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REVISING THE POPISH PLOT: FRANCES TROLLOPE'S *THE ABBESS* AND *FATHER EUSTACE*

By Susan M. Griffin

MY SUBJECT is doubly suspect: polemical religious fiction by Frances Trollope. Victorian Studies has, of course, always stressed the centrality of religion to nineteenth-century culture. Yet, paging through Robert Lee Wolff's magisterial 1977 *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England*, what is striking is how little advantage has been taken of his work, how few of the fictions he describes have made their way into critical conversation about the Victorian novel. In 1989 John Sutherland mapped what he called the unexplored "lost continent" of non-canonical Victorian fiction (1). Modernism's lingering legacy has meant, I would argue, that novels of religious controversy by women continue to comprise one of that continent's darkest reaches.[1]

Frances Trollope's fiction has also remained, for the most part, off our critical map. Known throughout most of the twentieth century as "Anthony's mother," the popular and prolific Frances Trollope has received some recent attention in studies of nineteenth-century industrial fiction which discusses her *Michael Armstrong* (1840) and *Jessie Phillips* (1844) (Bodenheimer, Gallagher, Kestner). However, like most of Trollope's other novels, her two anti-Catholic narratives, *The Abbess* (1833) and *Father Eustace* (1847), are largely unread by contemporary critics. Even a recent Trollope biography dismisses both novels as recyclings of hoary gothic plots and panderings to popular taste.[2]

The Abbess and *Father Eustace* do contain multiple gothic elements and capitalize as well on the Protestant preconceptions of Trollope's English audience. However, rather than cause for dismissal, Trollope's choice of this popular genre allows for investigation of a woman writer's engagement with the nineteenth-century Protestant critique of Roman Catholicism.[3] For Trollope, the conventions of gothic[4] and anti-Catholic literature offer a structure within which she can plot stories of mothers, daughters, and female autonomy. What Trollope offers as an alternative to the popery that she attacks in *The Abbess* and *Father Eustace* is, of course, English Protestantism. But "Protestantism" for Trollope is less a matter of doctrinal purity and more a gendered set of possibilities for self-making.

Seeking to explain the revival of a seemingly anachronistic anti-Catholicism in nineteenth-century Britain, Walter Arnstein notes that "numerous mid-Victorians possessed a highly vivid sense of medieval history. There was but a narrow mental gap between the Victorian Gothic and the true Gothic" (214). In *The Abbess* and *Father Eustace*, Trollope

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at once exploits and undoes the threat from the Dark Ages that returns to haunt Victorian England. Anglo-American anti-Catholicism — central to the gothic from its inception, and, as historians like Arnstein, Dennis Paz, and John Wolffe have shown, a lively force in nineteenth-century culture — provides Trollope with a repertoire of images, characters, and narrative strategies. Recasting the gothic plots of female victimhood, with their missing mothers, entombed nuns, and young women imprisoned in convents, Trollope describes in these two novels central relationships between mothers and daughters based on what she sees as Protestant ideals. Her female characters create for themselves shared spaces of reading and authorship.

Like many women writers of her era, Frances Trollope found in the creation of fictional families a means of supporting her own children. Faced with her husband's financial failure, Trollope wrote some thirty-five novels, many of them centered around the dominant woman characters who became her trademark (Sutherland 638–39). In *The Abbess* and *Father Eustace*, Trollope not only suggests an alternative arc for the gothic and anti-Catholic narratives that are her models but also imagines a happier ending for her own family story. In *The Abbess*, set in sixteenth-century Italy, women survive by mimicking and then escaping the roles in which familial and religious patriarchs attempt to imprison them, though that escape proves only temporary. In *Father Eustace*, Trollope confronts what she sees as the contemporary face of the gothic in the person of John Henry Newman. This time her Protestant heroine herself revises the gothic plot and routs the holy fathers. Yet in order for this new narrative structure to work, Trollope must end her novel in the realm of the imaginary.

Charting the unknown territory that is *The Abbess* and *Father Eustace* suggests, then, not only some of the diversity of women's religious fiction, but also the ways in which polemical techniques serve Victorian writers as unexpected vehicles for addressing a range of gendered cultural issues. Unexpected for us, that is. For Trollope's readership, doctrinal controversy commingled with cultural discussion and construction of personal freedom, appropriate education, gender relations, etc. As John Maynard remarks, "it may well be that the only scandal that remains in the postmodern world is that of religious seriousness" (3). Trollope's treatment of religion, often comic, is nonetheless always serious.

In an era of strident religious controversy, Trollope's own beliefs were comfortably moderate. Her father had been an Anglican minister, a former fellow of New College, Oxford, who eventually became a country vicar with greater interest in scientific matters than in ecclesiastical disputes. In her writings, Trollope consistently criticizes religious extremism of all kinds; low as well as High Church dogmatism earn her scorn.[5] Her best-known religious novel, *The Vicar of Wrexhill* (1837) attacks the practices of the evangelical clergy and criticizes the women who foolishly and self-destructively support them. Her depictions of popery in *The Abbess* and *Father Eustace* censure both the Church of Rome and those segments of the Church of England that have become, to her mind, Romanized.

While *Father Eustace* responds directly to the then-scandalous subject of the Oxford Movement, it returns to and revises the materials of *The Abbess*, a novel less tied to specific historical events yet evincing nonetheless contemporary English Protestant attitudes towards Rome. The Catholic Emancipation of 1829, as well as rising Irish immigration, brought about a resurgence in the 1830s of what G. F. A. Best has labeled "Popular Protestantism," with its cries of "No popery" and time-honored suspicions of priest, confessional, and convent. Best describes nineteenth-century Protestant anti-sacerdotalism as an interwoven

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set of theological, political, moral, and sexual attitudes and beliefs. Cartoons, pamphlets, sermons, speeches, and novels expressed and shaped this popular ideology through what had come to be conventional characters, imagery, and plots. Undeniably, Trollope's *The Abbess* takes part in this cultural work of shoring up the identity of Protestant England. Yet Trollope makes these materials perform other tasks as well. For *The Abbess* tells the story of mothers tutoring daughters into independence and autonomy, intricately and precisely symbolized by and as "Protestantism."

Trollope's use of the gothic and anti-Catholic narrative traditions in *The Abbess* is pervasive.[6] Set in sixteenth-century Italy and England, the novel contains family secrets, murder by poison, kidnapping, mysterious strangers, young women forced into convents against their will, nuns walled up and left to die, daring escapes in disguise, and underground sessions of the Inquisition (complete with masked mutes). The two types of priest portrayed are also traditional to Protestant polemic: the ascetic, cruel, proud, power-hungry fanatic (Isidore) and the wine-guzzling gourmand who keeps a mistress and happily absolves any sin for a price (Father Laurence).

Indeed, the very title of *The Abbess* recalls Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* or Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*. Rather than the powerful males who inhabit these earlier gothic narratives, however, Trollope designates a female authority figure.[7] Like the lascivious priest who commands through the confessional, the Abbess or Mother Superior appears in anti-Catholic literature and pornography[8] as an image for uncontrolled, sexualized authority. Her unchecked female power is portrayed as irrational, sudden, and violent.

The horrified fascination with which Protestants censured and investigated convents in the nineteenth century focused repeatedly on the crimes and cruelties of the Mother Superior. Convents in England did not become an important public issue until the Tractarian revival of sisterhoods in the 1840s and the evangelical organization of deaconesses beginning in the 1860s (Vicinus). However, the immediate condemnation that these institutions provoked suggest the Protestant prejudices that Trollope draws on in 1833.[9] Martha Vicinus has described in detail how both traditional Protestant suspicion of "popish" practices and prevailing gender ideals fostered resistance to women's religious communities in general and to their female governance in particular. Several highly-publicized cases which aired convents' disciplinary problems did little to foster public acceptance. For example, the 1869 *Saurin v. Star and Kennedy* was a sensational trial in which a nun (Sister Mary Scholastica Joseph, the former Mary Saurin) charged her superiors, including the Mother Superior (Sister Mary Joseph or "Mrs. Star"), with assault, imprisonment, libel, and conspiracy. The *Times* argued that the secrets of convent life that had been revealed confirmed that

> a Convent . . . is nothing more or less than so many women, and women are women all over the world. . . . They cannot live together without coming into collision, and without a continual contention as to precedence, command, and submission. . . . Theirs is an infinity of pettiness. ("Great Convent Case," 10 Feb. 1869, 7)

Saurin v. Star and Kennedy also confirmed the prevailing Protestant image of the female Superior as an impulsive and undisciplined authority figure who exercises power arbitrarily and inequitably. Reporting that a Priest had spoken of Mary Saurin as "the saint of the community," the *Times* snickered, "What Mother Superior could bear that!" ("Great Convent Case," 27 Feb. 1869, 9). Framing the problem in national terms, the newspaper report declared

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that for

> women, pent up in a Convent, with only the pettiest domestic incidents to employ their minds upon, and with whom the ideal state is an impossible annihilation of freedom of will and judgment, to remain truthful and natural and just is above or below humanity – at all events, Irish or English humanity. . . . no Mother Superior on English soil can be suffered with impunity to exercise authority as Mrs. Star exercised hers. ("Great Convent Case," 27 Feb. 1869, 9)

In the British imagination, confinement to the supernatural, subhuman existence of convent life is imprisonment in an Italian Gothic plot.

Like the writer for the *Times*, Trollope depicts convent life as an uneventful round of pettiness. Removed from the activities and responsibilities of the outside world, the nuns of Sant' Catherina in Italy succumb to a childish sensationalism, eagerly consuming sweets, gossip, romantic stories, and superstitious tales. However, Trollope's Abbess Geraldine does not conform to the popular Protestant stereotype. Geraldine rules her convent so perfectly that the Pope declares her a potential saint and the most powerful members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy invite her to their councils, yet she is also beloved by the nuns of her convent, her "daughters." Geraldine explains that she has achieved this success precisely by avoiding the supposedly female traits of pettiness and arbitrariness. She is absolutely consistent in her exercise of authority while simultaneously limiting that authority: "It is not strict discipline, which produces rebellion; but the vexatious interference of power, on points where its exertion is unnecessary" (2: 89).

Where did this Abbess learn to rule her "daughters" so moderately? From her English Protestant mother. Hidden in the mother's room or on an isolated woodland bench, mother and daughter secretly studied the Bible together, an activity, Protestant polemicists claim, strictly forbidden to Catholics. As Richard Brodhead, Kate Flint, and Colleen McDannell have shown, in nineteenth-century Anglo-American culture the image of mother and daughter with an open book represents the making of self. Trollope clearly subscribes to this normative view of the mother's loving lessons as the "natural" and non-coercive means of subject formation.

The bench where Geraldine reads with her mother is defined by its difference from the surrounding culture of patriarchal punishment that Trollope represents as native to sixteenth-century Catholic Italy. In *The Abbess*, cruel Catholic fathers, not domineering Mother Superiors, make convents miserable for women. The evil confessor Isidore, who ruled Geraldine's weak father, had plotted to immure the young woman in a convent, eventually poisoning her mother in order to separate the two. This pattern is repeated in the next generation when Geraldine's brother, the vain, self-centered Theodore, Count d'Albano, attempts to force his daughter Juliet to enter the convent. In *The Abbess*, the nun's life represents the Catholic daughter's fate — a radically restricted realm of unthinking obedience to rigid rules, chosen by men for women.

However, Juliet avoids that fate and escapes the continental nun's chronicle because her Abbess turns out to be, not the Catholic bigot that Trollope's young heroine, as well as her readership, expect, but the benevolent Protestant Geraldine. Having learned her Protestant creed of individual conscience and English independent thought from her own mother, Geraldine seeks to teach her niece, whose prior "religious" training has been confined to enforced confession, attendance at chapel, and the mindless repetition of unintelligible prayers. The claim that Catholics are indoctrinated into obedience is basic to Protestant

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polemical literature; in the anti-popery narrative of *The Abbess*, Trollope stresses what such training might mean for females. Her confessor's lessons are supposed to ready Juliet for her father's demand for daughterly self-sacrifice. Yet, Juliet is open to Geraldine's love and learning because, as a valueless daughter, she has received neither ("The Catholic religion, Juliet, what are its doctrines? asks Geraldine.[1] 'Ought I to know all this, my dearest aunt?" wonders the ignorant girl [2: 84]).

If the priest and the father conspire to wield Catholic authority, women work together to create Protestant autonomy. But they do so not through convents, institutions established, according to Trollope, by men to rule women. Rather, Geraldine's instruction of Juliet in Protestantism begins with the designation of a private walkway, open to sight of the sea, as "our school and our temple . . . it is here that I hope to find what will console me for my long fast from the delightful intercourse of unrestrained confidence" (2: 90). In order that they might share this space, Geraldine gives Juliet access to the master-key which opens every door in the convent; "I shall fancy that I can march off whenever I like," Juliet comments (2: 91). This protected female space of freedom recreates, in turn, the hidden places where Geraldine sat secluded with *her* mother, learning to be an English Protestant. Casteras has documented the ambivalence with which the image of the walled convent was depicted in nineteenth-century English art; a typical painting shows "the young woman isolated from the outside world in a religious inner sanctum bordered by a high brick wall that restricts her sphere of action and forcibly closes out all reminders of the past" (172). Trollope revises this image, creating a place of free access and open discussion, where Juliet, who has grown up without parental love, and Geraldine, whose twenty years in the convent have been a time of emotional and psychological isolation, can become as daughter and mother.

But who is the daughter, and who is the mother? At their first meeting, Geraldine addresses Juliet as "my mother" because the younger woman is the Englishwoman's physical reincarnation. Later Geraldine exclaims, "My child! – my mother's child!" (1: 265), identifying Juliet both as her daughter and her self. The intricacy of these female relations point to Trollope's complex models for female education. Although Juliet initially pledges to trust her aunt "as blindly and as securely as an infant trusts to the mother who bears it in her arms" (1: 248), their relationship shifts. By the time Juliet declares her intention to become a Protestant — "Whatever you are – that I would be" – she is not pledging blind submission to the older woman (1: 265). Rather, Juliet's vow echoes Ruth's pledge to Naomi, an oath of loyalty that the daughter-in-love fulfills by protecting and caring for the chosen mother.[10] To be as Geraldine is to become independent, strong, and self-sacrificing. As a daughter, Geraldine braved terrible penances and privations, attempting to protect her mother from Isidore's plots. This heroic daughterly behavior is passed on to Juliet. While Geraldine begins by rescuing her niece, before long it is Juliet who is devising the plans, who three times, through personal bravery, saves the older woman's life, and who engineers the ultimate defeat of Isidore. The last time Juliet risks her own life to rescue Geraldine, she does so by ignoring her aunt's express commands: "Obey me, Juliet!" Geraldine insists twice, to no avail (3: 230). The mother has taught her lesson of autonomy so well that she can no longer command obedience — and it is a good thing, too.

Helen Heineman suggests that the Abbess Geraldine, as heroic rescuer of the young, is a figure for Frances Trollope, savior of her family (*Frances Trollope* 83). However, Susan Kissel has argued that "the structural paradigm" of Frances Trollope's fiction "suggests that the future of civilization rests . . . on the shoulders of bright, *young* women" (153). Kissel

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insists that Trollope's mothers make poor role models for these girls, who are, instead, educationally "nurtured" by their fathers. I maintain that in *The Abbess* and, later, in *Father Eustace* the mother saves her daughter precisely by failing to rule and, thus, allowing the young woman to be strong.

Early in *The Abbess*, Geraldine boasts that she has impersonated a holy Catholic Abbess so perfectly that she has defeated Isidore at his own game: "I am his master. – I have outrun him in his own narrow path" (1: 288). Mimicking "The Abbess" for the fathers' gaze, she subverts their attempts to dictate the image and pattern of her womanhood.[11] But the real triumph is Juliet's. Not only does she thwart Isidore's gothic machinations, she also moves beyond mimesis. Juliet rejects completely the "Catholic" model of womanhood, refusing to take vows and persuading Geraldine to resign as Abbess. Juliet even removes Geraldine from the space of the gothic plot: together, they leave not only the imprisoning convent but Italy altogether.

However, once in England, conventional narratives overtake the two women: the older Geraldine must fade into the novel's background ("honoured, beloved, admired; her life glided on" [3: 343]), and Juliet is absorbed into marriage and motherhood. Having escaped from the gothic into the domestic, Geraldine and Juliet no longer need to create heroically a separate female space and story. The young woman who faced down the Inquisition, who defied and defeated the terrifying Isidore, can only tremble when the evil monk reappears at her son Ferdinand's birthday picnic. Geraldine reassures Juliet that under the protection of English laws they are safe from Isidore. And they are — he has no power to bring them before the Inquisition, to imprison them in a convent, to order their death, or to return them to the gothic narrative of sixteenth-century Italy. Nonetheless, with its happy English ending, Trollope's novel looks forward to the lament that frames George Eliot's *Middlemarch*: in the nineteenth-century, there can be no female epic. The English story of an Abbess and the young woman who succeeds her ends as that of "a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing."

While English law does protect Geraldine and Juliet, Isidore manages to kidnap the young male heir for a time, not in order to poison him or to wall him up (punishments he meted out to women in the past), but to educate him for the priesthood: "I shed no more blood. At the foot of the cross shall this child be reared; and the voice which shall claim the broad lands of Arlborough will be heard from beneath the cowl of a monk" (3: 328). In this switch from Italy of the past to England of the future, from female to male victim, and from physical punishment to internalized discipline, Trollope foreshadows the novel she will write fourteen years later, *Father Eustace*. Nineteenth-century anti-Catholic literature works both sides of this (roughly) Foucauldian cultural divide, alternating between depicting Catholicism as anachronistic in its emphasis on bodily correction and representing Rome as insidious in its manipulation of the disciplinary technologies of the confessional. *The Abbess* and *Father Eustace* do the same, but with the later novel Trollope's emphasis shifts to the psychological dangers of a religious education in obedience.

One reason for Trollope's change of focus in the 1847 novel is the national panic in the 40s over the Oxford Movement. When *Father Eustace* takes up again the topic of female instruction, it does so by way of contrast with what Trollope sees as the failed — indeed, fatal —- system of male education that has infiltrated England. *The Abbess* described women rescuing themselves from male institutions of authority; *Father Eustace* addresses how those patriarchal institutions threaten young men. Pairing an exquisitely-educated English youth with a "self-schooling" young women, Trollope is able in *Father Eustace* to demonstrate the superiority of pedagogical, familial, and narrative structures generated by female autonomy.

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Almost from the start, Keble, Newman, and Pusey, the leaders of the Oxford or Tractarian movement, were figures of controversy — in ecclesiastical and political debate, in the national press, and at Oxford, where Newman, in particular, commanded an unprecedented student following (Chadwick 1: 167–211). The Tractarians' aim was to restore the historical authority of the Church of England. Faced with growing popular sympathy for constitutional reform and with widespread theological and devotional latitudinarianism, they had turned to an intensive rereading of the Church fathers. In the works of these early writers, the Tractarians found warrant for a return to the Church's original unity. Ultimately this reassertion of a primal and primary Church authority, transmitted through apostolic succession, led a number of Oxonians — most notoriously Newman — to submit themselves to papal rule and join the Church of Rome. As Walter Arnstein notes:

> Although individual cases of conversion to Roman Catholicism were not unknown in early nineteenth-century England, it was in the 1840s that a trickle became in the minds of many Englishmen a flood. . . . The significance of the conversion process for Englishmen of the day lay less in the absolute number of the converts than in their intellectual distinction and their social status. (41–42)

Trollope's own connections to the Oxford Movement are indirect, but of interest. Her father and husband had both been fellows of New College. Her son Thomas Adolphus also attended Oxford, studying first at St. Albans under Whately and then at Magdalen, receiving his degree in 1835. An indifferent student, Tom apparently showed little interest in the religious fervor generated by Keble, Newman, and Pusey (Stebbins 43). Frances Trollope's daughter Cecelia, however, did become caught up with the High Church ideals of the Tractarians, writing a novel praising the strict observances of an Oxford-trained cleric, *Chollerton, a Tale of Our Own Times, By a Lady* (1846) (Stebbins 120). Fanny Trollope's memoir of her mother-in-law records Frances's numerous dinner-party discussions of the Tractarian controversy during the 1840s (a period in which she lived in Florence, visiting England periodically), as well as her meetings with Frederick William Faber, who had studied with Newman and converted to Roman Catholicism.

In *Father Eustace* Trollope takes issue not only with the Tractarians' "Romanism," but also with their invocation of what is, for Trollope, an anachronistic patriarchal authority, and she does so by revising, as she did in *The Abbess*, the gothic novel of female victimhood. The popular female novelist assaults the cultural and literary predominance of elite male educational enclaves, which she depicts as secretly submissive to an all-powerful religious despot.

Unlike *The Abbess*, *Father Eustace* is set in contemporary England. Nonetheless, within Trollope's *Tale of the Jesuits*[12] the General of the Society of Jesus, Antonio Scaviatoli, functions as a gothic romancer, plotting the seduction of a beautiful young English heiress (Juliana de Morley, the literary descendant of *The Abbess*'s Juliet d'Albano)[13] by a sensitive, handsome priest in disguise (Edward Stormont a.k.a. Father Eustace). When Juliana's father, Richard de Morley, dies, she follows a conventional gothic path — exploring the family castle that she has inherited from turret to dungeon. But, despite mocking allusions to brides entombed in iron chests and Udolphoean mysteries, "the adventure ended much as all other such adventures in the nineteenth century are likely to end" (1: 328) — with the heroine deploring the horrors and tyrannical cruelties of the benighted past. Trollope's lighthearted dismissal of the castle's terrors seems to signal that her modern text will eschew the gothic's clumsy machinations.

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Yet *Father Eustace* challenges Juliana's easy assumption that horror and tyranny have no place in the enlightened nineteenth century; the plot that entrammels her throughout much of the novel *is* a tale of terror and despotism. What Trollope's at times comic rewriting of the gothic asserts is that such narratives, whatever their subversive subtexts, finally rest on a willing acceptance of patriarchal authority. In *The Abbess*, despite Geraldine's subversive mimicry and the flight that Juliet engineers, the women wind up domesticated Englishwomen reliant upon male rescue. In *Father Eustace*, both archaic patriarchal authority and its gothic narratives are ultimately countered by Trollope's story of female parthenogenesis, creativity, and self-sufficiency.

The novel's departure from the female gothic is signaled by the fact that what Juliana finds when she investigates her castle is not the imprisoned mother figure traditional to the gothic plot (Heller 19–21), but her father's secret Roman Catholic chapel. There, prompted by Father Ambrose's pictures of purgatory, she prays for her parent's soul, and considers conversion to Roman Catholicism.

> Then came the tremendous moment, when that grey-haired old man, whom, from her earliest infancy, she had been used to invest with a halo of mysterious holiness, declared to her, in the most specific terms, that she had the power either to loose or bind the soul of her father upon its passage from earth to heaven. (2: 275–76)

Trollope's language is provocative, indeed blasphemous. The power that her Protestant audience believes belongs to God alone is here imputed to humans, both lay and priestly, to Juliana and Father Ambrose. In referring to "the power either to loose or bind the soul," Trollope cites the text around which Protestant-Catholic debates about purgatory, indulgences, and confession all centered, thus invoking the touchstones of English anti-Catholicism: the corrupt and corrupting confessional, the selling of indulgences, and the idolatry of praying for and *to* the dead (Arnstein, Best, E. R. Norman). Keble and Pusey's reintroduction of auricular confession into the Anglican church had reopened these debates and renewed these fears (Chadwick 1: 503–04). Trollope's Father Ambrose confirms English Protestant fears that such idolatry of the dead consolidates priestly power here on earth: Having dictated De Morley's words during his lifetime, the confessor now speaks with the voice of the dead father, irresistible to the grieving daughter. Father Ambrose is then replaced by Father Eustace, whose intrusion into the castle begins with him literally taking the father's place at the organ, playing a requiem for De Morley. Both men act in obedience to the commands of the novel's central paternal authority, Scaviatoli, a figure linked by Trollope with John Henry Newman.

Scaviatoli's design is for Eustace to win Juliana's love and effect her conversion to Catholicism; the Jesuit General is sure that when Juliana learns, too late, that Edward Stormont is really Father Eustace, her despair will lead her to transfer the De Morley estate to the Society of Jesus and retire to a convent. The holy father's love plot is a perverse variation on the older gothic pattern wherein the young virginal heiress is first seduced/raped by a priest and then robbed of her fortune and imprisoned in a convent.

What makes the father's plot possible is the education of Edward Stormont into Father Eustace — an education in total obedience to a holy father.[14] In Scaviatoli, Trollope raises the specter of Newman as a Roman Catholic teacher who is educating English youth to death.[15] (That Newman was a secret Jesuit was well "known" in the 1830s — even the *Times* reported

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the allegation [Chadwick 1: 177, 196].) Comparing the schooling of two orphaned English boys, Edward Stormont and Oliver Twist, Trollope claims that:

> thanks to the light thrown upon the subject in the exquisite pages of Oliver Twist – few amongst us are ignorant of the careful and skillful system of training, by which a particular class of our metropolitan population are brought to such perfection in the management of their fingers, that their movements are made as imperceptible to feeling as to sight; and in like manner, if the whisperings from behind the veil speak sooth, the COMPANY upon whom more eyes are now fixed than were ever fixed before, not only instruct the young idea, but the young limbs also, how to move onward, with as little disturbance as possible. (1: 234–35)

Behind the Jesuit's infamous "gliding" step, Trollope suggests, lie years of indoctrination in total mind and body control. In the Italy of *The Abbess*, Juliet's religious education is neglected because she is a female. Privileged nineteenth-century English males are less lucky. The Jesuits in *Father Eustace*, educated abroad, infiltrate England, bringing with them an underground educational system, at once a secret training and a training *in* secrecy.

According to Trollope, so complete is the Jesuit remaking of individuals that it amounts to a second, unnatural creation:

> not only are the principles in which the unearthly disciples of Loyola are reared, of so stringent a quality as to impede, and finally destroy, every natural movement of the soul, but they are also made to be, habitually, of such ready application, that no emotion can arise without bringing its antidote with it. (2: 182–83)

Unlike Geraldine, who learned to mimic the forms of Catholicism while retaining her secret Protestant self, Edward internalizes these disciplinary principles. Father Eustace learns an automatic, habitual revulsion from all of Edward Stormont's natural feelings. As his superior says, "education has made him a good Jesuit, though nature fights hard to turn him into a bad one" (3: 95). Scaviatoli knows in advance that Juliana's goodness and beauty will awaken Eustace's ability to love humanly, but counts on the young priest's programmed reaction: "The glance of passion faded into the cold and paralyzing glare of abject, spiritless despair" (2: 178).

The author of this artificial being and the embodiment of Roman Catholic authority is a familiar figure in the literature of anti-Catholicism: an all-powerful father, horrific because of his unlimited and unchecked human authority.[16] For the novel's English Protestant readership, Eustace's pious intonation – "No will but thine – thine Scaviatoli!" — is both a parody of prayer and proof that Catholics practice idolatry (2: 81). The General of the Jesuits has displaced God, both in his own eyes and in those of his Company.

Unquestioning faith in the father demands distrust of the self. "Creeping under the shelter of authority" (1: 261), the infantilized Eustace and his ilk are taught that "the impious efforts of that fallacious earth-born impulse which men call conscience" must be "beaten down and trampled in the dust" (2: 80). What Trollope is attacking here is the doctrine of obedience that the Tractarians found so compelling. In a sermon on the folly of attempting "Knowledge of God's Will without Obedience," Newman condemned those who follow God's commandment merely because they agree with its morality, who fail to realize that they must "obey *because* it commands" (*Sermons* 31). Instead, Newman enjoins in another sermon, "Obedience The Remedy for Religious Perplexity," "To all those who are perplexed in any way soever, who wish for light but cannot find it, one precept must be given, – OBEY. It is obedience which

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brings a man into the right path; it is obedience keeps him there and strengthens him in it. Under all circumstances, whatever be the cause of his distress, – obey" (*Sermons* 135).

Trollope's commitment to liberal Protestant individualism makes her perceive this rule as a death sentence. Taught "to abdicate all individual will, all individual judgment, and to live, think, speak, and act, wholly, solely, and without reservation, according to the judgment and the commands of your superiors" (1: 241), Eustace is only the facsimile of a living English man, "the living image of a helpless bigot, in whom this blind submission had stifled all the energy of moral freedom, and all the individual responsibility of manly honour" (3: 189). The novel returns repeatedly to Ignatius Loyola's injunction: the Jesuit must make his "will 'dead as a corpse,'" (2: 80; 2: 181; 2: 191). *The Spiritual Exercises* are, Trollope argues, a training in self-murder. Unlike Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, Trollope's novel does not finally explain away the dead body behind the clerical veil. Longing for an end to life, the increasingly "deathlike" (3: 242) Eustace makes a last visit to Scaviatoli, whom he has begun to distrust. Eustace's loss of doctrinal foundation is comically literalized when the floor opens beneath him and he falls into an imprisonment where he will "never see the light of day again" (3: 267). He appears again in the novel only to finish dying, prematurely old, at Juliana's feet.

"Why are we not both dead?" Juliana asks Eustace at this last meeting (3: 317). If, for Trollope, Romanist education keeps male youths from becoming men, first infantilizing and, then, effectively killing them, the tradition of the gothic entrammels female characters and creativity, as Trollope argues when she equates deference to the dead father with marrying a corpse and killing yourself. What Juliana learns when she finds out that Edward Stormont is a priest is that she is in love with a dead man, with a (her) father. The Jesuits hope that this will make her give up life too.[17]

So why is Trollope's heroine not dead, or at least dead to the world in a convent at the end of the novel? What causes the father's death plot to fail is the nineteenth-century mother and writer. Within *Father Eustace*, both archaic patriarchal authority and its gothic narratives are contained and countered by Trollope's story of female education. While Eustace's veneration for Scaviatoli is, throughout the novel, compared to the feelings of an unjudging, dependant infant towards his "never-to-be-doubted . . . mother" (1: 272), the *woman* who is a mother in *Father Eustace* resembles the Abbess Geraldine in that she makes no attempt to retain infallibility, to keep her child an infant. The priestly pretense to maternity is a grotesque parody — self-aggrandizing patriarchal power tricked out in the robes of female love and nurturance. The fundamental misogyny of this drag show is revealed in the Jesuits' virulent hatred of Lady Sarah, the ideal Protestant mother who not only fosters her daughter's autonomy, but also submits to being "mothered" by Juliana.

Trollope's fathers may give lessons in death, but her mothers, as we learned in *The Abbess*, give physical, emotional, and moral life. What Lady Sarah's mothering preserves, and what the infallible parental authority of the holy fathers destroys, is the basis of English Protestantism: individual conscience. Juliana de Morley may be, at first, susceptible to the Jesuits' machinations because of her desire to obey the wishes of her own dead Roman Catholic father. Yet since her Protestant mother has educated her in self reliance and private judgment, Juliana can finally reject submission and, with it, spiritual and physical suicide. Immediately following Richard De Morley's death, Lady Sarah makes it clear that Juliana is mistress of both her estate and her self, with "perfect independence as to her own destiny" (2: 264). As Juliana reminds Lady Sarah, she is her mother's companion, not her subordinate. "I will not let you scold me for speaking to you with the freedom of a sister, rather than with

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the deference of a child, for it is you yourself, dearest, who have taught me to love you in both capacities" (3: 205).

Like Geraldine's repeated acceptance of Juliet's guidance in *The Abbess*, Lady Sarah's deference to her daughter is not an example of weakness to be avoided, but the source of the heroine's strength. We can see this dynamic at work in the scenes of Lady Sarah and Juliana reading side-by-side, a further refinement of *The Abbess*'s female spaces of love and learning. Lady Sarah and Juliana each performs an activity iconic of absorption, yet they do so together. That Trollope shows, not the mother reading to the daughter, but two companionate readers, indicates her belief in the younger woman's own self-making. Reading images Juliana's autonomy, as her declaration that the only submission to which we are bound is submission to the will of God makes clear. That divine will is revealed, of course, not in popish priestly commands, but through the individual Protestant's reading of the Bible. It is not surprising, then, that Trollope marks the moment of Juliana's full recovery from her gothic trauma by declaring: "from that time she resumed her constant occupation of the library" (3: 323). Under Roman Catholic rule, this room had been the space of perversion: Richard de Morley hid there from his wife and daughter, prostrating himself in the adjoining secret chapel; Scaviatoli staged clandestine meetings here between Eustace and Juliana, manipulating the unsuspecting couple's overwrought sexual and religious emotions, fashioning their guilt and desire. Juliana reclaims the room as the scene of Protestantism, a space in which she alternates between private reading and shared family prayer.

Trollope represents this Protestant scene as superior to, not only the culture of patriarchal physical punishment native to the sixteenth-century Italy of *The Abbess*, but also to its modern reincarnation in the guise of religious education in obedience. In both instances, Catholicism is seen as violating the integrity of the self. Drawing on her audience's belief that the Protestant's direct relationship with God and private reading of the Bible represent personal freedom from earthly authority.[18] Trollope describes, reassuringly, the subject formation of the English individual. If, as Flint argues, the "spaces" of reading are where "subjectivity and socialization" meet (40, 43), Juliana's control of that space suggests Trollope's belief in her independence and choice.

This vision of *female* individuality, however, may have been less reassuring to Trollope's readership. Finally, Trollope can depict Protestant autonomy as available to women only in an imaginary narrative realm. Before Eustace's revelation, Juliana is "puzzled as to the manner in which she was to bring her little romance to its third volume" (3: 107). Her "self-schooling" finally allows her to author the ending she wants, although not the one she (or Trollope's readership) could have expected. Juliana spends her adulthood benevolently plotting others' happiness. Having helped engineer her mother's remarriage (to the local Protestant minister), she adopts her new stepbrother, re-naming him Julian de Morley (he calls Juliana "Mamma" and Lady Sarah, his biological mother, "Granny"); brings about the marriage of her best friend,[19] who then bears a daughter, Juliana; gives her two namesakes in marriage to one another; and lives to see the birth of their child Julian de Morley. In short, Juliana figures the female writer who engenders her own family. Unlike Geraldine, who subverts through mimesis, or Juliet, who breaks free from the daughter's convent story only to be recaptured by a conventional narrative, Juliana successfully creates a new self and story.

This imaginary ending wherein the daughter successfully authors her own family narrative is particularly poignant if we consider the possibility that Frances Trollope is writing *Father Eustace*, at least in part, to her own daughter, Cecelia, whose Tractarian novel had

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just been published. By 1847, Cecelia was already worn out by childbirth and beginning to show signs of the consumption that killed her two years later. None of Cecelia's five children lived to adulthood (see Heineman, *Frances Trollope* 18–19).

Juliana's final rejection of the gothic and Trollope's revision of it also resonate interestingly with another aspect of the Trollope family's dynamics. After his financial failure, Frances Trollope's husband spent most of his time immersed in writing an ecclesiastical encyclopedia which was to describe "the denominations of every fraternity of monks and every convent of nuns, with all their orders and subdivisions" (A. Trollope 11–12). In his *Autobiography*, Anthony recalled that, despite his father's intense desire to see his sons educated, he "could not give his time to teach me, for every hour that he was not in the fields was devoted to his monks and nuns" (12). Never completed, the project generated no income. In contrast, Frances Trollope's books about "monks and nuns" were written early in the morning before her family arose or while she sat nursing at their sickbeds and earned sufficient money to support them all.

In *Father Eustace*, Frances Trollope, a woman who both mothered and fathered her children by creating fictional families, writes a book in which a young woman devises her own family narrative. In rewriting Scaviatoli's gothic – and in rejecting the Tractarians' invocation of the fathers' history and papal authority – Trollope fashions a new woman's plot, one that, like the "impossible" ending of another famous anti-Catholic novel, Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, overcomes both the narrative structure — and the cultural strictures – that imprison females.

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NOTES

1. For general surveys of nineteenth-century Anglo-American religious fiction, see Franchot, Leavis, Maison, Reynolds, Wolff. More specific studies of individual writers and works are beginning to be done, as suggested by new work presented at the 1998 18th- and 19th-Century Women Writers Conference (e.g., Cronin; Freed; Griffin, "Fathers"; LaMonaca; Melnyk).
2. Heineman, *Mrs. Trollope* 107–09, 230–31. Heineman does praise what she sees as brief bits of realistic character description in *The Abbess* (107–09). In his survey of Victorian religious fiction, Wolff describes *Father Eustace* as "readable" and "arresting as a piece of popular psychology" (40).
3. On anti-Catholicism in nineteenth-century England, see Arnstein, Best, Chadwick, E. R. Norman, Paz, Wolffe. There has been little work on women's anti-Catholicism; Paz argues that, as a political activity, anti-Catholicism was primarily male. Nineteenth-century women were, however, prolific writers of religious novels of all sorts, including anti-Catholic fiction. See Maison and Wolff, which remain the two best surveys of Victorian religious fiction.
4. On anti-Catholicism in the eighteenth-century gothic novel, see Tarr.
5. In both novels under discussion, Trollope makes explicit distinctions between Romanist fanatics who are under the sway of Jesuit or proto-Jesuit confessors, and well-intentioned, if slightly misguided, Catholics who remain part of the general Christian community. On the general distinction made in nineteenth-century England between the newly conspicuous "Roman" Catholic party and the "Old" or "English" Catholics, see Norman (1–28). Frances Eleanor Trollope noted of her mother-in-law that "Mrs. Trollope, in some of her correspondence written at this time [1847], remarks that it is a curious sign of the times, how very large a share High Churchism and Low Churchism have in the differences which divide men into two parties" (2: 84).

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6. Heineman remarks the novel's gothic characteristics.
7. Heineman notes that the young Frances Trollope had read and liked Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (*Mrs. Trollope* 107). The gothic model with which Trollope works in both *The Abbess* and *Father Eustace* is primarily what has come to be called the (Radcliffean) "female" gothic. The literature on power and gender in the gothic is too voluminous to be cited here. In thinking through Trollope's critical revisions of the gothic, I have benefitted much from Heller's work on Wilkie Collins, especially from her observation that the gothic becomes, for Collins, a feminized site of subversion.
8. These are far from mutually exclusive categories. The most famous pornographic depiction of the Mother Superior is Diderot's in *La Religeuse* (pub. 1796), which was quickly translated into English (1797) and widely reprinted. A related figure in polemical Protestant literature is the "Jesuitess," whom Maison describes as "a most unpleasant character, full of hypocrisy and gluttony" (175). Trollope uses a female Jesuit as a minor character in *Father Eustace*. See also the part the Mother Superior plays in nineteenth-century American convent captivity narratives (Franchot 135–61). For a broader discussion of the relations between religion and sexuality in Victorian culture, see Maynard.
9. Through widely-available books like Monk's *Awful Disclosures*, the British reading public was well aware of the spate of American escaped nun stories published in the 1830s. On these narratives, see Franchot and Griffin.
10. The story of Ruth and Naomi has become an important text for feminist study of women's relations. See, for example, Kates and Reimer.
11. On female "mimesis" as a subversive tactic, see Irigaray.
12. On nineteenth-century British depictions of "the wicked Jesuit and Company," see Maison 168–82 and Wolff 27–41.
13. That Trollope is rewriting *The Abbess* is also made clear at the end of *Father Eustace*. In both novels, the priest characters (Isidore and Father Eustace) reappear after years of absence at the birthday picnic of Juliet/Juliana's sons. In addition, Eustace's eventual self-murder through Jesuitical obedience is foreshadowed by Isidore's more direct suicide.
14. Both Heineman and Wolff note the novel's focus on obedience.
15. Newman's (mis)education of young men remained a Protestant concern long after he had left Oxford, as Charles Kingsley's 1864 "What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?" illustrates (Newman, *Apologia* 310–40). Chitty, Maynard, and others have argued convincingly that Kingsley's attack has its roots in his own early attraction to Tractarianism.
16. Depending upon the Protestant author's predilections, this character can be either the Pope or the General of the Society of Jesus (who is then said to secretly control the Pope). In *The Abbess*, the present Pope is Geraldine's friend, a relatively benign and just man; however, Isidore's (thwarted) ambition is to become a Cardinal, presumably as a step towards the Papal throne. In *Father Eustace*, authority rests with Scaviatoli, not the Vatican; the Jesuit General is "unbroken by penance, and unshaken by any terrors of discipline, either of this world or the next; recognising no authority that could make his spirit quail" (1: 162).
17. From the start, Trollope suggests that obedience to the dead father kills daughters: "All that she [Juliana] had not, and could not have felt for her gloomy father during his life, seemed now to swell her heart almost to bursting; and she would gladly have given years of life to have possessed power at that moment to comply with every wish expressed by Father Ambrose in her father's name" (1: 43–44).
18. Of course, given the range of English Protestantisms, not all anti-Catholic texts emphasized individual autonomy. For example, a novel contemporaneous with *Father Eustace*, Sewell's *Hawkstone* (1845), represents the need for a strong paternal authority (albeit a limited one). On the nineteenth-century novel's complicity with the disciplinary forces against which it purports to define itself, see Miller.
19. In this subplot, Trollope also alludes comically to stories of captive nuns. The beautiful but impoverished Fanny Clarence comes to live with her cousin, Adelaide Stansberry, whose Italian heritage has given her a violent temper. Adelaide forces Fanny to "veil" herself (wear a hideous muffler and bonnet at all times), so that she will not attract William Curtis, the man Adelaide plans to

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marry, with the help of the novel's Jesuits. Juliana rescues Fanny from this Italian plot and arranges her marriage to William Curtis.

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