “bride.” When Agnes’s condition is discovered by the abbot, she begs for his mercy, attempting to convey the tragic history that led her to take her vows. The abbot is horrified by her sin, completely unaware of her struggle and truly repentant heart. He refuses mercy, turning her over to the punishment of the cruel Prioress of the convent, claiming, “I will rescue you from perdition in spite of yourself; Penance and mortification shall expiate your offence, and Severity force you back to the paths of holiness” (47). His assumption of control in her situation reflects the same proud belief that he has concerning his control over his own moral situation. His growing pride has convinced him “that He [is] superior to the rest of his fellow Creatures” (40). Without stopping to recognize God’s role in the possibility of redemption, Ambrosio names himself her savior, sentencing her to an earthly purgatory at the discretion of the Prioress. In despair, Agnes condemns the state of the abbot, illuminating his inappropriate status as a judge and foreshadowing his imminent fall with a curse:

‘Man of a hard heart! Hear me, Proud, Stern, and Cruel! You could have saved me; you could have restored me to happiness and virtue, but would not! You are the destroyer of my Soul; You are my Murderer, and on you fall the curse of my death and my unborn Infant’s! Insolent in your yet-unshaken virtue, you disdained the prayers of a Penitent; But God will show mercy, though you show none. And where is the merit of your boasted virtue? What temptations have you vanquished? Coward! You have fled from it, not opposed seduction. But the day of trial will arrive! Oh! Then when you yield to impetuous passions...When shuddering you look back upon your crimes, and solicit with terror the mercy of your God,

Oh! In that fearful moment think upon me! Think upon your Cruelty!

Think upon Agnes and despair of pardon!' (48-49)

Agnes accuses the abbot of being ill-qualified to pass judgment on her, as he has hidden from the temptations by which she has been seduced. She recognizes the strength of temptation and the increased danger that it poses to those to whom natural things are forbidden. She also makes a point to emphasize that it is *God* who passes judgment and that it is *God* who will show her mercy when Ambrosio does not. Here the two potential brides part ways – Agnes, penitent and humble, leaves to face her punishment and to be redeemed, as Ambrosio ignorantly walks into the waiting trap of seduction, armed only with his pride.

Until this point of the narrative, Ambrosio's only perceivable spiritual flaw has been his pride. Considering the Protestant viewpoint, however, a very visible flaw may also be seen in his infatuation with the image of the Virgin Mary in his chamber. Alone in his chamber he exclaims, "Oh! If such a creature existed, and existed but for me! Were I permitted to twine round my fingers those golden ringlets, and press with my lips the treasures of that snowy bosom...should I then resist temptation?" (41). His pride quickly recalls his doubts, reassuring him that though "the trial might be too mighty for a common virtue...Ambrosio's is proof against temptation" (41). It is this combination of pride and lasciviousness that Lewis's depiction of Satan uses as the springboard into the abbot's soul. In congruence with other Protestant writers of his day, "the conflation of sexuality and image worship is marked by Lewis as a part and parcel of the Catholic community as a whole."<sup>68</sup> The reliance on a material body as the recipient of one's prayers, as seen in this case, projects unrealistic life onto the icon itself, creating an

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<sup>68</sup> Mulman 103.

idealized image that could lead one away from the belief that originally inspired its creation. Ambrosio's deliberate declaration of the portrait's image as his only possible seductress defiles the quality of the represented persona, transforming the painting from a religious depiction of the holy virgin to an ordinary picture of a beautiful woman – one capable of being impersonated by a cunning devil. By devaluing the persona that inspired the image, Ambrosio makes himself more vulnerable to the advances of Matilda because, while she will have to uphold a semblance of virtue, in his mind, her ability to resist sin is only as strong as his own.

It is also the concept of image worship that inflates Ambrosio's pride enough to block his connection with his supposed Master – God. Ambrosio has become an image of perfection of virtue for the people of Madrid, and in response, has begun to view himself through their eyes. By imagining himself as an icon, he is unable to perceive any of his personal flaws, and likewise, when Matilda takes shape in the image of his worshiped icon, her flaws are equally hidden. Ambrosio's investment in the materiality of his religious beliefs is a key element in his downfall. Mulman explains the harsh critique of Lewis's contemporary T.J. Matthias, commenting that he “correctly recognizes the aesthetic quality of Lewis's evocations, and his extreme repugnance at the allure of the text reveals the true nature of anti-Catholic terror: the possibility that extreme investment in the material realm leads not to sanctification but to unchecked and unmediated impulse.”<sup>69</sup> By focusing only on idealistic representations of himself and Matilda, Ambrosio is unable to focus on the maintenance of his virtue because the images lead him to believe that he is in no danger. His actions are therefore “unchecked and unmediated.”

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<sup>69</sup> Mulman 100.

The contrast between the reactions of Ambrosio and the two lovers is the means through which their separate destinies unfold. Agnes and Raymond are both sanctified through the penitent nature of their spirits and their perseverance through the trials of their punishments. Agnes is the first to be punished, “chained down in [a] secret dungeon, shut out from the world...with no comfort but religion, no society but repentance” (408). Her endurance through the death of her child and her own near-death experience, without loss of faith or resolution of her desire to repent, absolves her of her crime, sanctifying her and releasing her from the torment of Catholic evils. Mulman explains:

The moral lesson offered by these twists of plot is residual in the anti sensuality of the novel’s happy ending: Agnes returns to Alphonso much altered after her confinement in the dungeon, and although she is restored to health, it is her deeper and more profound attachment to her lover which truly reunites them...lead[ing] them to depths of feeling inspired by virtue and affection rather than erotic attraction, enforcing the importance of social propriety and a religiosity which is dependent upon such domestic order.<sup>70</sup>

Agnes becomes the new example of the “sanctified” bride – although she has sinned, her near death and following salvation have purified her spirit. Her renewed spirit is able to nurse her betrothed back from a near-fatal illness, and they are restored to strength together.

Ambrosio, on the other hand, refuses to submit to the punishments warranted by his actions. He follows the seductive Matilda through a treacherous labyrinth of sins, including murder, rape, and incest, in the hopes of maintaining his virtuous image. When his sins can no longer be denied before his earthly judges, Ambrosio succumbs to Matilda’s ultimate seduction, permanently destroying his betrothal to Christ through a

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<sup>70</sup> Mulman 107.

marriage with the Devil. Lucifer bids Ambrosio to answer a series of questions that resemble wedding vows: “Will you be mine, body and soul?...Do you freely and absolutely renounce your Creator and his Son?...Do you make your soul over to me for ever?...Without future appeal to divine mercy?” (433-7). For fear of his immanent death, Ambrosio ultimately replies, “I do! I do!... Forever!... I am yours for ever irrevocably!” (437-8). Through this demonic wedding ceremony Ambrosio seals his fate as a fallen bride of Christ, ultimately unable to follow in the penitent footsteps of Agnes and Raymond, due to his weakening pride.<sup>71</sup>

Through this contrast between the courtship/marriage plots of Ambrosio and Raymond and Agnes, the novel presents a symbolic representation of the failing Catholic faith, as portrayed in anti-Catholic notions of late eighteenth century England. According to anti-Catholic belief, the Catholic Church, bound up in its rituals and cursed by its own pride, is likewise being courted by the devil, and the result of its corruption will be the destruction of those suffering under its power. It is therefore being portrayed as a danger to society, which encourages the elevation of anti-Catholic action and could possibly renew early modern ideas of purging society of such a threat.

D.G. Paz claims in his study of anti-Catholicism in Victorian England that, “England’s experiences from the Reformation to the Glorious Revolution embedded in people’s historical consciousness a distinct view of Roman Catholicism that was the bedrock on which the Victorians built. This view advanced theological, moral, and political objections to Roman Catholicism.”<sup>72</sup> Through this study I have exhibited the ways in which the anti-Catholicism of the Reformation period moved through the

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<sup>71</sup> Steven Blakemore provides a more elaborate reading of this scene in his article “Matthew Lewis’s Black Mass: Sexual, Religious Inversion in *The Monk*,” in *Studies in the Novel*, published in 1998.

<sup>72</sup> D.G. Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (CA: Stanford UP, 1992) 2.

eighteenth century, ultimately experiencing a vigorous resurrection at the end of the century, as exemplified in the gothic novel. The graphically violent anti-Catholic sentiments revealed in Lewis's *The Monk* transformed the previously tame gothic genre, encouraging additional imaginative portrayals of anti-Catholic belief in the following century.

## CONCLUSION

Within studies of post-Reformation anti-Catholicism in England, the period falling between the failure of the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion and the French Revolution has been overlooked almost entirely, especially concerning the literature of the period. It is surprising that the novel is referenced so little in anti-Catholic studies, as it follows the frequently discussed religious commentary provided in poetry, satire, drama, sermons, and treatises of the Restoration and early eighteenth century.<sup>73</sup> Through these genres, it is obvious that religious controversy was a common theme in literature – a point which led me to question why the novel’s relationship to religious issues in the eighteenth century has not been evaluated.

In the course of this study I have attempted to begin a discourse on the relationship of the evolution of the novel genre during the mid and late-eighteenth century in England with the issue of anti-Catholicism during this period. Through an exploration of the interactions of these novels with contemporary historical contexts, I have argued that the novel was a means of both tracking and influencing religious thought during this period, and more specifically, was a means of transporting the anti-Catholic sentiments of the Elizabethan and Stuart eras to the nineteenth century. I have also attempted to show that the use of religious themes was a means through which authors could augment and transform this new literary structure, best exemplified in Matthew Lewis’s infusion of early modern romance and controversial imagery into the gothic novel. Also through an extensive exploration of the themes of courtship and marriage in these novels, I have posited that the novel form was a convenient medium

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<sup>73</sup> In *Catholicism in the English Protestant Imagination* Tumbleson notes the significance of Milton, Marvell, Dryden, Restoration dramatists, Foxe, and briefly mentions Defoe and Fielding; however, his study does not progress past the failed Jacobite rebellion, nor does it acknowledge the novel as a significant genre in anti-Catholic studies.

through which the idea of the church as the bride of Christ could be employed in order to justify either the Protestant or Catholic Church as the “true church.”

Each of these works exhibit connections to earlier literary representations of anti-Catholic sentiments, particularly in the symbolic references to the church as the bride of Christ. Through these connections, evolving ideas of anti-Catholicism continued to move through the literature of the eighteenth century, culminating in the vibrant renewal of early modern images and themes in the gothic genre, which greatly influenced the development of literature in the nineteenth century. As Jack Lynch explains, the literature of earlier periods provided eighteenth century England “with a limitless supply of examples of what it most feared and abhorred.”<sup>74</sup> Therefore, following the terror of the onset of the French Revolution, the conduction of the anti-Catholic images of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the late-eighteenth century novel helped to fuel the virulent anti-Catholicism that emerged during the early nineteenth century.

This has been by no means a comprehensive study of anti-Catholicism in the novel, but as so little research has been conducted on this topic, I hope that this initial study can open the doors to future research in this area. As Colin Haydon asserts, “the eighteenth century constituted a bridge, not a hiatus, between the better researched ‘No Popery’ troubles of the Stuart and Victorian eras.”<sup>75</sup> Through this study I have provided evidence of the significance of the eighteenth century novel in research on anti-Catholicism during this perceived “lull” between the more violent and vocal seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, in hopes that this innovative form will be no longer overlooked

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<sup>74</sup> Jack Lynch, *The Age of Elizabeth in the Age of Johnson* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 82.

<sup>75</sup> Haydon 2.

but, instead, be implemented into additional explorations of religious thought in eighteenth century literature.

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