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The Catholic "Other" in Gothic Literature

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Abstract:

This paper investigates how Gothic literature was complicit in the construction of a Catholic 'Other" against which a British Protestant Nation could define itself. Through its frequent utilization of religious themes and tropes, it represented Catholicism as a medieval, barbaric religion, and its institutions and agents as oppressive and tyrannical. Catholicism then stood in opposition to British national identity, founded upon a supposedly modern and liberal Protestant world view. Specifically, this paper will explore the anti-Catholic tendencies in Ann Radcliffe's novel *The Italian*, and *Kilverstone Castle*, a chapbook. Since the works in question are intended for widely varying readerships, they demonstrate how pervasive anti-Catholic prejudices were in British society. These were the sentiments Gothic literature both catered to and reinforced within British popular consciousness. Thus, this paper argues that the Gothic genre was instrumental in reinforcing a sense of British identity that was not only Protestant, but Anti-Catholic.

Keywords: Anti-Catholicism, Gothic fiction, Ann Radcliffe, British Nationalism, Protestantism.

British national identity was fundamentally based on Protestantism; it united the people of Britain and distinguished them from the rest of Europe. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the prevailing socio-political situation made the fact that Britain was a dominantly Protestant nation increasingly relevant. During this time period, Britain was involved in recurrent wars with Catholic France, and there were also threats of invasion from other Catholic European countries. Also, there was evidence of discrimination against Protestants in some Catholic countries. Struggles of Protestants abroad struck close to home, for there were popular fears regarding Stuart reclamation of the throne, and the re-imposition of a Catholic monarchy in Britain (Colley 11-54).

In such a scenario, Britons interpreted their present situation as a continuation of their nation's Protestant history. It appeared that the struggles of the Protestant Reformation were

not yet over. Catholicism continued to present a dynastic and political threat. Popular literature at the time, notably, John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, was responsible for reinforcing an interpretation of history in which Catholics were overwhelmingly responsible for the oppression of Protestants. These representations not only vilified Catholicism, but also glorified Protestants, highlighting their bravery in the face of persecution. Thus, to Protestant Britons, the suffering of their ancestors had been for a purpose, that is, they were martyrs and had given way to their countrymen's Protestant destiny. They believed that as God's chosen people, it was their fate to undergo certain kinds of trials in the hands of certain kinds of enemies. However, if suffering was endured with faith and determination, they would eventually gain salvation due to the grace of God. In this manner, their present battle against Catholicism was given meaning and purpose (Colley 11-54).

These were the beliefs that that the people of Britain drew upon to give them courage and dignity in a time that was rife with social, religious and political tension. Thus, the construction of a Catholic "Other" that stood in opposition to British Protestantism was instrumental in carving out a sense of national identity (Colley 11-54).

As stated previously, popular literature produced in this time period played an important role in this construction, and perhaps no other genre was more influential in this regard than the Gothic. It was after all, an immensely popular genre that appealed to a wide range of audiences. Thus, it played a vital role in shaping popular consciousness. Also, as a fictional form, it drew many of its tropes from texts published during the height of the Protestant Reformation, such as the *Compendium Competorum*, and John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. In drawing from texts such as these, Gothic literature was catering to stereotypes that had been in circulation in the British public imagination for the last two hundred years or so. Since these Anti-Catholic tropes were so familiar, Gothic novelists could use them as shorthand for representing all that threatened the British nation. Hoeveler points out how the heyday of Gothic literature coincided with the campaigning for and against the passage of the Catholic Emancipation Acts that aimed at restoring some of the rights of Britain's Catholic citizens. According to her, the three tenets of British anti-Catholicism, that is, political distrust of the clergy, theological debates around transubstantiation and popular fears regarding the threat of invasion from the Catholic countries of France and Spain found expression in the Gothic genre. Through Gothic literature, the British Protestant imagination sought to soothe its anxieties regarding the lingering threat of Catholicism (Hoeveler 15-50).

Moreover, in the eighteenth century, religion was interlinked with political alliances. Adherence to the Catholic faith was a statement about loyalty to the old ways, and the Stuart

claimants to the throne. On the other hand, being Protestant meant an endorsement of the Whig's more progressive and liberal agenda, and the Protestant Hanoverian dynasty. Hoeveler argues that the Gothic was consciously employed by the Whig establishment to demonize the Catholics in popular consciousness. To the Whigs, Catholicism was a regressive religion, one that stood in opposition to the ideals of secular modernity that Britain aspired towards (Hoeveler 15-50).

To further assert her argument that the Gothic genre was invested politically and ideologically in the Anti-Catholic campaign, she notes how many Gothic novelists tended to be associated with the Whig party or the Anglican Establishment. For example, Matthew Lewis served as a Member of Parliament in the Whig party, and Radcliffe was related to the Bishop of Gloucester (Hoeveler 15-50).

Thus, Anti-Catholicism played a vital role in the forging of a British national identity, and the Gothic as a popular genre propagated this through catering to prejudices against Catholicism. I will now focus on two Gothic texts specifically, attempting to demonstrate through an analysis of their anti-Catholic tendencies what I've stated above.

Firstly, I will be looking at *The Italian*, a Gothic novel by Ann Radcliffe, which was first published in 1797. Radcliffe wrote the novel partly as a response to Matthew Lewis's novel, *The Monk*, and consequently, it utilizes many of the same tropes. While *The Monk* is generally perceived to be virulently Anti-Catholic, Radcliffe is not as overt in her criticism of the Catholic church. However, while Radcliffe's novel might not be as sensational and explicit, it is obviously characterized by its Anti-Catholic tendencies.

The novel is after all, set in Catholic Italy, and it is the forces of Catholicism which are responsible for the trials and tribulations her virtuous protagonists must overcome. Radcliffe's novel contains many familiar Gothic tropes, and most of these are blatantly Anti-Catholic in nature. Through examining Radcliffe's utilization of these tropes, I intend to argue that she endorses a hostile representation of the Catholic church. This was characteristic of many Gothic works produced at the time, and were reflective of the social, religious and political anxieties of the period. Gothic literature played an instrumental role in enabling readers to confront these anxieties, by reinforcing a sense of national identity that was based fundamentally on Anti-Catholicism.

The story opens with an English traveller visiting Italy, who is amazed to learn that the Catholic Church provides sanctuary to assassins. His Italian friend claims that events such as these are commonplace in Italy. While he is following this strand of thought, he is reminded of an extraordinary tale, one that has to do with a confession made in the very church that they

were visiting, that is, the Santa Maria Del Pianto. He gives the Englishman a narrative that relates these extraordinary events, and this constitutes the story of *The Italian*.

In the plot, Vincentio di Vivaldi, falls in love with Ellena di Rosalba and intends to marry her. However, Vivaldi's aristocratic family is vehemently opposed to the match, for Ellena is considered to be far below their rank. While Vivaldi's father, the Marchese, strongly expresses his disapproval, the Marchesa chooses instead to adopt stealth. She secretively enlists the help of her confessor, the monk Schedoni. The two conspire against the union of the lovers, prepared to adopt any means necessary in order to separate them. To this end, Ellena is kidnapped and imprisoned in a convent. She eventually manages to escape with Vivaldi, but due to a scheme enacted by Schedoni, the two lovers are separated once again. While Vivaldi is arrested by the Inquisition, Ellena is taken to a seaside manor, where Schedoni plans to murder her. However, here, he falsely recognizes Ellena to be his daughter, and his plans change radically.

Schedoni is now determined to bring about the marriage and tries to arrange for Vivaldi's release from the Inquisition. With a turn of events however, he is summoned to the Inquisition himself. Through a course of revelations, his past crimes are revealed. Soon after this discovery, Schedoni poisons himself, and dies in the prisons of Inquisition.

By the end of the novel, Vivaldi is acquitted, and Elena's true origins are discovered. She too hails from a noble family, and Schedoni is not her father, but her uncle. There is no longer any reason to oppose their marriage, thus the Marchese readily consents. Ellena and Vivaldi are married, and the novel ends with a fete given by the Marchese to celebrate their union.

In the opening scene itself, the difference between English Protestant culture and Catholicism is firmly established. While the frame narrative seems to have no direct connection to the plot, this will be a theme which occurs throughout the novel. As an institution that grants sanctuary to assassins, the Catholic Church is represented as not only morally contemptible, but dangerously powerful. Although the church, in this case, the Santa Maria Del Pianto, is protecting dangerous criminals, the state apparently does not have the power to intervene and enforce justice.

This representation of the Church as a formidable, omnipotent institution that operates beyond common law reinforces English Protestant prejudices regarding Catholic tyranny. Moreover, such an institution stands in stark contrast to the values of a secularizing British Protestant nation state.

Throughout the novel, Catholic agents and institutions seek to oppress the two lovers, who are characterized by their British Protestant virtues. Of course, Schedoni, the villain, and perhaps the central character of the novel, is a very sinister monk. He is, after all, guilty of murdering his own brother, and attempting to murder his sister-in-law. Unlike Ambrosio in *The Monk*, his worst crimes were committed before he joined the monastery. Thus, he is not instigated by Catholicism in committing them in the way that Ambrosio is (Hogle 158). Also, he appears to suffer deep repentance for the sins of his past, and even subjects himself to severe penance. Purves argues that Schedoni goes through a penitential process throughout the novel, which ultimately induces the reader to feel a measure of sympathy for him (84-85).

However, while Schedoni's past crimes appear to torture him, he is far from a changed man. Although now a monk, he is still driven solely by his ambitions and is determined to go to any extent to fulfil them. Abduction, imprisonment, torture, even murder are all crimes he is willing to commit. With the various revelations that unfold throughout the novel, Schedoni's motives and loyalties change, but we are led to believe that his nature remains fundamentally the same. On recognizing Ellena as his daughter, he does attempt to make amends by uniting Ellena and Vivaldi. But in this, he is driven by a recognition of the benefits he would gain from the alliance as much as he is by a desire for Ellena's happiness.

Similarly, even Schedoni's last moments do not redeem him. While he confesses the truth and thus aids in the acquittal of Vivaldi, he also somehow manages to poison his traitorous accomplice, Zampari. Till his very end, he is driven by the need for vengeance, and his apparent love for his newly discovered daughter does not counteract it.

Schedoni appears to be a deeply religious Catholic, and while none of the brothers of his order love him, nevertheless, he is respected for his piety. Schedoni is the "pride of his house" and is "severe in his devotion" (Radcliffe 101). Also, it is through the protection that being a respected member of the clergy grants him that he can enforce his malevolent schemes. The ultimate manifestation of this is when he gets Vivaldi arrested by the Inquisition, based on a false allegation. Thus, Schedoni's villainy seems inseparable from his Catholicism.

Undoubtedly, Schedoni is one of the more complex representations of the Gothic monk, nonetheless, he is not a figure who elicits sympathy. He is deeply malevolent, and never attains a tragic status.

The monk is a recurring trope in Gothic fiction. As in *The Italian*, he is often represented as an aristocratic criminal, who joins the monastery not owing to his religious beliefs, but in order to find a safe haven. While nuns were sometimes depicted as innocent victims of Catholic tyranny, the figure of the monk was nearly always demonized (Hoeveler 146).

Such representations of the monk or the priest figure in literature could be attributed to the fears among British Protestants regarding the increasing power of the clergy. According to them, the Catholic clergy had a dangerous amount of influence in the Continental states. Protestantism was founded in Britain by "removing the meddling clergy, not only from the altar, but more significantly, from the affairs of state" (Hoeveler 109). Thus, separation of church and state was the founding principle of the British Protestant nation, a nation that aspired towards secular ideals (Hoeveler 109).

In such a scenario, "the spectre of theocracy" was one that haunted the Protestant imagination (Hoeveler 146). In order to advance the cause of secularization, the figure of the monk was evoked only to be demonized. (Hoeveler 109).

Another site of Catholic tyranny represented in *The Italian*, is the convent of San Stefano, where Ellena is imprisoned after she is abducted from home. When she is first brought to the convent, she observes that the "walls were painted with subjects indicatory of the severe superstitions of the place", and that the face of her conductress was "characterised by a gloomy malignity, which seemed to inflict upon others some portion of the unhappiness she herself suffered" (Radcliffe 65). These observations induce Ellena to believe that the inhabitants of the place would not be sympathetic to her sufferings, and she is proven right.

While a convent is meant to be a place for sanctuary, in this instance, as Ellena points out, it is a prison. Presided over by a cruel, tyrannical abbess, San Stefano is an immensely hostile environment for Ellena. The Abbess of San Stefano is a "woman of distinction," and considers few offences greater than those committed against nobility. This points towards the corrupt alliances that were thought to exist between the Church and the aristocracy in Protestant consciousness. Here, the Catholic Church becomes the means by which the status quo is reinforced, and it punishes those who seek to challenge traditional class boundaries, as Ellena is through aspiring to marry Vivaldi.

In the convent, Ellena is subjected to confinement and repeated humiliation. Moreover, she is pressurized to either take the veil or to consent to a marriage arranged for her by the Marchesa. When she firmly refuses to accept either of the two alternatives offered to her, she is threatened with severe, even fatal consequences.

Through Ellena's experience in the convent, it is evident that this is an institution has no qualms about suppressing individual rights and freedom. In fact, it is prepared to take the most drastic measures in order to enforce its tyrannical authority. Thus, through the convent of San Stefano, Catholic institutions, and by extension, Catholicism is represented as oppressive, and threatening to the freedoms so highly prized in British Protestant consciousness. While

Ellena is not a complete departure from the passive Gothic heroine, in her interactions with the Abbess, she is unusually assertive. Not only does she recognize that she is a victim of cruelty and oppression, she actively revolts against it. In her consciousness of her own rights and her expressed indignation at tyranny and oppression, she is characterized as distinctively English and Protestant.

While San Stefano is unarguably an oppressive institution, the convent of Santa Della Pieta is established it stark contrast to it. Upon discovering that Ellena is his "daughter", Schedoni places her in this sanctuary while he attempts to reverse the damage he has done. In Santa Della Pieta, Ellena finds a safe haven from the institutional violence she encounters throughout the novel (Tooley 42-56). The society is said to "appear like a large family, in which the Lady Abbess is the mother" (Radcliffe 285). The harmonious environment that prevails in the convent is largely due to the virtues of the remarkable Lady Abbess, whose influence and moral guardianship all the inhabitants of the convent benefit from.

This, however, isn't necessarily proof of a pro-Catholic representation. Radcliffe states that "The society of our Lady of Pity was such as a convent does not often shroud", making it clear that a convent such as this one is more the exception rather than the norm (285).

The Abbess' personal faith is markedly unorthodox, on the rare occasion that she does preach religion, her perception of it is ''cheerful'', rather than "gloomy and bigoted." Mostly, however, the Abbess provides moral rather than religious instruction to her charges, inculcating in them those values which would be the most "practicable" in the society in which they lived.

As noted by several critics, the Abbess of the convent seems to practise characteristically Protestant values, to whatever extent it is possible to do in a superstitious, Catholic Italy.

After all, while she "conforms to the precepts of the Roman Catholic faith, she does not consider a belief in all of them to be necessary for salvation" (Radcliffe 285). In her lack of adherence to dogma, the Abbess is distinguished from what is established as the norm of Catholic intolerance in the novel. Moreover, although the Abbess is a tolerant and liberal individual, she has to work within the larger institutional frameworks that she is a part of. These are clearly established as tyrannical and oppressive. Thus, she must appear to conform to orthodox principles in order to protect herself from ecclesiastic scrutiny. Though not Protestantism itself, through the convent of Santa Della la Pieta, we are presented with a model of Catholicism that would be acceptable to Protestants.

The most fearsome of Catholic institutions, the Inquisition, pervades the latter half of the novel. Vivaldi is arrested and incarcerated in the prisons of the Inquisition in Rome, on the basis of an accusation levelled by Schedoni.

While other Inquisition narratives tend to be sensational and explicit, in this case, the horrors of the Inquisition are primarily psychological. Vivaldi is only threatened with torture, and never actually witnesses any violence in the dungeons of the Inquisition. In *The Italian*, the Inquisition and its machinations are represented as shadowy and obscure, and thus all the more terror inducing. This lack of transparency is deliberately utilized by the Inquisitorial system to create an oppressive atmosphere where the accused is forced to confess. Through the character of Vivaldi, supposedly Italian, yet "Anglicized" by his virtues, Radcliffe explores the abuses of the Catholic Church through an English, Protestant consciousness. Vivaldi challenges the hypocrisy of the Inquisitorial system, which is geared towards implicating the accused at any cost rather than uncovering the truth.

"It is not the truth which you seek; it is not the guilty whom you punish; the innocent, having no crimes to confess, are the victims of your cruelty, or, to escape from it, become criminal, and proclaim a lie" (Radcliffe 194).

The cruelty and injustices practised by the Inquisition arouse his honest indignation. Observing the Inquisitors, Vivaldi is appalled that human nature can condone such horrible "perversion of right" (Radcliffe 189). Catholicism is represented as a religion which not only inflicts abuse, but also tends to dehumanize its practitioners, making them insensible to the suffering of their fellow human beings.

Despite this, the Inquisition ultimately becomes the means by which the "guilty are punished." Schedoni is implicated for his crimes by Inquisitorial proceedings, presided over by a truly just Grand Inquisitor. While Schedoni takes advantage of the protection of the Catholic Church to carry out his insidious schemes throughout the novel, ultimately, it turns against him.

That the Inquisition is successful in this one instance, does not point towards a positive, or even ambiguous representation. As Michasiw has noted, the Inquisition might have enforced justice in condemning Schedoni, however, this does not improve the moral stature of an Institution clearly delineated as tyrannical and corrupt (341). Instead, it points towards the fact that the Inquisition serves only its own convenience and can persecute its faithful servants just as it persecutes the innocent.

The figure of the Grand Inquisitor, like the Abbess of Santa Della la Pieta is positively represented. However, it is clearly highlighted that such figures are distinguished from the

norm. They are virtuous despite belonging to an institution that is obviously characterized as oppressive, thus they excite the admiration of the protagonists.

Beth Swan notes the parallels that exist between Radcliffe's representation of the Inquisition and the concerns that existed around the English legal system in the 18th century (186-97). She argues that the trope of the Inquisition, being a powerful symbol for juridical inequity, is utilized in *The Italian* as a coded critique of the English legal system, particularly English prisons (186-97). Representations of the Inquisition can be seen more generally as a critique of unjust legal systems. However, when we consider how frequently the Inquisition theme was invoked in Gothic literature, it seems likely that this was Anti-Catholic propaganda. After all, in popular consciousness, the Inquisition was the most frightening manifestation of the continued power of the Catholic church.

The Inquisition had been defunct in Italy for over a hundred years, yet it is presented as a thriving force in the novel, which is set in 1758 (Groom xvii). This cannot be dismissed simply as a historical anachronism. Although no longer active in most parts of Europe, the Inquisition was a recurrent trope in Gothic fiction, as mentioned previously. The utilization of Inquisition tropes and themes are reflective of British anxieties regarding the cruelties and legal atrocities practised in Catholic countries (Hoeveler 148). These were especially relevant to their own situation, given the repeated attempts made by the Catholic Stuarts to regain the throne. Hoeveler argues that a direct link exists between the threatened return of the Stuarts, and representations of the Inquisition in Gothic literature (148). There were popular fears that if the Stuarts had been successful in reclaiming the throne, it would lead to the imposition of an Inquisition like scenario in Britain (Hoeveler 149).

Moreover, such representations of the Inquisition are a means of contrasting the modernity of the British legal justice system with the more antiquated, ecclesiastical systems in Catholic countries. British Protestantism, assumed to be tolerant and liberal, defined itself against such bodies (Groom xvii).

Thus, *The Italian* endorses a representation of Catholicism as a medieval, superstitious and barbaric religion. As is evident through the figures of Schedoni, the Abbess of San Stefano and Nicola Di Zampari, Catholic clerics are largely portrayed as instruments of tyranny.

The Catholic Church itself is represented as an oppressive institution, and therefore opposed to the characteristically Protestant, English virtues of freedom of conscience and respect for human liberty.

Accordingly, its agents and institutions seek to conspire against Ellena and Vivaldi, who aspire towards a modern, companionate marriage. As Salter has noted, it could be argued

that through her treatment of religion in the novel, Radcliffe was exploring what it means to be English. The "Catholic Other" is the means against which the "Protestant self" is defined (Salter 57). As she believed England was modern, rational and civilized, Catholicism, its opposite was defined as medieval, superstitious and barbaric. Thus, a sense of herself as being modern, Protestant and English was derived at least in part from her aversion to Catholicism (Salter 57).

The second text I will be looking at is a Gothic chapbook, *Kilverstone Castle: or the Heir Restored, An English Gothic Story*.

While it may be argued that Radcliffe is ambiguous in her criticism of the Catholic church, the obvious Anti-Catholic nature of many of the Gothic chapbooks published in the late eighteenth century cannot be ignored. Catering to the newly literate working classes, the chapbook was the means by which the lower classes participated in the ideological developments of their culture (Thomson and Hoeveler 157). Owing to their cheap price and wide circulation, the chapbook was a successful vehicle for reinforcing prejudices against Catholicism in popular consciousness (Thomson and Hoeveler 155). Thomson and Hoeveler have noted the extremely large number of Anti-Catholic chapbooks were published during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. They even contend that whole publishing houses were invested in propagating the Gothic as a kind of "covert religious writing, propagandizing and quasi-religious pamphleteering (156). In any case, it cannot be denied that through the utilization of Anti-Catholic tropes, these Gothic works exploited the political and religious hysteria amongst the masses in this time period. *Kilverstone Castle* was published in 1799, only two years after *The Italian*. Both are the products of a turbulent decade, charged with religious and political anxieties.

Kilverstone Castle is set in medieval England. It claims to be founded on a "fact" that happened on the dawn of the reformation. The plot is mainly concerned with the misfortunes that befall the Baron of Kilverstone, Mervil Audley, due to the evil machinations of the monk, Father Peter. Although Father Peter is chiefly responsible for Mervil's downfall, the Catholic clergy as a whole are depicted negatively.

In the beginning of the story, it is Mervil's father who is the object of the monk's hatred. Lord Audley is described as an extremely virtuous man, but due to a "a mind enlarged with good sense and benevolence", he embraces certain principles dissenting from the Church of Rome (*Kilverstone Castle* 4). For this reason, he attracts the vengeance of Father Peter, the chief of a Benedictine monastery. Father Peter believes that he is doing God's work in plotting against a man who does not align fully with the Catholic faith. He is not driven solely by his

religious bigotry, but also by avarice. He aspires to seize the property of Lord Audley, through a claim made by Lord Wentworth (the seignory of the land) on his insistence. Father Peter is not a complex figure, he is simply representative of the supposed evils of the Catholic faith. We are told of the influence the clergy had over the people in those times of superstition, and how they frequently abused the power they were invested with. Accordingly, Father Peter too abuses the power his religious authority grants him in order to oppress the Baron. Lord Wentworth had spent his youth recklessly, and now, in old age, perhaps in order to relieve himself of past sins, he deposits his confidence in the Catholic church. Taking advantage of his "unreformed mind", the churchmen are described as taking possession of his soul (*Kilverstone Castle* 10). They "grafted bigotry upon the darkness of his understanding, wound up the springs of superstition, from the horrors of their doctrine induced his avarice to bend in the purchase of salvation" (*Kilverstone Castle* 10). The clergy take advantage of the ignorance and credulity of the people, and since the Lord Wentworth has a mind susceptible to superstition, they exploit this tendency of his to bring him under their influence. Thus, he blindly follows the dictates of Father Peter.

After the death of his father, Mervil Audley inherits his estate, becoming the Baron of Kilverstone Castle. The object of the Father Peter's hatred is no more, but the object of his avarice, that is, Audley's estate, remains. He finds that Mervil is a more rigorous opponent than his old and ailing father, and suspects that he could foil his plans. Thus, he intends to dispose of him. His first attempt to assassinate him fails, as a consequence of which he crafts a more elaborate plot. Through this scheme, he instigates Mervil to kill his kinsman, Ironhide. Once charged with murder, Mervil will be forced to forfeit his life and his estates. While the monk is successful in ruining him, Mervil manages to flee. He spends many nights wandering, until he learns that the hermitage of his ancestor, Moreland Audley is nearby. Moreland Audley was bred to the office of a priest and had resided in a monastery for a while. However, he had been disgusted by the hypocrisy and corruption amongst the clergy that he had witnessed there. Thus, he had retreated to a secluded place amongst the mountains, where he lived as a hermit. Moreland did not withdraw completely from the world and continued to offer moral and religious instruction to the people of the countryside. The hermitage is established as a more suitable alternative to the corrupt monastery.

When Mervil Audley retreats to the hermitage, he takes the place of his ancestor, and carries out the same functions as he used to. Consciousness of his crimes weighs heavily upon him, and to him the hermitage is not only a sanctuary, but also a place where he might repent

for his past sins. Eventually, he discovers that his kinsman, Ironhide, was only injured, not killed. He eventually decides to return to the world and make attempts to regain his lost rank.

Mervil demonstrates his valour and loyalty in battle, and in order to honour him, the King of the region grants him the escheated lands of the monastery. Since the clergy is found to have conspired against the King, the Benedictine monastery is razed to the ground. It is indicated that it is the sins of their house which have led to their ruin. Although Father Peter was the driving force for most of the events in the story, there is no mention of him towards the end of the story. Mervil Audley not only regains his lost station, but is also reunited with his family, and good ultimately triumphs over the forces of evil, represented by Catholicism.

As a chapbook of 38 pages, with a relatively simplistic plot structure, *Kilverstone Castle* does not allow for too much analysis. However, if placed within a particular social and political context, it can offer us an insightful glimpse into popular consciousness. *Kilverstone Castle* clearly demonstrates hostile attitudes towards Catholicism in the British Protestant imagination. As in *The Italian*, Catholicism is depicted as the repository of vice, superstition, and prejudice. While Father Peter is not characterized with nearly as much complexity as Schedoni, they share several commonalities. These parallels are by no means restricted to these two characters but were fairly common in representations of the Gothic monk. Schedoni and Father Peter are portrayed as instruments of tyranny, and they seek to oppress the virtuous protagonists in the story. Monkish hypocrisy is clearly delineated in both the characters, as well as a propensity for crime. While Schedoni is equally envied and respected for his extreme piety, Father Peter is the chief ecclesiastic of his monastery. They both assume an appearance of sanctity, yet they are unabashedly ambitious. Moreover, the two priests are equally subtle in the artful means they employ in order to realize their ambitions.

They are also treated similarly within the narrative framework, that is, while Schedoni dies in the prisons of the Inquisition, Father Peter's monastery is razed to the ground. In order for the narrative to reach its inevitably happy conclusion, they are erased from it, despite being the driving force behind most of the events which transpire.

The Anti-Catholic sentiment prevalent amongst the masses in the late eighteenth century is widely acknowledged. However, the educated classes were supposed to have a relatively tolerant attitude towards the Catholic faith, especially in the light of the violence of the French revolution. Radcliffe would be catering to a more educated, middle or upper middle-class readership, rather than to the masses. However, it is evident that both of the texts observed utilize many of the same tropes. These are tropes which are invested in the Anti-Catholic agenda, as explained previously. It may be argued that the Anti-Catholicism amongst the

intellectual elite was not as vehement and hysterical. Nevertheless, animosity towards the Catholic faith was not restricted to the masses, it was in fact a pervasive sentiment in British consciousness. This is evident not only in *The Italian*, but also in the earlier works of Radcliffe, and the Gothic novels of Matthew Lewis, Horace Walpole, and many others. This widespread Anti-Catholic sentiment contributed towards creating a sense of British national identity during a time period where political and social threats to the nation were interpreted as overwhelmingly Catholic in nature. In such circumstances, Gothic literature played a crucial role in the construction of a Catholic "Other" against which national identity could be defined.

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