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The Terrors of Everyday Life: The Gothic Novel as a Woman's Conduct Guide to Survival, 1791-1817

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THE TERRORS OF EVERYDAY LIFE:

THE GOTHIC NOVEL AS A WOMAN'S CONDUCT GUIDE TO SURVIVAL, 1791-1817

BY

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This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the master's degree and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree. Acceptance of this does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

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ABSTRACT

THE TERRORS OF EVERYDAY LIFE:

THE GOTHIC NOVEL AS A WOMAN'S CONDUCT GUIDE TO SURVIVAL,

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The Gothic is often associated with the fantastical, with people and events that only take place within our darkest nightmares. In my thesis, I explore how, in the hands of Ann Radcliffe and Jane Austen, the Gothic exposes the hidden dangers of reality perpetuated by conduct literature. Within conduct manuals, thousands of regulations direct women's behaviors and identify the perfect woman as one who exists passively within the safety of the domestic sphere. Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817) engage in subterfuge against eighteenth-century conduct literature and expose the realities of the domestic sphere: it was often not safe, and women's passivity did nothing to rescue them from its tyrannical gatekeepers. Through their heroines' Gothic adventures, Radcliffe and Austen teach their readers that to escape suffocating and dangerous domesticity they must slough off their passivity, enact their sensibility, and actively pursue their desires.

INTRODUCTION

FANTASY VERSUS REALITY: THE BIRTH OF THE FEMALE GOTHIC AND THE LEADING STRINGS OF CONDUCT LITERATURE

Critics who discuss conduct literature in relation to eighteenth-century fiction have focused on the domestic novel, analyzing how these novels perpetuated the ideal image of virtuous femininity that conduct literature emphasized. However, the relationship between conduct literature and other types of novels—the Gothic, for example—has not been explored in depth. Conduct literature represents the public sphere as a threat to women's virtue—or virginity—while offering the domestic sphere as a safe space from public life's dangers. As authors such as Ann Radcliffe and Jane Austen recognized, however, the promised safety of the domestic sphere was often an illusion. Their Gothic novels function as alternatives to conduct books and instead of perpetuating the lie that men and the domestic sphere provide women with safety, Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817) illustrate the audacity of this claim and work as survival guides teaching women how to navigate the dangers of the domestic sphere.

For centuries, conduct authors joined forces to control what women read and what they did in public and in private. This intense concern over women's reading and subsequent growth in knowledge stemmed from fear. Starting in the late seventeenth century, when women turned to print, it became more difficult for men to "control either the reading or writing of women" (Fergus, "Women Readers" 173). According to Jan Fergus, the fear was that women who read the wrong types of books—which often

included fiction by women—would “become sluts,” “run away,” or “fail to find ordinary men—as opposed to men in novels—appealing” (173). These fearful assumptions did not abate over time; in fact, according to Vivien Jones, “[T]he relationship of women and literature was changing so radically by the mid eighteenth century that it promised to undermine men’s and women’s established social roles, and to alter the very basis of accepted gender positions” (Introduction 1). Conduct authors often combatted women’s ascension to knowledge via literature, but they were not the only literary voices during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

While several novelists used their platforms to protest socially enforced and conduct-manual-endorsed protocols upon women, it was women Gothic novelists who consistently fought back. Authors such as Radcliffe, paragon of the Gothic, and Austen, humble novice to the genre, used the hyperbolic Gothic universe to debunk conduct literature’s representation of the domestic sphere as a safe space for women and expose the real domestic dangers many women struggled to survive every day. In disguising their socially unacceptable advice within the pages of a socially acceptable—or, at least, popular—genre, Radcliffe and Austen established an alternative to conduct literature. According to Radcliffe and Austen, conduct literature’s advice encouraged women’s passivity and thereby exposed them to perpetual victimization. Via their Gothic heroines, Radcliffe and Austen showed women how to navigate domestic and public dangers and empowered them to slough off their socially assigned passive roles and pursue their desires outside the domestic sphere.

While terms such as domestic sphere and public and private life come with a myriad of interpretations, my thesis, which concentrates on how conduct literature

interpreted these ideals, centers the domestic sphere on a physical location, one in which woman was supposedly reigning queen while the king was away ruling over non-domestic or public affairs. These public affairs, i.e., business and politics, took men from the private affairs of domesticity, and it was the job of the woman to ensure the private domestic sphere was not infiltrated by sordid public doings once the man returned home after a long, hard day of battling the worldly evils of business and politics. This "perfect" set-up created the domestic sphere as a place of safety for women and men, as long as women performed their domestic roles perfectly and within the confines of socially assigned gender roles and with the help of conduct manuals.

Along with conduct manuals, many other types of manuals and guides found their way into women's lives with promises to make their domestic spheres the envy of their neighbors. Much like modern-day magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*, household manuals like Hannah Woolley's *The Cook's Guide* (1664) and *The Accomplished Ladies Delight* (1720); Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery* (1748); and Elizabeth Raffald's *Experienced English Housekeeper* (1769) concentrated on educating women about the domestic sphere. In teaching women how to manage their socially assigned universes, these manuals assisted women in ordering their domestic spheres, keeping tabs on servants, raising children, and ensuring their husbands had a comfy haven from the outside world.

This was not the only educational literature available to women of the day, however; arguments for women's advanced learning also found a literary foothold. Some essays treated advanced education as a means for becoming a better wife and mother, and some argued, especially for the lower classes, that education offered a safety net when the

domestic sphere failed. In the *Reflection on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (1798), Priscilla Wakefield argues for keeping women's traditional domestic roles yet wants "to enlarge society's recognition of woman beyond the conventional conduct-book ideal of protected wife to include the real circumstances of the widow, the spinster, the impoverished gentlewoman, and the factory hand" (Sutherland 38). Mary Wollstonecraft, in her magnum opus *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), argues for advanced education and increased public and political roles for women. She does declare that in "[c]ontending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue," and that in opening up "political and moral subjects" to women, they would become "properly attentive to their domestic duties" (xxvi, 244). However, while it may seem that Wollstonecraft's arguments, like Wakefield's, do not challenge the domestic sphere's legitimacy and do not auspiciously grow from a desire to see women expand into academic's upper echelons, they, like others before them, used his rhetorical strategy to make women's advanced learning palatable for the audience. Alongside texts such as Anna Maria van Schurmann's *The Learned Maid, or Whether a Maid May Be a Scholar* (1641), Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* 1694), and Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1774), these educational arguments, despite being tied to domesticity, did encourage women to advance their learning to better themselves—even if for the sake of their families and children.

Conduct literature did not encourage advanced education nor the learning of a useful trade but did just as its name suggests: conducted women's lives from their most

public moments to their most private ones. Although conduct books targeting women have a long history stretching back to at least the Middle Ages, they began to gain in popularity in the seventeenth century with Richard Allestree's *The Ladies Calling* (1673) and George Savile, First Marquis of Halifax's *Advice to a Daughter* (1688), then "exploded" on the literary market after 1695 and peaked between 1760 and 1820 (Armstrong 99). Conduct literature did not completely disappear after 1820, however; publishers resurrected conduct literature through various later editions, and Sarah Stickney Ellis's popular *The Women of England* (1839) kept the tradition alive through most of the nineteenth century. Popular authors and their works during conduct literature's reign include Mary Wray's *The Ladies' Library* (1714), Elizabeth Singer Rowe's *Letters Moral and Entertaining, in Prose and Verse* (1728), John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1761), Rev. James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), Rev. John Bennett's *Letters to a Young Lady* (1791), Thomas Gisborne's *An Inquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797), and Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799). All these authors wrote to ensure the proper upholding of the domestic sphere and offer advice on all elements of women's existence, including but not limited to fashion, devotionals, prayer, church attendance, exercise, balls, masquerades, interactions with men, friendship, proper feminine education, and reading.

Due to literature's powers of lifting women from forced ignorance into knowledge and thusly into action, conduct authors dedicated certain mandates to what women should and should not read. The "should" category, significantly smaller than the "should not" category, included the Bible, a few approved poets (varied by conduct

author), plays (only if they did not cause an innocent young lady to blush), history books, botany books, or any other "feminine" science, such as astronomy. Even permission to read devotional texts included several caveats, including the theologian and if the material would challenge established religious tenets or require women's thinking on religious matters.

While much nonfiction writing was considered suspect by conduct writers, nearly all fiction was identified as being off limits. According to conduct authors, dangerous fiction included "romances" and "novels"; however, they did not use these terms with precision. In addition to using them interchangeably, they also used them to refer to multiple genres of fiction that included seventeenth-century French romances (readily available in translation), amatory fiction, scandal fiction, domestic novels, and—of course—Gothic novels. Though conduct writers rarely referred to Gothic literature specifically—most likely including them in the romance category—there is little doubt that the tantalizing, grotesque, and fantastical elements meant to instill horror or terror into readers would have put the Gothic at the top of their literary blacklist. Conduct authors' relative silence over Gothics specifically, however, did not equate to a mutual silence from Gothic novelists. Markman Ellis discusses this as it relates to Radcliffe's fiction which "is embedded in a long-term and significant contestation of the status of women" perpetuated by conduct books (54). By using the Gothic to contest conduct literature's rules and by embracing "traditions of sensibility and sentimentality" Radcliffe and later Austen were able to "discredit societal constructs of women and conduct literature's espousal of the perfect woman" (Hoeveler 3).

Though conduct writers were generally critical of fiction, literary critics have long recognized the ways in which their writing contributed to the development of the novel, most particularly the domestic novel. This subgenre, established with the publication of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* in 1740, generally focuses on a young woman whose long-suffering virtue is rewarded with marriage. Because of their emphasis on expressions of feeling that are sometimes extreme, many domestic novels are often referred to as sentimental novels. Nancy Armstrong and Mary Poovey, in particular, explore the relationship between conduct literature and domestic and sentimental fiction. Armstrong describes conduct literature as a void, empty of any substance about women or the world they lived in (97). Despite this emptiness, conduct manuals' repetitiveness eventually created "a figure of female subjectivity" who "awaited the substance that the novel and its readers … would eventually provide," culminating in a "culture divided into the respective domains of domestic woman and economic man" (97). Poovey seems to agree with Armstrong's assessment that fiction, at least, the eighteenth-century sentimental novel, which was "confined … to domestic affairs and concerns of the heart," perpetuated conduct literature's propaganda and "called attention primarily to women's weaknesses and helped to drive further underground the aggressive … energies that men feared in women" (38). According to Poovey, conduct literature offered "expressions of the implicit values of the culture," which included an emphasis on women's roles as virtuous and self-effacing wives and mothers (16). With domestic and sentimental fiction working in tandem with conduct literature, there was no longer any ambiguity concerning women's ultimate goal: no matter the setting or obstacles placed in their path, they must never veer from their destiny of marriage and domesticity. While it makes sense that the

relationship between domestic fiction and conduct literature intrigues critics, they rarely mention the Gothic's role in supplanting conduct literature's advice even though the Gothic revealed the domestic sphere's dangers instead of its safety.

The first Gothic novel is often identified as Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*, published in 1764. Walpole's novel sparked a sensation which "establish[ed] … the formula of gothic fiction"—often associated with the "'trappings' … of castles, ghosts, corrupt clergy, and so on" (Heiland 4). While Clara Reeve abandoned Walpole's love of the supernatural, she stayed true to the Gothic's blend of ancient tales of woe, violence, and adventure and wrote *The Old English Baron* (1777) with a realistic touch that still told a "story of patriarchy disrupted" (15). It would not be until the 1790s that the Gothic craze started by Walpole would claim a decade. Radcliffe's Gothic novels—which included *The Romance of the Forest*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1796)—entertained readers throughout this decade, making her "the most popular and best paid English novelist of the eighteenth century" (Moers 91). No wonder her works sparked the Gothic imitation in her fellow authors. This is not to say they stole her ideas verbatim. Matthew Lewis, in his Gothic work *The Monk* (1796), a "marginally pornographic romance," does not simply imitate Radcliffe's novels but attains "an actualization of the incipient or imagined horrors of … an Adeline," the heroine of *The Romance of the Forest* (K. F. Ellis 132). In her novels *Cecilia* (1782) and *Camilla* (1796), Radcliffe's contemporary Frances Burney used Gothic elements to "[capture] the anxieties of female adolescence" (30).

The Gothic's popularity soon spread to America and inspired Charles Brockden Brown to write the first American Gothic tale, *Wieland* (1798). If an ocean could not stop

the spread of the Gothic, neither could the flip of the calendar, and as the eighteenth century came to an end, the Gothic began its transition into the nineteenth century. Austen's only Gothic, *Northanger Abbey* (1817), preceded nineteenth-century British Gothics such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847); Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847); Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848); Elizabeth Gaskell's works, including "The Old Nurse's Story" (1852); and Charles Dickens's novels, including *Great Expectations* (1861). American Gothic continued its development with the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, including *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), and Edgar Allan Poe's entire litany of Gothic short stories and poetry.

Since its inception, the Gothic novel has been associated with the idea of transgression. Donna Heiland stipulates that perhaps Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) highlighted the essential theme of the already christened literary genre and argues that just as the Goths invaded Rome, "Gothic fiction at its core is about transgressions of all sorts: across national boundaries, social boundaries, sexual boundaries, the boundaries of one's own identity" (3). The Gothic represented the long eighteenth century's political, social, intellectual, and familial revolutions. As Heiland explains, Gothic novels are particularly concerned with transgressions against "the patriarchal structures that shaped the country's political life and its family life, and gender roles within those structures come in for particular scrutiny" (5). Add on the fact that these transgressions are "often violent and always frightening," and the Gothic creates "fear—fear in the characters represented, fear in the reader" (5).

Both Radcliffe and Austen highlight fearful experiences of women within patriarchal and familial systems that prove unsafe for them. Interestingly, both do so in

part by rejecting the supernatural elements of the Gothic that had been introduced by Walpole and adopted by male writers of the Gothic such as Lewis and Brown. Even though Radcliffe incorporated the supernatural, she became notorious for explaining the unexplainable as she understood that the supernatural was not "a viable way of addressing the social problems in which her novels also deal," so she used "social mechanisms" to reveal that society, not ghosts, haunted women (Heiland 58). While it might seem that Austen mocks Radcliffe's heroines' misplaced belief in the supernatural, she, like Radcliffe, demonstrates how the explained reality behind the ghostly elements wakes the heroine from a superstitious daydream and allows her to concentrate on the malevolent reality before her. Radcliffe's revolutionary Gothic ideas and Austen's repurposing of them revealed the real "ghosts" haunting women.

Radcliffe's efforts in reclaiming and retelling women's experiences in a patriarchal culture where men controlled women's voices in public and mimicked them in fiction helped develop what critics often refer to as the female Gothic. When Ellen Moers coined the phrase "female gothic" in 1976, she encapsulated women's Gothic writings during the eighteenth century; however, defining female Gothic writers was easier than defining the Gothic, which, according to Moers, boils down to writing that "has to do with fear" (90). By capturing women's fears, Radcliffe illustrated the central meaning of the female Gothic: "[W]oman is examined with a woman's eye, woman as girl, as sister, as mother, as self" (109). In addition to expressing women's terrors in women's voices, Radcliffe also created a mold for future female Gothic novels, like *Northanger Abbey*, where "the central figure is a young woman who is simultaneously persecuted victim and courageous heroine" (91). Radcliffe and Austen do not allow society to mistake their

heroines' persecution, however, as these heroines represent the fact that women are persecuted within the domestic sphere as well as outside its sacred walls. To save themselves from persecution, women must escape the "safety" of the domestic sphere by entering the "dangerous" public sphere.

With this epiphany, women were no longer cowed into believing that the noble patriarch assigned to them would or could protect them. According to Hoeveler, this insight contributed to the birth of the female Gothic because "women realized that they had a formidable external enemy—the raving, lustful, greedy patriarch—in addition to their own worst internal enemy, their consciousness of their own sexual difference perceived as a weakness rather than a strength" (10). Despite women's innate need for independence, their perceived sense of weakness, indoctrinated in them from birth, shackled them to passive defense mechanisms. Hoeveler states that "the female gothic novel represented women who ostensibly appear to be conforming to their acceptable roles within the patriarchy but who actually subvert the father's power at every possible occasion and then retreat to studied postures of conformity whenever they risk exposure to public censure" (6). For most women, due to weaker physicality and lack of resources and freedom, when danger arose, their only protection was to plead innocence and placate their oppressor until it was safe to act. Echoing this reality, female Gothics told the same tale of "a blameless heroine triumph[ing] through a variety of passive-aggressive strategies over a male-created system of oppression and corruption" (9).

Critics and scholars have attempted to dissect this salvation through victimization prevalent in most Gothic literature. Hoeveler argues that the female Gothic is "a version of 'victim feminism,' an ideology of women's power through pretended and staged

weakness," and that this "playacting for the benefit of an obsessive and controlling male *gaze*" created an elaborate game that included subversive tactics for survival (7, 4). According to Hoeveler, by including a heroine's stereotypical passive-aggressive behavior, nothing about victim feminism empowers women; instead, a taint overshadows their struggles, labeling them as sneaky instead of savvy; resentful instead of resourceful; passively aggressive instead of actively avenging. This "staging" is reminiscent of the playacting Hoeveler argues women did to escape dangerous situations, resulting in a performance completed on stage for the benefit of the woman or a performance completed because that is what the audience—men—expect, and by playing into their misconceptions of women, the "actress" could escape a stage she never wanted to be on in the first place.

Not all female Gothic authors, however, were "[complicit] with the development of 'victim feminism'" (3). Taking her cue from the stage and mimicking the powerful performances and sensibility of eighteenth-century actress Sarah Siddons, Radcliffe, while not wholly abandoning the victim trope, centered the spotlight on her heroine's strengths instead of her victimhood. Despite Radcliffe's and Austen's heroines being victims, they do not quite fit the victim feminism "notion that women earn their superior social and moral rights in society by positioning themselves as innocent victims of a corrupt tyrant and an oppressive patriarchal society" (2). Adeline, the heroine of *The Romance of The Forest*, does not position herself as a victim; she is one. Instead of using passive-aggressive powerplays, she uses her wits and sensibility to actively escape her predators. Likewise, Catherine, the heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, is also a victim of rumor and manipulation, and like Adeline, Catherine refuses to succumb to corrupt

patriarchy. Radcliffe and Austen empowered their heroines, giving them action and intellect instead of enslaving them to victim feminism.

To understand how Radcliffe and Austen dismantled conduct literature, we need to explore the rules within these manuals. Chapter one will delve into the conduct manuals of Allestree, Gregory, Gisborne, and More. While probably not descriptive of society, these manuals reveal society's fear of women and women's unstructured lives. Their authors structured women's entire days and perpetuated an ideal they wanted to see as reality on the streets as well as the sheets—sheets of paper, that is. Conduct manuals perpetuated the lie that the domestic sphere was the only safe place for women from an evil world and from women's own inherent moral weakness. Often illustrating these concepts with proverbs of "good" and "bad" girls, conduct manuals displayed the knife-edge women walked on every day. If they obeyed conduct literature's tenets, society deemed them as "angels" and rewarded them with marriage. If they disobeyed, society labeled them as "whores," and they deservedly got their comeuppances and eventually died detested old maids.

Chapter two explores how Radcliffe, in *The Romance of the Forest*, proves a formidable foe to these dangerous ideologies and how she uses Adeline to prove the importance of a honed sensibility and to encourage women to exert agency—even when it seems impossible. Through Adeline's adventures and decisions, the reader gets play-by-play instructions on how to escape toxic domesticity, fight for justice, and build a new, safe domestic sphere on her terms.

Chapter three analyzes how a satirical take on the Gothic does not detract from the Gothic's power to expose reality. In Austen's capable hands, *Northanger Abbey*

proves a valuable opponent to the pervasive lies of conduct literature and societal regulations. While her protagonist, Catherine Morland, is not a perfect heroine, her experiences are a perfect portrayal of how women can, if they use their resources, sensibility, and sense, outwit the villain, within or outside the Gothic.

Radcliffe, with her large platform and Gothic prowess, and Austen, with her keen satirical eye, used the Gothic to establish a different brand of conduct literature, one that empowered instead of silenced women, encouraged activity versus passivity, and exposed the dangers of the public *and* domestic spheres. No matter how they chose to voice their discontent or to cloak their arguments, Radcliffe and Austen applied a Gothic overlay to realistic dangers to expose conduct literature's lies, illuminate the guilt laid upon women's shoulders, reveal the insidious falsehood of proposed safety in ignorance and the domestic sphere, and advocate for women to use all the tools in their arsenal to escape dangers, both public and private.

CHAPTER ONE

CONDUCT LITERATURE:

A GIRL'S GUIDE TO MARRIAGE, DOMESTICITY, AND "SAFETY"

> [I]n respect of [women's] intellects they are below men; yet sure in the sublimest part of humanity, they are their equals: they have souls of as divine an Original.
>
> Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling*, 1673

Richard Allestree's declaration from 1673 echoes with a hypocrisy that sets the tone for conduct literature for centuries. This offkey ringing sends the message that women, due to their mental weakness, are merely spiritual beings who must look forward to equality in everlasting paradise as they will not attain it bodily on earth. Instead of educating women or giving women independence, autonomy, or agency, society promised protection for women who surrendered their individuality to the protected domestic sphere. Despite the inevitable evolution in social, political, and religious ideologies, these perverse lies were passed down from parents to children, ingraining men with misogynistic views and women with a deplorably low sense of self-worth, creating the perfect concoction for domestic abuse. Even though conduct authors admitted to the potential of domestic violence, they downplayed its seriousness and blamed it on women. Despite the existence of such violence, they still propagated the myth that the domestic sphere and men would protect women, a dangerous message that Ann Radcliffe and Jane Austen refute in *Romance of the Forest* and *Northanger Abbey*.

There are different interpretations of conduct literature's role in late-seventeenth and early eighteenth-century society, and although conduct manuals did come to repress

women, they did not originate from a need to curtail their every move. Nancy Armstrong argues that conduct literature's infamous impact upon eighteenth-century to modern-day women started with the late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century politics of Elizabeth I and James I. Both voiced concern over the mixing of the classes and attempted to keep the populace visibly separate so the aristocracy wouldn't accidently rub elbows—or more intimate body parts—with someone not in a purebred bloodline. For political reasons, James I encouraged a migration of formally aristocratic beings into the wilds of the country (Armstrong 109).

Conduct literature spread this propaganda, and while men found their former "lavish displays" trimmed down to the "frugal and private practices of the modern gentleman," women had to balance two worlds (Armstrong 109). On one hand, tradition had instilled in them certain "rules for displaying" their "aristocratic bod[ies]," while on the other hand, they had to blindly grope for the right rules dictating their "practice of hospitality in the countryside" (109). Conduct literature served as a beacon to guide women into the right behaviors; however, this beacon lost its assumed beneficence and soon "denigrated the ornamental body of the aristocrat to exalt the retiring and yet ever vigilant domestic woman" (109). This denigration did not stop at stripping women of their ornaments or baubles; instead, it "hollow[ed] out the material body of the female" until it was empty enough to fill with whatever "gender-based self or psychology" men and society thought necessary (109). The manifest destiny of conduct literature was twofold: to teach women the proper way to regulate themselves and their domestic space and to do it for the benefit of the men within. Oddly enough, people from all walks of life, political groups, and Christian doctrines thought this devolution of women a thing of

beauty, and over time, individuals would stamp this shared foundation with their own mark.

While in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries preserving class distinctions and securing patriarchal control over women gave rise to conduct literature, the eighteenth century witnessed an explosion of conduct manuals designed to sustain "normalcy" and stave off messy revolutions. Lucy Morrison investigates the connections between the political upheavals—foreign and domestic—of the long eighteenth century and conduct literature's attempts to secure normalcy. With the French aristocracy overrun by "unruly" French citizens as a result of the revolution of 1789, England feared the same fate and, instead of embracing the individual personalities of its people, structured their public and private lives in such a way as to crush any buds of rising anarchy. Morrison explains, "In most conduct books written during Britain's war with France, the authors lend their arguments authority through reference to the revolution there, which they necessarily denounce" (205). While this fear may be understandable at the outset, a closer examination of this thinking reveals the insidious consequence. According to Morrison, "despite the French Revolution's demand for liberty, equality, and fraternity, English society, perpetuating tradition, continued to view women as second-class citizens" (205).

Oddly enough, women conduct authors helped perpetuate this ideology. More encouraged her contemporaries to "remember their traditional positioning," in order to stave off "the most tremendous confederacies against religion and order, and governments, which the world ever saw" (205). So in a plea for God and country and in terror of the "disruption of societal conventions witnessed in France," British women's lives were conducted to ensure the health of an entire nation (205). In securing women in

their domestic sphere, society considered they had achieved "[a woman's] own good, the good of her family, and the good of society and the nation" (211). Women's infractions against this moral code were frequently represented as destructive to all. More was not alone in her fears over the horrid consequences of women's misbehaviors, but as I cannot include discussions of the dozens upon dozens of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conduct manuals, I will concentrate on Allestree's, Gregory's, and Gisborne's thoughts on the domestication of women and the safety of the domestic sphere.

While much of the subject matter within conduct manuals placed the onus of women's failings upon their weakness of mind and body, most conduct authors agreed that sensibility in a woman was an innate and positive attribute—if governed well. Gisborne places sensibility among other angelic traits such as "modesty" and "delicacy," and urges his readers to look "[t]o the sister, to the daughter, to the wife" to find "these endowments" that "form the glory of the female sex" (23). However, within the space of several pages, Gregory reneges on his compliment, and while he maintains his initial argument that "acute sensibility" is "peculiar to women" and that it is "singularly engaging and amiable," sensibility becomes a "disadvantag[e]" when not saved from women's natural inclination for "sudden excesses … suspicion[s], fretfulness, and groundless discontent" (34). Like Gisborne, Bennett brings a supposedly positive womanly attribute under suspicion and argues that "[n]othing certainly can be more nauseous and disgusting, than an *affected* sensibility, as nothing is more charming than the pure and genuine (211). He then calls into question the sensibility of any woman who dares enjoy the "turbid pleasures of midnight to opening buds and blossoms … to undisturbed contemplation, to the raptures of devotion," and casts a shadow of doubt over

any woman who wishes to "leave the charms, the cries, the wants and tender pleadings of an infant offspring, for the vain and perishable splendour of a ball" (211). As with the rest of conduct literature's mandates, the jury judging women's behavior and doling out praise or condemnation is, of course, not women, but men. Sensibility was, like other positive attributes, assigned to women and then stripped away if they failed to perform to society's standards of behavior in private and public settings.

No matter the variety of arguments, conduct texts shared the goal of maintaining the gender ideology which gave men free reign to engage with and in public life, both social and business, while women were perpetually kept in subordinate passivity. The need to establish "'natural' gender difference[s] with definitions of 'proper' or 'suitable' behavior" fed conduct authors' need to "conceptualize and interpret female behavior as [a] predictor of social behavior" (Sutherland 26). Due to fear over what the "irresponsible, the overrefined, the ungoverned, the under- or over-educated" could do to a society, conduct authors assigned these awful traits to women and systematically, through their advice, "exorcised" these behaviors (26). Despite the constant push to keep women from exploring carte blanche within the public sphere, women could and often did interact and mingle within the public sphere but only under the direct supervision of men or guardians; this way, they never truly left the domestic sphere as it came with them. Like a guided tour through a museum, women could only look, touch, and interact with acceptable objects and with express permission from another. The reason, of course, was to keep women safe from miscreants and their own naivety. The consequences of their failure to uphold propriety were too great a risk, so society sold the domestic sphere as the ultimate haven for women. Away from the prying eyes of strangers and under the

direct supervision—"protection"—of husbands or male superiors, women were finally safe from a very big, very bad world.

This protection was not free, however, and women had to uphold their end of the bargain: they must not, under any circumstances, lose their virtue. Virtue, as eighteenth-century society saw it, meant more than general morality. Women who were virtuous "abstain[ed] from immoral sexual activity" or were "chaste/virginal" ("Virtuous"). Unvirtuous women, therefore, were a nonentity, and at the first whiff of scandal—real or imagined—women were no longer qualified for the sacred sphere or, worse, were ousted from it. Allestree argued that a woman without virtue was not capable of becoming anything but a "prostitute woman" (1.1.20). He warns readers that "the deplorable state of those who have abandoned their Vertu" will end only with a "dreadful," "deform'd soul, spoild of its innocence" (1.1.21-22). It is this tarnished virtue which soils women, reducing them to nothing more than the dirt they rolled around in, dirt, according to Allestree, unable to grow anything good or beautiful. He states, "They are miserable Trophies to Beauty that must be built on the ruins of Vertu and Honor" (1.1.19). Therefore, without virtue as the backbone of women's character, nothing good could attach itself to them, and it mattered not how they lost their virtue or to what extent; all that mattered was the appearance of their virtue.

Conduct literature perpetuated the idea that appearances were everything, and society often considered the appearance of virtue more important than the actions done by or to women. Women's violated bodies did not matter; the violation of society's impression of their bodies did. However, in a society that thought women's corporal bodies did not exist, and if they did, existed only for another's pleasure or the procreation

of children, women's "demand[s] … to be seen as sexual subjects rather than as sexual objects" fell on deaf ears (Caine 43). As objects, women had no choice but to look and act how society expected them to. The first missteps to losing virtue included violating codes of modesty, which enacted a sort of devolution where women stopped being women and morphed into "Brutes" and "Monster[s]" (Allestree 1.1.15). So concerned for the "forwardest of [women]," Allestree scolds them for not adhering to strict modest codes and lays the following blame and curse on them: "Certainly such are the Horrors and Shames that precede those first Guilts, that [women] must commit a rape upon themselves (force their own reluctancies and aversions) before they can become willing prostitutes to others" (1.1.15). All it took for "willing" women to ruin themselves was a split-second decision to abandon modesty and dare to send a flirtatious glance or walk with a little more sway, "invit[ing] … the Assault" to come (1.1.16).

Believing women prone to sexual deviance, Allestree tells women they are their own worst enemies as they fail to protect their moral virtue from their immoral nature and, therefore, should be thankful that God granted them fences keeping them safe. He argues in the preface that "God … fenced [women] in" to keep them safe from "those wilder excursions, for which the customary liberties of the other Sex afford a more open way. … [Women] have so many advantages towards Vertu, that … Christian women have now reason … to thank God that he made them women, and not men." Of course, women's talents in virtue do not come from their ability to school their passions and think like rational beings. According to Allestree, women could attain virtuous status within the domestic sphere only under the guidance of a man. According to conduct

authors, without marriage, women were nothing. With marriage, they could attain a sort of perfection on earth.

Conduct writers played upon women's fears to convince them to marry, and this included convincing them that, for women, the ultimate curse was spinsterhood. These writers helped spread the notion that unmarried women were a curse to themselves and to society. Gregory makes it clear to his daughters that on top of "attain[ing] a superior degree of happiness in a married state, to what you can possibly find in any other," marriage will save them from becoming "old maid[s]" (105). This salvation will stave off several sins, including a "forlorn and unprotected state" and "the chagrin and peevishness which are apt to infect [old maids'] tempers," turning them into "propagators of scandal and defamation" and making it difficult for them to "transition with dignity and chearfulness … into the calm, silent, unnoticed retreat of declining years" (106). Gregory continues to convince young ladies to shun old maid status, foretelling a bitter future of degradation, dissipation, and "expos[ure] … to the ridicule of girls, who might have been their grandchildren" and bitterness of neighbors exhausted by "impertinent intrusions into their private affairs" (106-7).

These spinster sins, of course, arise from the lack of the domestic sphere's requisite male and subsequent children, which would have filled her days with purpose. Without this reign on the "exuberant activity of spirit," women who should have "found employment at home," are doomed to a woeful future; a sad fate, indeed, when accepting the harness of domesticity "would have rendered [spinsters] respectable and useful member[s] of society" (107). Only marriage could give women respectability and worthiness, and Gregory reminds his daughters that "a married state … will be the

happiest for yourselves, make you most respectable in the eyes of the world, and the most useful member of society" (109). While he adds the caveat that his daughters should marry for love and not give up their independence "to become the slaves of a fool or a tyrant's caprice," he soon reminds them of "the many inconveniences attending the state of an old maid" (110, 116). While Gregory stipulates the importance and necessity of the married state, he does not necessarily discuss spinsterhood's evil roots nor offer a remedy for such spinsterly ills.

His predecessor, Allestree, however, had laid the foundation for the awful fate of spinsters one hundred years before and argued that the primary danger in spinsterhood is that it leaves women without masters and women cannot master themselves. In discussing women, "who are kept in [an old Maid state] against their wills," Allestree does not attempt to change society's mind that "[a]n old Maid is … thought such a curse as no Poetic fury can exceed, look'd on as the most calamitous Creature in nature" (2.1.3). For those women unfortunate enough to lose their husbands and become, in a sense, their own masters, they have much to bemoan, as "God sets not the same valu upon their being masterless" and, therefore, "[God] reckons them most miserable, when they are most at liberty" (1.2.32). The danger of masterless women stems from the belief that God, knowing that women "are not very apt to submit to … Authority," "placed [women] in a degree of inferiority to the other" (1.2.40). Thusly, virgins answered to their fathers, wives to their husbands, leaving the widows—and those who never married—without a master. He argues that women who fight the idea of answering to a master and who think "meekness and submission as a silly sheepish quality," are "wofully mistaken" and only "seeking to pull themselves from the Sphere where the divine Wisdom hath

placed them," "render[ing] them less acceptable to others" and becoming "a plague to [their] relatives, and a derision to strangers … and a torment to [themselves]" (1.2.41). Clearly, having no master is the start of a vicious chain of events which will culminate in the destruction of women. Allestree, in his beneficence, does not leave his women readers wallowing in desperation; he has a cure for the missing master ailment.

His antidote to masterlessness and the evils of not submitting to a husband is attainable by those willing to submit their will. After declaring that women are notorious for unwillingly giving up their individuality to enter proper submission, he builds his argument that women "should be very industrious to wipe off" their "unruly Wills" and claims that a "governable Will" is the only thing that leads to "Happiness" and "Vertu" (1.2.36-37). Allestree's use of virtue here places women's succumbing to authority and displaying no will of their own on the same plain as their sexual purity. Just like a woman without virtue is hopeless so is a woman who refuses to forfeit her will; both have no hope for marriage and will suffer the Old Maid Curse. This stubbornness, of course, stems from a deeper sinfulness within women, and according to Allestree, since women lack Reason and naturally slough off "just Authority," their "passions … ought to be the more strictly guarded and kept under the sever discipline of Reason" (1.2.40). If due diligence is not done to keep women in check, they will bring doom to all. This dangerous ideology continually set women in passive roles, not only in society but also in their own minds. If they could not trust their own reason, if God had indeed placed men over women to protect them from themselves, if they could not enact their own will to save themselves or bring their futures into fruition, then women must seek men's

guidance and protection. Women's only option was to forfeit their wills and choose the yoke of safe domesticity.

While they taught women to fear spinsterhood, conduct authors also, though less explicitly, played upon their fears of rape. Kate Ferguson Ellis discusses the probable explanation for society's belief that "home [was] a safe refuge" for women and sets the scene, both rural and urban, as one filled with dangers (xi). With working-class women leaving the safety of their domiciles in response to the increasing demand for a "waged labor force," they were "particularly vulnerable to assault and rape" (xi). In tandem with this truth, Clara Tuite argues that patriarchal propaganda used this harsh reality to scare women back into their domestic spheres. Tuite states that "the myth that women are raped only by strangers or deviants emerged precisely at this time, to warn women against the dangers of straying outside their proper place in the home" (127). As evil does not follow class lines, middle-class and upper-class women were not spared, and Parliament, in 1753, passed the Hardwicke Act in response to men "rap[ing] … rich heiresses as a way of forcing them into marriage" (K. F. Ellis xi). As altruistic as this may sound, the main concern of members of Parliament seemed to be the monetary side effects rather than the psychological and physical wounds and subsequent scars of the victimized women. Ellis points out that the law, passed "for the better preventing of clandestine marriages," seemed to fear the rapist "gaining control over [the woman's] fortunes and family connections" (xi).

What is more troubling, however, is that even when women did accuse men of rape, the odds were stacked against them. If not stymied by the consensus that women were "responsible for illicit sexual activity," which "implicated women in the very acts

about which they complained," women were hampered with the onus of providing proof that was often "exceedingly difficult to produce to the satisfaction of judges and juries" (Walker 116). Add the fact that "women, and their chastity, were viewed as male property and "it is no wonder that "gentlemen rapists … were rarely punished" (117, 124). Garthine Walker studied samples of rape reports from newspapers in 1730 and came to the startling statistic that out of twenty-eight men accused of rape, ten went to trial, and nine of them were acquitted (123). These glaring deformities of justice prove Walker's argument that these reports do not reveal the whole story. Even though society's misogynistic beliefs led to horrible miscarriages of justice, these prejudices had already worked in the background, "preventing most rapes from ever reaching the courtroom" (140). By acquitting men of rape or denying women their day in court, society had failed to denounce rape for the evil crime it was—and is.

With little to no guarantee of justice, it became women's job to fend off such attacks, and the obvious answer—at least, for conduct authors—was to shield themselves from the pleasures of society that could accidentally exacerbate women's inability to school their desires. For this reason, even innocent pleasures were suspect and layered with so many caveats that women who still dared to find pleasure were looked at askance. Fordyce insists, "The love of promiscuous amusement, how innocent it may often seem, and sometimes be, ensnares multitudes of your sex" (3.47). Fordyce predicts that women, who first take to these amusements with "sprightliness and simplicity" and who "often blush, for fear of having offended," will set their curiosity ablaze, ending in a conflagration of sin and "debauched" minds (3.48). Gisborne agrees with Fordyce's assessment and specifically criticizes masquerades as "pernicious" and "surpassing [all

other entertainment] in encouraging evil," because of "[t]heir dangerous tendency" and "the state of concealment under which the individuals present keep themselves" (151).

Ironically, women were probably safer at a public masquerade with a male stranger than in their private homes with a male relative. While the illusion of a sacred circle promised protection to all within its boundaries, reality reveals the sleight of hand society used to trick women into believing the domestic sphere their only safe option. The worldly ills conduct literature attempted to eradicate from women's lives by insulating them from the world were present within the domestic sphere. Once inside the "safe" walls of the domestic sphere, women often found not their promised protector but their master and, at times, their subjugator, abuser, and even rapist. One can hardly be surprised by this, as it would take a Herculean effort for men to believe in their superiority over women in the public sphere and not take that mindset home. Kate Ferguson Ellis claims that "as long as those standards [of her 'community'] encode a patriarchal view of women as the 'weaker sex,' unable to resist 'temptation' when they are not themselves instigators of it, women will not be safe from abuses of male power" (5). The safe domestic sphere, originally created to keep women away the public "danger[s] … from a man-made world of agricultural and industrial improvements," could not save them from private danger (8). According to Ellis, "[W]ith the home increasingly viewed as a private place where people could do as they wished without interference, the middle-class woman was not necessarily safe from male anger, and with her resources legally belonging to her husband she was not in a strong bargaining position" (9).

Sadly, nothing protected women—even married women—from violence. Kate Ferguson Ellis argues that a woman "was still a possible outlet for male frustration from which 'the home' could not adequately protect her," and while the idyllic domestic sphere "theoretically protected a woman in it from arbitrary male control," it "gave her little real protection against male anger (xi). But after saying "I do," the damage had been done, and as the woman had signed her life away to her husband, believing absolute obedience necessary, she was now "powerless to rid the home of the always already present danger of unchecked male power" (38). Ironically, obedience did nothing to save women from marital abuse. In fact, society condoned "moderate physical correction of wives, children, servants or apprentices," and "justicing manuals stated a charge of assault and battery would *not* be sustained in the case of … a husband [chastising] his wife 'in a reasonable and proper manner'" (G. Smith 32; emphasis mine). The severity of the chastisement and what was considered reasonable was clearly in the eye of the abuser and the law but never women. In 1790, Sir William Scott, after overseeing a domestic violence case, "left room in the marriage home for 'occasional sallies of passion, if they do not threaten bodily harm'" (32). Again, this ambiguity in the language of the law gave women no protection as their definitions of such passions were rarely asked for.

In some tragic cases, women were raped by their husbands. Unlike physical violence, which was not necessarily contained to a bedroom's privacy, rape was a silent malfeasance. Due to the shame that accompanied sexual abuse and rape, the fact that "there was no legal concept of marital rape," and that it was "unquestionably impolite for women to talk about sex, even when they had been harmed by its practice," eighteenth-century women rarely exposed the sins committed against them (Foyster 410). According

to Elizabeth Foyster, instead of voicing the injustice, women used hysteria as a "vehicle of expression after sexual abuse" (410). While this might have been a "means of bringing sexual abuse into the open," women's hysteria did not, in fact, protect them, and more often than not, "men dismissed fits of hysterics as nothing but 'affectation'" and conjured up unwelcome and dangerous insinuations of insanity (412-13). This is just additional proof that women, whether they voiced their injustices or were silenced by guilt, society, or charges of insanity, were as powerless within their domestic spheres as they were outside of them.

While the exact number of injustices of physical and sexual abuse is not known, marital violence regularly occurred. How regularly women sought justice is hard for historians to pin down as political, social, and economic reasons often hampered/ended their quests. This is not to say that marital abuses never came to court; however, to skip the long wait and expense of ecclesiastical courts or courts of quarter sessions, women took their cases to their local justices of the peace. These cases came up at least three times a week, and while London is not indicative of all England, this proves that women were abused and that some did seek reparations (G. Smith 34). Oddly enough, even as eighteenth-century society came to follow the tenets of sensibility, which made outward violence detestable in men, it did nothing to alleviate violence in private. Sadly, the "codes of politeness and sensibility, which … prized self-control" and "refined deportment and humane behaviour towards the weak" failed to protect victims; instead, it shoved the monstrosity away from public eyes (Bailey 275). Robert Shoemaker, in a study of homicides in London, found that violent deaths did not decrease as the eighteenth century moved along; they simply went indoors. By the end of the eighteenth

century, "wife beating ending in death made up an increasing proportion of reported homicides" (275). While an untold number of women met their fatal ends at their husbands' hands, hundreds if not thousands of women survived what Joanne Bailey calls "marital violence" or "wife beating" (277). [1] Out of approximately 600 court cases, Bailey handpicked 172 in order to configure a marital violence map of sorts; she even includes wife murder, as "'the investigation of domestic homicide is the best way of obtaining solid evidence about violence within the family" (279-80). It is within this dark spectrum of violence that she meets poor Mary Ray, who days before her husband killed her in 1734, admitted to a neighbor that "'she dy'd by Inches" at his hands (280). This sad testimony uncovers the insidious truth about marital violence: it does not have to kill to destroy.

Conduct writers emphasized the dangers unleashed access to public life posed to women, dangers so indisputable that Fordyce did not refute the fact that women needed weapons in the first place. However, the quintessential weapon Fordyce and others like him gave their women readers was the very thing that threatened them: men. Fordyce has much to say on the subject, but his statement that "the Almighty has thrown you upon the protection of our sex" sums up his ideas well (1.4). In recognizing the dangers of the world, Fordyce, instead of holding men accountable, puts the onus of the problem on women. The solution? Women must flee from the world and seek safety in "domestic, elegant, and intellectual accomplishment" (4.50). He argues that "[a virtuous woman's]

[1] Bailey refrains from using the phrase domestic violence for several reasons. One, this phrase is "anachronistic" to the eighteenth century and would not have been used to describe such violence. Two, "husbands' violence against wives was not solely home-based, and when it was located in the couple's dwelling it is unwise to view this space as purely domestic and private." Three, in eighteenth-century society, "'the distinction between the private and the public did not correspond to the distinction between home and not-home" (277).

walks are not in those places of public entertainment. … She loves the shade. There she finds herself most secure from the blights of calumny, and the heats of temptation" (11.87). Probably knowing the fate awaiting many young women, Fordyce gives them one more option when the safety purportedly offered by men and the domestic sphere fails: he promises that if they "pray hard enough for protection" and "perceive [their] own imbecility," God will be happy to assist them (9.50). This invocation of a higher power proves that Fordyce believed the world a dangerous place for women; however, his solution offers no real protection for women. No matter how much women hid from the world, no matter how many virtuous friends they surrounded themselves with, no matter how much they prayed, no matter how accomplished they became, no matter how ignorant of the evils of the world they pretended to be, danger often found them.

Even though conduct authors assert that the domestic sphere—which by extension includes the relationships connected to it—represents the only safe space for women, these writers knew well the dangers of this sphere and even admit to at times; however, they place the blame on women's "faulty" behavior. Fordyce, for example, blames wives when their husbands go rogue. If Fordyce had been a marriage counselor, he surely would have sided with the husband every time, as he believed that brutish men are only brutish because of women. He argues that many "men … would have turned out better, had they met with discreet and obliging women" and that "multitudes have been lost by the inattention and neglect, as well as not a few by the impertinence and perverseness of their wives" (14.133). He reasons that husbands would not have endangered the domestic sphere if their wives had behaved "with a more respectful observance" and "stud[ied] their humours, overlook[ed] their mistakes, submitt[ed] to their opinions, … [given] soft

answers to hasty words, complain[ed] as seldom as possible, and [made] it [their] daily care to relieve [the husbands'] anxieties" (14.133). Women only have themselves "to blame" if their house is not an "abode of domestic bliss" (14.133). Women constantly gauging their husbands' temperaments to escape their ire does not paint a picture of "domestic bliss." And when this bliss blows up, who is left holding the pieces of shattered safety? Women, of course.

Gisborne, Fordyce's contemporary, agrees that women are to blame if their husbands' behavior proves less than ideal. He writes, "Heaven has not left the wife destitute or neglected. Security is provided for her in various ways against an arbitrary and tyrannical exercise of power … of the husband. Some limitations to which his authority is subjected have already been noticed. These, if he deserve the name of Christian, he well knows" (244). If this does not work out and the vicious husband does not give two farthings about the all-seeing eye of God, Gisborne declares the wife must be held responsible: "If a woman marry a person without sufficient reason to be satisfied, from actual knowledge of his character, that the commands of the Scriptures will decide his general conduct, the fault is surely her own" (245). Because conduct literature led women to believe that any fall from grace—from either sex—was their fault, conduct authors were able to abandon women, leaving them holding the wreckage when their worlds fell apart and burdening them with the guilt of all.

Allestree, instead of addressing the miscarriages of justice within the domestic sphere, teaches his readers a basic survival tactic when husbands prove tyrannical or unfaithful: activate men's pity. Instead of encouraging women to address the infidelity or abuse head on or express how they feel, he reminds them that they are "[impotent] to

govern" men's "Wrath and Anger, Malice and Revenge" and instead encourages them to engage in "a patient Submission" (2.2.25). He scolds women who "pursue their husbands with virulencies and reproches" (2.2.26). The magic behind this advice, at least according to Allestree, lies in men's natural tendency to pity worthy victims. He states, "[F]or where men have not wholly put off Humanity, there is a native compassion to a meek sufferer. We have naturally some regret to see a Lamb under the knife; whereas the impatient roaring of a Swine diverts our pitty" (2.2.27). This disturbing comparison between a meek wife who deserves pity and mercy and a scolding wife who fights her husband's cruelty and deserves no mercy exemplifies conduct writers' disempowerment of women. Even when they did everything right, they were still at fault.

In fact, according to Allestree, a husband who *unjustly* suspects his wife of extra-marital affairs and abuses her with "causeless jealousies" is perfectly within his God-given rights. Allestree calls on a wife who has been accused in this way to "examin strictly what she has don to provoke so severe a scourge" and asserts that if she is innocent of any sin against her husband, is probably guilty of "many Disloialties to her God" and should therefore accept her husband's ire and abuse as "the punishment of her iniquity" (2.2.27-28). With this edict, not only is the wife labeled a victim of her husband, but she is also God's victim, and for both, she should be thankful because it is her victimhood which will save her in the end. Allestree elucidates on this and argues that if a woman "consider[s] how painful a passion Jealousy is, her husband will more need her pitty, who tho he be unjust to her, is yet cruel to himself … so should the wife … [deny] herself even the most innocent liberties, if she see they dissatisfy him" (2.2.29). Here lies the problem with the "safety of the domestic sphere" propaganda pushed by conduct

authors: the domestic sphere is no safer for women than the public sphere and in many instances proves more dangerous.

As with all propaganda, however, there are those who blindly follow the script, those who ignore it, and those who challenge it. The number of conduct books sold does not equate to the number of women who bought into their content. While conduct literature attempted to rule the lives of women, we cannot assume it was always successful in this endeavor. In fact, there is danger in lumping all historical readers into a "single implied reader" (Jones, "Seductions of Conduct" 112). By not taking into consideration that conduct literature's contemporary readers may have disagreed with conduct literature's advice, modern readers and critics retroactively strip women of individuality and assign all to a homogenous group of readers who didn't or couldn't think for themselves, which is exactly what conduct literature authors thought of women.

While we will never know the number of everyday women who did not buy into everything within these manuals, there are several women who raised their voices against society's sanctions and published the truth about the domestic sphere's "safety." Mary Astell questions the promised blissful married state and asks, "[I]f Marriage be such a blessed State, how comes it … that there are so few happy marriages?" (*Some Reflections Upon Marriage*). She warns women that the "world is not over full of" "very good [men]" and argues for women's education so that women may protect themselves from "Deceivers … whose Character is to *lead captive silly Women*" (*A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* 43, 20). Astell pushes back against the lies of domestic safety and states that, even if the law punished a husband for "depriv[ing] a Wife of Life," "he may … do what is much more grievous to a generous Mind, render Life miserable, for which she has no

Redress, scarce Pity, which is afforded to every other Complainant, it being thought a Wife's Duty to suffer every thing without Complaint" (*Some Reflections Upon Marriage*). Her admission that husbands could harm without impunity—excepting those that made it to court—proves women were powerless within their assigned domestic spheres and that for some the promise of domestic safety was broken.

Astell's contemporaries Lady Mary Chudleigh and Sarah Fyge Egerton also expounded on the dangers within the home. In "To the Ladies" (1710), Chudleigh captures the image of a male tyrannical figure. She asserts, "Wife and servant are the same, / But only differ in the name" (lines 1-2), stating that, after a woman takes her marriage vows, she must "fear her husband as a God: / Him still must serve, him still obey" (16-17). She tells women to "shun, oh! shun that wretched state" (21) and to instead value themselves "and men despise" (23). Egerton also uses poetry as a vehicle to expose the lie of domestic safety and to reveal that men are not held accountable for their abuses. In "The Emulation" (1703), she states, "The Husband with insulting Tyranny / Can have ill Manners justify'd by Law" (lines 8-9) and ends her poetic rallying cry with "And shall these finite Males reverse their Rules, / No, we'll be Wits, and then Men must be Fools" (38-39). Egerton clearly believed that men would not willingly give up their power and encouraged women to use their wits to overthrow these domestic tyrants.

While these women exposed early on the domestic sphere's dangers, it wouldn't be until nearly one hundred years later that Radcliffe and Austen would use the Gothic to create disobedient heroines and dismantle the lie of domesticity's safety. Adhering to advice Egerton gives women writers in her poem "The Liberty" (1703), Radcliffe and Austen took up their "daring Pen[s]" (line 43) and bid Adeline and Catherine,

respectively, to use their wits and “never to the Idol Custom bow” (24). By not bowing to conduct literature’s dictates, both heroines survive dangers—inside and outside the domestic sphere—illustrating that women did not need rules governing their every move. Ironically, they needed the character traits explicitly remonstrated against in conduct manuals. With freedom to act, education to make decisions, and sensibility to perceive, heroines and everyday women alike could free themselves from “Customs scanty Rules” (2) so that they would no longer be “chain’d to the nice Order of [their] Sex” (45). Offering more than mere entertainment, Radcliffe and Austen provided step-by-step guides for their readers on how to release themselves from the dangerous chains of domesticity, the tyrannical men acting as gatekeepers, and the suffocating regulations that came with it all.

CHAPTER TWO

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SPIDEY SENSE: *THE ROMANCE OF THE FOREST* AND THE SUPERPOWER OF SENSIBILITY

By utilizing the Gothic's hyperbolic world, Ann Radcliffe carried on the Gothic's traditions, repurposing them to fight conduct literature's transgressions against women. In a world that insisted women were inferior in mind and deceitful, Radcliffe formulated her pro-woman argument around sensibility, which most agreed was an innate talent in women—again, if governed correctly. When lack of education and freedom kept women encased in the domestic sphere, Radcliffe illustrated through her Gothic worlds, especially *Romance of the Forest*, that women, despite the shackles society and conduct literature placed on them, could use their sensibility to survive—and possibly to escape—the domestic sphere. To achieve this, however, women needed to hone their sensibility to learn how to read a situation, frame their expressions, and elicit the desired response. Women could achieve the autonomy to choose their own destinies if they had the willingness to disobey society's rules. Failure to do so left women as men's automatons. Radcliffe, through Adeline's adventures, sensibility, and disobedience, exposed conduct literature's dangerous mantra that the domestic sphere offered safety for the women confined within its boundaries under a father's or husband's beneficent mastery.

To illuminate the issues plaguing eighteenth-century women, Radcliffe assigned the protagonist role to women of virtue, beauty, and sensibility. In *The Romance of the Forest*, Radcliffe wastes no time in placing her heroine, Adeline, into a threatening environment. When Pierre de la Motte, a fugitive evading angry creditors and Paris

police, first meets Adeline, her kidnappers shove her into his arms. Saved by La Motte and his wife, Adeline and her newfound "family" seek sanctuary in an abandoned abbey. They soon discover a dungeon replete with a skeleton and a dead prisoner's manuscript, which Adeline later learns are her father's. Ignorant of this for the time being, Adeline fills her days with soothing La Motte's frayed nerves, dealing with Madame La Motte's malignant attitude, and singing to nature and petting tame deer. A stranger—to the ladies, at least—shatters this relative peace when Marquis de Montalt arrives at the abbey with a young soldier named Theodore.

The Marquis soon infringes upon more than La Motte's privacy; not knowing that Adeline is his niece, he sets out to woo her. Adeline, also ignorant of her relationship with the Marquis, cringes at his lustful advances all the same, and she rejects him in favor of the handsome Theodore. Unbeknownst to Adeline, the Marquis and La Motte have created secret machinations to enslave Adeline in marriage to the Marquis. Upon learning her fate, Adeline escapes (more than once) Marquis de Montalt; however, after he realizes she is his niece, he demands La Motte kill her (which he refuses to do). After a series of close calls, Adeline finally finds safety in the La Luc family. All the characters' journeys converge at a court trial, where the truth finally comes out: the greedy Marquis killed his brother and left his rotting corpse in the abbey's dungeons, hiring miscreants to kidnap his niece—whom he had never met—and kill her. Unbeknownst to him, instead of killing his niece, his hired thugs had a heart and threw her at La Motte. In the end, Theodore escapes death for treason, La Motte is banished, the Marquis takes his own life, and Adeline creates a domestic sphere on her terms with her chosen lover, Theodore.

Adeline's survival and quest for justice all come down to a special gift often granted to Gothic heroines: sensibility. The concept of sensibility as it developed during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries consisted of three distinct but interrelated elements: sensory perception, emotion, and sympathy. The concept of sensibility, however, did not originate during these centuries. According to Daniel Wickberg, "[T]he term 'sensibility' dates from the fourteenth century," but "the roots of the modern concept of sensibility lie in seventeenth-century British empiricism and sensationalist psychology" (664). A "psychoperceptual scheme" that joined together John Locke's studies in psychology and Isaac Newton's theories on nerves, sensibility "denoted the receptivity of the senses—the material basis of consciousness" (Barker-Benfield, "Sensibility" 102). According to Locke, sensation begins with the organs that pass on the message via the nerves to the brain, which after creating ideas, connects everything together with reflection; to all this he included the idea that "sensation and reflection [were] the sources of consciousness" (102). Newton added to this idea and illustrated the nerves' anatomy by explaining that "the nerves transmitted sense impressions by the vibrations of the 'most subtle spirit,' ether, inhering in all solid bodies" (102). During the eighteenth century, the transmission of sense impressions came to be associated with the capacity to experience emotions, which in turn was associated with the ability to feel sympathy for others.

Because they had a more "highly developed" nerve elasticity and because their "nerves were more delicate than men's," women in particular were associated with sensibility during the eighteenth century (Barker-Benfield, "Sensibility" 102). Even though the psychoperceptual paradigm initially recognized "women's equal mental

development" and added fodder to the seventeenth-century notions that women should be better educated and that because "human selves were made, not born … women could capitalize on the 'potentialities for mankind,'" women's bid for equality did not last long (Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility* xvii). Before women could capitalize on the equality sensibility guaranteed them, society stripped them of this promised potential. However, this did not silence women for long. As women's literacy rates rose and women authors flooded the literary market with their voices, women "[articulated] their sense of real and potential victimization by men" (xix). In reclaiming rights to sensibility, women advertised the benefits a honed sensibility provided when escaping the dangers within and without the domestic sphere.

For Radcliffe, sensibility becomes a survival strategy for women, allowing them to escape sticky situations. In addition to perception, women must change their behavior to match the scenario or mimic an accepted or expected emotion to deflect danger, make an escape, or misdirect the enemy's attention. Radcliffe proves this survival skill's importance when Adeline camouflages her emotions in threatening environments, often deflecting suspicion and, at times, physical assault. Empathy, as well as perception and emotion, contributed to women's abilities to protect themselves. According to eighteenth-century essayist, Nathan Drake, a person "who could feel, with so much sensibility, the sorrows and misfortunes of others, and could pour the plaint of woe with such harmonious skill, was soon himself to be an object of extreme compassion" (N. Smith 578). Adeline's survival—as well as the survival of the people she cares about—depends on her ability to appeal to the sympathy of others and to recognize when such appeals will not work.

Luckily for Adeline, fate gifted her with all three components of sensibility, and through perception, feeling, and empathy, sensibility's powers shine through, illustrating to women that a honed sensibility can—if not rescue them entirely—buy them time to configure an escape route. Step one in building an escape plan is perceiving the environment. Adeline, though offered little choice when her kidnappers thrust her upon La Motte, perceives La Motte the lesser evil—for the present—and begs him for assistance. Not long after the La Mottes take Adeline in, she perceives a new sensation. Unbeknownst to her, Madame La Motte suspects Adeline and La Motte of an illicit affair, which affects how Madame La Motte treats Adeline. Despite Madame La Motte's "mask of kindness," Adeline "without exactly knowing why, felt less at ease and less happy" around her former benefactress, so much so that, even though she didn't understand the subtle shift in Madame La Motte, the woman's "manner … chilled [her] hopes" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 48). Even though Adeline could not decipher this change, she perceived she could no longer confide in her former friend, which saves her in the end from making Madame La Motte a confidante. In stressing Adeline's perception that something is amiss even though Madame La Motte "was too guarded to betray any striking instance of unkindness" toward Adeline, Radcliffe highlights the importance of sensibility.

The ability to sense the smallest details is so vital that Radcliffe revisits this idea in her essay, "On the Supernatural in Poetry" (1826), where two travelers, Mr. W, a keen observer of sensibility, tries to explain the concept to Mr. S, a sensibility neophyte, via Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. During this conversation these two men explore sensibility, obscurity, terror and horror, and the sublime. Mr. W argues that Shakespeare's power lies

within his ability to "touch the accordant springs of sympathy by small circumstances" and that "every minute circumstance of the scene … contributes to excite some feeling of dreariness, or melancholy, or solemnity, or expectation" (Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural in Poetry" 2, 4). Years before writing this essay, Radcliffe exhibited such powers in Adeline who, because of her heightened sensibility, embodied the "exquisite art" of Shakespeare and could, like him, "exquisitely perceive and feel" (4, 1).

In entering an escape plan's second phase, women must control their sensibility instead of it controlling them. Without this self-control, perceptions are moot, and an enemy's detection of perception fatal. While eighteenth-century society believed sensibility made women "singularly engaging and amiable" (Gisborne 34), Radcliffe established that, if her readers embodied Gothic heroines' controlled sensibility, they could reap its protection and "survive in a hostile world" (Conger 17). Without control, however, sensibility could overthrow its owner in emotional torrents and fainting spells; therefore, Radcliffe pushed for the ideal sensibility, one that, while establishing a "foundation of … beauty and appeal," reinforced "habits of self-command" to avoid the "dangers of sensibility" (M. Ellis 53). [2] This kept women from becoming paralyzed victims of fear and emotion and gave them "heighten[ed] … powers of perception, communication, concentration, and self-control" (Conger 17). Because Adeline exhibits these powers, she masters Shakespeare's talent to awe an audience. Where Shakespeare had the uncanny knack "to inspire … various characters of this world, and create worlds of its own," Adeline, at times, inspired those around her to fulfill the needs of her world (Radcliffe, "On Supernatural in Poetry" 2). From the start, evil men haunt Adeline's

[2] Ellis quotes from a scene in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* where the heroine's father cautions her about the dangers of sensibility (Radcliffe, *Mysteries* 79-80).

world, and she must read the scenario correctly for a chance at survival. Danger and obscurity surround Adeline, and she must rely on her sensibility to inspire the man she hopes will lead her to safety.

After throwing herself at La Motte's feet with a plea for protection, Adeline's expressions give her refuge as La Motte and his wife take pity on her even though they suffered dangers as well. In fact, Adeline's "artless and simple expressions" stop Madame La Motte's probing questions, and combined with Adeline's "*seeming* innocence," which activates La Motte's humanity, Adeline attains safety (Radcliffe, *Romance* 8; emphasis mine). Sensibility in the eighteenth century went only so far, however, and Radcliffe with one word, "seeming," reminds her readers that the La Mottes based their perceptions of Adeline on her appearance. They help her not on solid evidence of her virtuous worthiness but based on her expression of it. From her sketchy introduction to the La Mottes, they could have abandoned her, assuming she was unvirtuous and therefore not worth saving. So in the relative safety of the La Motte's carriage, Adeline awaits her fate, balancing on a thin strip of assumed virtue.

Madame La Motte considers the weeping young girl and decides not to question her about her "connections" or the night's activities (8). Perhaps she did not want to know if the girl was virtuous or not, but in an empathetic move, Madame La Motte does not "require an explanation of the late adventure," in part due to her reflecting "on her own misfortunes" (8). Even La Motte, burdened with his own troubles, decides "to protect" the girl based on her "beauty" and the aforementioned "seeming innocence" (8). Even though Adeline is virtuous, what instigates her initial rescue is her *expression* of it. Adeline's virtue is so in tune with her sensibility that "the languor of sorrow threw a

melancholy grace upon her features, that appealed immediately to the heart" of the La Mottes (9). Without solid evidence and with only Adeline's expressions of suffering, innocence, and virtue, the La Mottes rescue Adeline; little do they know that Adeline's sensibility will rescue them as well, even if temporarily, from their own sufferings.

Once they find veritable safety and Adeline is freed from a sense of impending doom, she displays sensibility's power of influencing others' emotions. Despite the family's secreted abbey, which should have alleviated La Motte's fevered mind, he succumbs to melancholy. Adeline "endeavour[s] to enliven his spirits, and to withdraw him from himself" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 33). While Adeline does not always succeed, when La Motte "relaxed from the sullenness of misery, it was at the influence of Adeline" (34). Sensibility works on Madame La Motte as well, and even when Adeline's heart freezes with fear, "she rallied her drooping spirits and gave the first instance of her kindness by endeavouring to revive those of her friend" (25-26). Through Adeline's efforts to uplift Madame La Motte's spirits, Madame La Motte soon "loved her as her child" (34). While Adeline's "happy art or … happy nature, of accommodating itself to her situation" continues to positively affect both her and the La Mottes for some time, her sensibility comes across an enemy she cannot fight (34). While Radcliffe makes a case for sensibility's importance, a woman's sensibility in a patriarchal society cannot go unharried for long.

As long as men claimed dominion, they held the power to exploit women and their sensibility. Just as society controlled how women translated their "gifts" of beauty and virtue, it also encouraged an acceptable brand of sensibility that would attract men. John Gregory argues that while "extreme sensibility … may be a weakness and

encumbrance in our sex," "it [was] peculiarly engaging" in women (27). Even novelist Frances Brooke, predecessor to Radcliffe, considered sensibility a "magnet which attracts all" and the only quality that "inspires love" (qtd. in Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility* 28). On the other hand, as G. J. Barker-Benfield notes, both Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft feared unchecked sensibility (107). Wollstonecraft argued that women would become "the prey of their senses … blown about by every momentary gust of feeling," thereby demeaning them as "the plaything of outward circumstances" and setting them up as "prey" to man as well (77, 111).

The way in which Radcliffe frames her heroine's story, full of exploitation and men's constant threats to Adeline's innocence, gives credence to Barker-Benfield's assertions that Radcliffe also thought the "culture of sensibility embodied" the "wounds given by men in the sexual warfare" against women (Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility* 19). While it might seem from the novel's opening that Radcliffe thought overt sensibility sexy instead of a detriment to women, her combining of sensibility's sexual attraction with Adeline's virtue at her first rescue proves the opposite. Despite having "An eye / As when the blue sky trembles thro' a cloud / Of purest white,"[3] Adeline's cloak is askew and "thrown open at the bosom," now draped not by cloth but her hair, which "had fallen in disorder," and her veil, instead of covering her hair, "had, in her confusion, been suffered to fall back" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 7). While her "distress" gives her "an expression of captivating sweetness," her state of sexy dishevelment

[3] Radcliffe quotes from James Thomson's *The Tragedy of Sophonisba* (1730), in which the tragic heroine, Sophonisba, commits suicide by poison— "at the instigation of her betrothed"—to avoid being taken captive by enemy forces ("Sophonisba"). Whether Radcliffe is critiquing or endorsing this plotline is hard to say, but after considering that Adeline does not slough off her life but fights for hers and her lover's indicates that Radcliffe may have disagreed with Thomson's assertion that woman's only choice was death.

"interest[s] La Motte more warmly in her favour" (7). La Motte's appreciation for Adeline's exposed body—especially considering his later sex trafficking of her—instead of for her expressions of true suffering prove Radcliffe's fears that men's power and irreverence of women's sensibilities could exploit and wound women.

While exploitation manifests in different ways, the common denominator for all forms of exploitation includes obscuring a victim's vision of their surroundings. Without a clear view, a victim cannot make the right choice and must either relent or struggle aimlessly against an unseen enemy. The Gothic, built upon obscurity and transgression, illustrates the damage done when obscurity veils perception, no matter how keen. Obscurity inhibits the ability to "ascertain the object of … terror" and keeps people from "acquir[ing] the means to escape" (Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural in Poetry" 6). Radcliffe's penchant for displaying human rather than ghostly terrors plants the Gothic obscure in eighteenth-century reality. Just as the villainous Marquis and cowardly La Motte obscure the truth from Adeline, giving her limited and hazy options, eighteenth-century society did the same for everyday women. The obscurity shading women's existences did not start in a creepy building on their eighteenth birthdays; instead, it began from the moment of their birth. Society obscured women's views of the world, men, and themselves, leaving them to grope in the dark for truth's remaining crumbs.

Adeline's journey embodies this reality, and she suffers the consequences of obscurity engineered by men, leaving her in the dark and groping for truth and survival. From the moment readers meet Adeline, men's exploitations have obscured her reality and even her identity, cursing her with "indistinctness … which leaves [her] imagination to act upon the few hints that truth reveals" (6). As a result, Adeline has no choice but to

fill in the gaps. Often this "obscurity leaves something for the imagination to exaggerate," leading to errors and negative consequences (6). As Adeline attempts to make sense of her senseless surroundings and cloudy perceptions, she occasionally abandons her sensibility, causing her to misinterpret her surroundings and make miscalculated decisions.

Through Adeline's successes and failures, she learns sensibility's successes hinge on her opponent's capacity for sympathy, and often, especially in Adeline's case, men are insensible to expressions of genuine suffering. Through the Marquis and La Motte, Radcliffe reveals the lies of conduct literature, which promised that if women stayed within their sphere and relied on their "natural softness and sensibility," they would receive protection from "any temptation to those vices to which [men] are most subjected" (Gregory 10). According to conduct authors, women's sensibility guaranteed their safety from the world's ills and domestic distress. But Radcliffe illustrates that the domestic sphere did not always come with a knight who understood the language of sensibility and who was prepared to protect the domestic damsel. This protection played out if women expressed the proper emotions at the proper time to the proper person, one who understood sensibility's language. While Adeline's escape from her kidnappers proves her ability to wield sensibility in life-threatening situations, her domestic experience, while successful at first, disintegrates as those she thought receptive to sensibility become insensible to her sufferings.

Upon settling into some semblance of domesticity with the La Mottes, Adeline realizes the initial wave of sensibility from the La Mottes predicted not domestic bliss but a mistaken perception of the La Mottes' intentions. As altruistic as La Motte's rescue of

Adeline seems, it was not La Motte's innate goodness or morals that encouraged him to help a victimized woman. Rather, after witnessing her "at his feet … with supplicating eyes, that streamed with tears" and hearing her begging "him to have pity on her," he "[finds] it impossible to contemplate the beauty and distress of the object before him with indifference" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 5). Rather than sensibility prompting him to rescue Adeline, La Motte's attraction to her initiates his good will. However, his willingness to take on another "burden" hints at his capacity for average sensibility. La Motte's wife also shows a cursory knowledge of sensibility, and if only they had attempted to attain the sensibility advertised in sentimental fiction, "one that could be further sensitized in order to be more acutely responsive to signals from the outside environment and from inside the body," perhaps they would have done a better job in caring for Adeline's physical and emotional needs (Barker-Benfield, "Sensibility" 102). Unfortunately for Adeline, the La Mottes' sensibility fades as the story progresses, and Adeline once again becomes a victim of assumptions and people's inability to read her emotions or intents.

While the La Mottes exhibit the capacity yet not the discipline for sensibility, the Marquis has neither the capacity nor the discipline for it. Despite Adeline's proclamations against his love, her tears, and her near fainting at his repeated declarations, he asks her why he was "obstinately persist[ant] in refusing to be happy" with him, and when she relapses into silence at this, he "interpret[s] her silence into a secret compliance with his proposal" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 160-61). Even the brainwashed women in the Marquis's harem prove useless in Adeline's escape from his love-chateau, as they are insensible to her pleas. Despite her visible suffering, his harem echoes the Marquis's qualities. Sensing "the inconvenience and fruitlessness of [her]

opposition," Adeline "command[s] her feelings" (158). Saving her sensibility for when it matters, Adeline is fully charged to deal with the real threat: the Marquis. This heartless, insensible villain, seeking Adeline's destruction, represents Radcliffe's umbrage with Gregory's statement that "[men] are conscious of a natural title you have to our protection and good offices, and therefore we feel an additional obligation of honor to serve you" (75). The Marquis, bereft of honor, and even La Motte, who only disengages from the Marquis's plan when he's asked to commit murder, displays little to no "natural" incentive to protect Adeline. However, Radcliffe makes her point in the end: neither men could save himself in the end, especially the Marquis. In the end, Adeline did not lock the Marquis in a jail cell, and in his final moments, she did not force him to swallow poison. The Marquis's refusal to perceive his surroundings, adjust his behavior, and respond properly to others' sufferings condemns him.

Through the devasting events resulting from other people's insensibility, Adeline learns she must control her suffering's outward manifestations to protect herself. To accomplish this, Adeline must perform for her audience. While this may seem a break from sensibility, sensibility and performance often worked in tandem, especially on stage. Radcliffe's private life remains a mystery; however, she respected the theater, Shakespeare, and Sarah Siddons, an eighteenth-century actress. Throughout "On the Supernatural in Poetry," Radcliffe, via Mr. W's character, praises Siddons and argues that she should play Hamlet because "she would more fully preserve the tender and refined melancholy" and "the deep sensibility" (3). Radcliffe reengages with the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century idea that sensibility was not a gendered entity, and by putting Shakespeare, Hamlet, and Siddons in conversation with each other,

Radcliffe judges them on their ability to vanish within their art. In a rare journal entry, Radcliffe writes, “Mrs. Siddons, like Shakespeare, always disappears in the character she represents,” and because of Siddons’s talent, Radcliffe “value[d] her ‘deep sensibility’” (qtd. in Richards 83-84). This art, which—according to Radcliffe—hid the “defects … of the theatre” has real world applications as well (83). Radcliffe followed Siddons’s example on stage and created her own “actress,” Adeline, who through her performances swayed her audience as Siddons had done. In fact, Radcliffe illustrates how people could use sensibility to mask and evade the “defects” of their surroundings as Siddons did for the theater and Adeline did for her survival.

While Adeline’s decision to use performance to escape danger may have encouraged young readers to do the same, society and conduct literature considered this a taboo for women. Society’s mistrust of women was so prevalent that they suspected anything women said or did, even claiming that in “important occasions of life” women rarely “kno[w] [their] own minds” (Gregory 119). It did not take long for society to believe that women were natural liars and hardly knew what they were thinking much less saying. Add on conduct literature’s other mantra that sins in women are worse than sins in men, becoming a “deformity,” and one can see how even the smallest falsehood from women’s mouths morphed into a monstrous dissimulation (Allestree 1.2.43).

Perhaps this mistrust of women’s words prompted Radcliffe to explain away Adeline’s dissimulation in a life-or-death situation with the Marquis. Adeline senses her dire situation and decides she should not “exaspirat[e] his pride” (Radcliffe, *Romance* 159). Instead, because the “honour and peace of her life” were in danger, she decides to “yield somewhat to the policy of dissimulation” because “she saw that her only chance of

escaping his designs depended upon delaying them" (159). Radcliffe apologizes for Adeline's dissimulation, reasoning that it "disguis[ed] her indignation and contempt" of the Marquis (160). Radcliffe assures her readers that Adeline's "mind was habitually impregnated with the love of virtue, in thought, word, and action" and that she "reluctantly" stooped to dissimulation "for the purpose of self-preservation" (160). In analyzing dissimulation's definition, which is the "concealment of what really is, under a feigned semblance of something different; feigning, hypocrisy," the last two words, "feigning" and "hypocrisy," carry a much heavier weight than simply concealing something ("Dissimulation"). Considering how other eighteenth-century writers perceived this word, dissimulation was a societal taboo. William Cowper, in his poem "Table Talk," uses dissimulation as follows: "[S]mooth dissimulation, skill'd to grace / A devil's purpose with an angel's face" (lines 130-31). [4] The caveat that Adeline loathed telling lies, even to save herself from rape, proves that society's inclination to label women as liars was so ingrained that Radcliffe felt the need to excuse Adeline's "devil's purpose." Adeline's adventures in dissimulation do not last long, however, as she senses the need to perform to escape her evil audience.

Radcliffe argues against the purported safety of the domestic sphere by illustrating how Adeline's sufferings take place in domestic settings. Whether it was in a "small and ancient house" or "the Gothic remains of an abbey" or a mansion that "resembled the palace of a fairy," Adeline endures abuse and threats of sexual violence, proving that domesticity's trappings and relations within are as dangerous to women as

[4] Cowper's poem discusses the relationship between kings and their subjects and uses the "dissimulation" lines to illustrate those who falsely profess their love for and loyalty to a king they despise to receive royal favors.

any outside entity (Radcliffe 3, 15, 156). Kate Ferguson Ellis argues that the "Gothic … is preoccupied with … the failed home … the place from which some (usually "fallen" men) are locked out, and others (usually "innocent" women) are locked in" (ix). Outside influences do not victimize Adeline; her makeshift family, the people conduct literature promised would save women, victimize her. Understanding her precarious situation, Adeline disengages from conduct literature's advice of "be[ing] cautious in displaying … good sense" because women's true protection from the world was their ignorance of it (Gregory 31). This advice is rendered useless as Adeline's ignorance of her birth, her identity, and even her evil uncle embroil her further in danger. By using her senses, however, she understands that the Marquis and La Motte care not that she is a victim; they rejoice in her victimhood. Adeline refuses to wait for the Marquis—her uncle—and La Motte—her father figure—to cease their torments, and she playacts to escape them and their oppressive domestic spheres.

Adeline's first performance hits at the heart of domesticity as her survival requires her to act a part with the two people who rescued her and brought her into their family fold. After Peter, the La Mottes' servant, informs her of their betrayal in signing her over to the Marquis, she plans her escape. After "yield[ing] to a flood of tears, and indulg[ing] the excess of her distress," Adeline "rouse[s] all her fortitude" to "sustain an appearance of composure in the presence of Monsieur and Madame La Motte" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 150-51). Throughout the evening's meal, Adeline "effectually conceal[s] the varied anguish of her heart," and she goes to her own chamber with the La Mottes oblivious to her escape plan (151). Ironically, Adeline needs to shield her true self from another woman, someone who, according to conduct literature, should exhibit innate sensibility.

Sensing hatred rippling from Madame LaMotte—who seethes with unjustified jealousy against Adeline—Adeline chooses to hide her feelings instead of pleading for her assistance. Unsure of why Madame LaMotte hates her and assuming she knows of the scheme to sell her to the Marquis, Adeline, after "cooler reflection shewed her the extravagance and danger of this conduct" chooses not to "implor[e] her pity and protection" and "suppressed her emotions" (152). Adeline does not seek protection in London's or Paris's slums, and she is not trapped in a barred cell. The decrepit abbey is her "present security and comfort" (45). And Adeline, though initially a stranger to the La Mottes, now "loved" them "as her protectors, and revered" them "as her parent[s]" (150). The danger for Adeline comes not from without but from within, illustrating that Adeline's "refuge" is her "prison" (K. F. Ellis xiii). Unwilling to remain a prisoner, Adeline uses her sensibility to perform and breaks conduct literature's number one rule of obeying those society has placed in authority over her.

Through Adeline, Radcliffe obliterates Allestree's and Gregory's arguments for safety in obedience for women and displays women's true power: sensibility with a dash of disobedience. While conduct authors directed women to maintain unquestionable obedience to social norms to ensure they could escape dangerous situations, Radcliffe introduces a different plan to avoid circumstances that could bring about women's ruination. In the beginning, Adeline follows conduct literature's commandments. Her beauty, virtue, modesty, and other prerequisites place her in the pantheon of perfect maidens. These alone should save her from danger. For a while, Adeline's virtues succeed; but when a man's own dangers—La Motte's in this case—supersedes hers, her beauty, virtue, and pitifulness fail her, leaving her with sensibility and an instinct to

disobey. With her heart dedicated to the young chevalier, Theodore, Adeline cannot bear thoughts of marrying the Marquis, but her pleas for the La Mottes' protection fall on deaf ears. Madame La Motte responds, "[O]ur present circumstances oblige us to preserve terms with the Marquis, and you will, therefore, suffer as little resentment to appear in your manner towards him as possible; conduct yourself with your usual ease in his presence, and … this affair will pass over" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 123). Viewing this conversation through the lens of conduct literature, Madame La Motte's demands take on heavier meaning; she expects nothing but obedience. Despite her knowing Adeline's revulsion toward the Marquis, Madame La Motte does not consider Adeline's preferences.

Due to Madame La Motte's refusal to extend empathy and help her, Adeline has no choice but to create an obedient front; however, she does not submit willingly. She states, "I obey you, Madam … it is my duty to do so; but I may be pardoned for saying—it is with extreme reluctance" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 124). This declaration of independence, even if only in word and theory, gives voice to Adeline's burgeoning disobedience, which strengthens as the La Mottes stonewall her. Hoping to engage La Motte's good graces, again, Adeline "determine[s] to throw herself at [his] feet … and implore his pity and protection" (118). However much conduct literature espoused pity as a survival tactic, La Motte's pity does not prompt him to take Adeline's best interest to heart. Unknown to her, La Motte, so indebted to the Marquis's secrecy, cares nothing for her pleas for protection. La Motte's selfishness cannot bend to sacrifice, and he demands that "she will conform [to his wishes], and not, by an ill-timed resentment, expose [him] to the enmity of the Marquis" (124). As with Madame La Motte, Adeline does not

acquiesce; instead, she answers, “I ought to submit” (125). The word “ought” indicates that Adeline has no intention to obey, but to escape immediate detection, she clears her face of “any expression of displeasure” (125). Her keen sensibility has taught Adeline to read a situation and camouflage her emotions to match it. After one more failed attempt at engaging La Motte’s pity and support, Adeline’s disobedience to her master fails, and the “ought” evolves to “I will endeavour to obey you, Sir” (127). Note she does not promise her fealty; she only hints at it, saying only she will endeavor obedience.

Adeline’s decision to disobey highlights her fears in sharing a supposedly “safe” domestic sphere with a man she did not choose. Adeline’s terror of marrying the wrong man against her will echoes of heroines before her as the “nightmare in the female gothic … is that women frequently cannot run toward what they … desire, the man they want to marry” (Hoeveler 10). To save herself from this horror, obedience is no longer a choice, and she cannot submit to her father figure’s—and, according to Allestree, her master’s—will. When Adeline refuses to entertain the Marquis, La Motte, enraged, waxes on about the Marquis’s excellent qualities and wonders at Adeline’s refusal, musing, “[I]s it possible that you can persist in this heroism of romance, and prefer a father so inhuman as yours, to the Marquis de Montalt! A destiny so full of danger to a life of splendour and delight” (Radcliffe, *Romance* 136). Adeline drops all pretense of obedience and rejoins, “Pardon me … a marriage with the Marquis would be splendid, but never happy. His character excites my aversion, and I entreat, Sir, that he may no more be mentioned” (136-37).

This exchange illustrates conduct literature’s belief that women required a master, either father or husband. Radcliffe highlights the absurdity that women are safer under

direct supervision and complete obedience to either one as Adeline has two choices: return to her father—or the man she thinks is her father—who will imprison her in a convent or marry the Marquis, a man who could protect her from her horrid father, despite her "dislike of his general disposition, and the aversion excited by his late offer" (130). Unaware of the Marquis's true depravity, Adeline cannot accept his amorous attentions, and her "heart" "revolted from the proposal" she planned to "never … accept" (130). Adeline's disgust at the Marquis increases, and instead of subjecting herself to men's will, "bear[ing] her sorrows in silence" and "put[ting] on a face of serenity and chearfulness" (Gregory 11), she "quitted her chamber," "passed with cautious steps down the winding staircase," and "proceeded down through the door of the tower into the forest" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 153). Adeline acts, knowing her beauty, virtue, and pitiable state will not save her. Even though her first escape from the abbey ensnares her in the Marquis's trap, Adeline chooses to disobey instead of suffering an oppressive domestic sphere in silence.

Adeline's disobedience does not bring her destruction as conduct literature promised; it ultimately brings salvation to her and nearly all connected with her. Through her victory over manipulative men, Adeline escapes the Marquis and La Motte, enabling her to once more "scan eyes, study gestures, and draw accurate inferences about the emotional or moral state of persons around [her]" (Conger 17). This time, however, she displays her sensibility in a public court of law as the Marquis's greed and lust drive him to destroy her and her lover, Theodore. La Motte also becomes entangled in the Marquis's revenge, and the novel's setting moves from a quiet forest setting to Paris's dungeons, where Theodore awaits his death sentence on desertion charges and La Motte

awaits his hanging on robbery charges. To save Theodore, Adeline presents herself before the tribunal, and her "natural dignity," "expression of soft timidity," and "sweet confusion" gain their "pity" and "admiration" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 351-52). When Adeline flings herself at the king's feet, he listens to her (353). Her sensibility, as well as her ability to know when she will be able to influence the sensibility of others, saves her, La Motte, and Theodore from an ill fate.

Adeline's sensibility, not La Motte's character, touches the heart of the king, prompting the pardon and saving La Motte's life. Even though the sentence decreases from death to banishment, "this indulgence, however, would have availed him little, had not Adeline's noble generosity silenced other prosecutions that were preparing against him, and bestowed on him a sum more than sufficient to support his family in a foreign country" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 353). Unlike the Marquis, whose inability to accept or practice sensibility causes him to take his own life, La Motte, through Adeline's sensibility, changes his life. Aligning with women novelists' fantasy that "insensitive men" could be "transformed into men of feeling through conversion" under a woman's tutelage (Barker-Benfield, "Sensibility" 111), Adeline's "kindness operated so powerfully upon his heart … that his former habits became odious to him, and his character gradually recovered" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 353-54). Adeline's sensibility in La Motte's case "purges the infected home" to such a degree that she is spared from sharing a home and a country with him (K. F. Ellis xii). The death of the Marquis and the exile of La Motte represent Adeline's victorious purging of dangerous domesticity.

After escaping an evil domestic sphere, Adeline, who from birth has experienced terrifying domestic spaces, is safe to establish her own domestic sphere with her chosen

domestic partner, a partner who speaks the language of sensibility. Adeline's "tak[ing] initiative in shaping her own history" fits in with the female Gothic's overarching goal: the heroine has voice and choice (*The Contested Castle* xii). And Adeline chooses a man capable of sensibility. Unlike the Marquis and La Motte, who needed Adeline's saving sensibility, Theodore does not require it, as he exhibits his own sensibility. In fact, his "ample pardon" and "a post of some considerable rank in the army" had more to do with *his* character than Adeline's pleas for the king's mercy (Radcliffe, *Romance* 353). Radcliffe's diminishing of Adeline's ownership of Theodore's rescue does not speak negatively of Adeline's powers but highlights sensibility's requirement in men as well. Adeline had recognized his sterling sensibility—the only man in the novel who displays this trait—long before the trial, and even though his "elegance … happily blended with strength" and "sweetness" reflected the truth of his sensibility, Adeline chooses Theodore due to his integrity and "merit" (87, 356). These positive qualities take root in Theodore's adherence to and respect for Adeline's sensibility.

From the start, Theodore gives Adeline choice. When he comes upon her in the forest, he does not approach, but instead, upon "observing her timid looks and retiring steps, he paused" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 76). When she retreats, he does not pursue nor hunt her as the Marquis does. As Adeline gets to know him, his conversation and his "manly dignity … blended with … benevolence" capture her heart (95). This last description of Theodore's benevolence is straight out of the women novelists' playbook, which "combined their advocacy of more sensibility in a man with the reassurance that heroines regard him as 'manly'" (Barker-Benfield, "Sensibility" 108-9). During the long carriage ride where Theodore attempts to rescue Adeline from the Marquis's nefarious

plans, he does not use her weakness to seduce her. Instead, "[t]he delicacy of his behavior, in forbearing to take advantage of her present situation to plead his love, increased her esteem" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 174). Theodore is the perfect "benevolent" hero women novelists often romanticized (Barker-Benfield, "Sensibility" 110). Theodore's "compassionate" and "humane" treatment of Adeline foretells he "would make a better husband by placing a high value on a harmonious marriage and on domesticity," and as they connect over similar ideals, he proves himself a "man of feeling … that respect[ed] women and [made] common ground with them" (110). In establishing Theodore as the epitome of masculine sensibility, Radcliffe encourages her readers to take initiative *before* marriage and find sensible husbands instead of kowtowing to conduct literature's degrading dictates *after* marriage to survive abusive husbands.

Theodore's sensibility also promises Radcliffe's readers that Adeline will experience happiness and safety within the domestic sphere, highlighting that the domestic sphere under a woman's control and choice can offer her more than safety; it can provide her the domestic bliss conduct literature promised but could never deliver. Some critics find fault with the Gothic's circular journey of evolving domestic spheres. Eugenia C. DeLamotte argues that "the deepest contradiction of women's Gothic … is that the heroine's impulse toward transcendence is always translated in happy Gothic into an impulse toward marriage" (185). While this is true in Adeline's case, DeLamotte's next argument takes away the individuality of Adeline and other women who choose the domestic sphere. She states that "the protest implicit in this symbolic struggle" against marriage "is undercut by the final identification of escape with domestic enclosure, itself the very source of the suffering the escape is supposed to alleviate" (185). Again, this

argument holds weight when juxtaposed with the cruel domestic sphere Adeline had been damned to; however, Radcliffe's ending does not support this entirely. Had Adeline married the Marquis to save herself from her "father," she would have fulfilled DeLamotte's dire prophesy of "a life of repetition, confinement, sexual domination, economic powerlessness, seclusion, ignorance," not to mention incest (185). In doing this, Adeline would have escaped one vicious domestic enclosure for another more insidious than the first. Instead, Adeline chooses to intertwine her future with Theodore's and gains her happily-ever-after.

With Radcliffe's final words, she closes the chapter on Adeline's adventure and empowers her readers to escape dangerous and/or suffocating domestic spheres and choose a partner who speaks and respects sensibility. In yearning for "sweet domestic pleasures," Adeline secures her future happiness and domestic bliss where the "snowy and sublime alps" nestled them both in the "very bosom of felicity" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 358, 362-63). In following true sensibility, Adeline and Theodore do not hoard their happiness but spread it "to all who came within the sphere of their influence" (363). Their married life illustrates teamwork between domestic partners, one in which they benefit each other and those around them. It is due to both that the "indigent and unhappy rejoiced in *their* benevolence, the virtuous and enlightened in *their* friendship" (363; emphasis mine). Through Adeline's sensibility and disobedience, Radcliffe encourages her readers to emulate her heroine and to use the reason conduct literature demanded remain unused to escape the unsafe domestic sphere. However, she does not abandon marriage or the domestic sphere. Instead, through Adeline and Theodore, Radcliffe models what the domestic sphere could be when women have the power to choose.

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT IF MOLEHILLS ARE MOUNTAINS?: *NORTHANGER ABBEY* AND THE DANGERS OF A GOTHIC REALITY

Following in Ann Radcliffe's footsteps, Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey* enumerates sensibility's importance in evading dangerous situations. While often considered a parody of Radcliffe's Gothic, Austen's novel demonstrates not how the Gothic is not real, but how reality is, in fact, Gothic. As Austen could not subvert propriety and social expectations as a domestic novelist, the Gothic allowed her to camouflage her subversion of societal roles assigned to women and gave her the chance to prove that Gothic dangers do exist and that average women can, if they use their sensibility's powers, overcome them. However much she may distance her heroine from the stereotypically angelic 1790's Gothic heroine, Austen adheres to Radcliffe's emphasis on sensibility and explores how a girl so infatuated with the Gothic missed the life-saving skills illustrated within them, revealing the consequences of relying on shallow conduct literature's advice for social survival.

Like Radcliffe, Austen puts her heroine in challenging situations to strengthen her sensibility, establishing the importance of definitive action rather than conduct-manual-endorsed passivity. Unlike Radcliffe's extraordinary Gothic settings, Austen's ordinary setting illustrates the Gothic threats awaiting women, and instead of deleting the Gothic's rapists or murderers, Austen disguises them as gentlemen. In hiding evil in proper society, Austen satirizes conduct literature's mandates, which encroached on women's daily lives, handicapped their present, and endangered their future, and she explores how

sexual assault and domestic violence threatened ordinary women as well as Gothic heroines.

Written during 1798 and 1799, *Northanger Abbey* (1817) joined the Gothic satires and imitations flooding the literary world (Fergus, "Biography" 8). Due to publishing issues, however, Austen's book did not reach the public until after her death in 1817. In preparing her book for publication long after Radcliffe's Gothic decade, Austen reassembled her novel and added the following author note in 1816: "This little work was finished in the year 1803 and … the public are entreated to bear in mind that thirteen years have passed since it was finished, many more since it was begun, and that during that period, places, manners, books, and opinions have undergone considerable changes" ("Advertisement"). More than fashion in clothes or societal rules had changed; by the time "the apprentice Jane Austen formed her literary attitudes" and wrote her first draft of *Northanger Abbey*, "the psychological refinements of the novel of sensibility had come to seem deeply suspect to many" (Mullan 381).

However, just because the reading public perceived sensibility differently two decades after *The Romance of the Forest* does not indicate that Austen abandoned Radcliffe's sensibility. The ambiguity surrounding Austen's opinion of sensibility exists due to her incongruous treatment of sensibility, where she assigns it to characters such as Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), which seems to "[suggest] that sensibility involves sickness," but gifted it to her strong, independent heroines, such as Elizabeth Bennet (Mullan 383, 385). John Mullan argues that this dichotomous treatment suggests that "Austen may satirise the cult of sensibility, but she remains intrigued by the idea" (384). However, as no other character in Austen's later novels "suffers" from a

crippling sensibility like Marianne, it is probable that Austen realized sensibility's potential for women. In fact, the victory over evil of *Northanger Abbey*'s heroine, Catherine, indicates that Austen, while perhaps treating some Gothic elements with satiric wit, respected Radcliffe's brand of sensibility.

Catherine's first steps toward her endangered future begin with a typical recipe for disaster: a naïve woman goes on a road trip, leaving behind her loving parents—who refuse to act horridly or die before their time as all Gothic parents often do. With only her untrained sensibility, Catherine Morland, country vicar's daughter, joins the Allens on an adventure of a lifetime—at least, for Catherine—to Bath. Her hope of a glorious beginning to an adventure flatlines when Catherine realizes the Allens have no acquaintance, crippling her social life and relegating her to wallflower status. She does not bear this indignity long before she meets Isabella Thorpe, who becomes her best friend overnight, and Isabella's brother, John, who unbeknownst to Catherine will threaten her virtue. In the meantime, though, Catherine moons over her new acquaintance, Henry Tilney, and befriends his sister, Eleanor.

But, as all journeys go, Catherine's time at Bath and her budding relationship with the Tilneys threaten to come to an end until Henry and Eleanor's father, the obsequious General Tilney, invites Catherine back to their humble abode: Northanger Abbey. It is not long before her Gothic novel addiction supersedes her common sense, and after hearing about Mrs. Tilney's sudden demise years earlier, she hyperbolizes her death until it morphs into a true Gothic horror: The General killed his wife! This provocative story is short lived as Henry Tilney reprimands her for this heinous idea, leaving Catherine clutching fragments of her broken heart—or so she thinks. Henry holds nothing against

her, and as Catherine begins to hear wedding bells, General Tilney—finding out she is not the rich heiress he imagined her to be—ejects her from the Abbey, and she endures unchaperoned public transportation back to her parents. After several depressing days, Henry makes a surprise visit. They confess their love, marry, and live happily ever after, Tilney with eyes wide open to his father's corruption, and Catherine with eyes wide open to the dangers and pleasures of, not Gothic novels, but reality.

Because Catherine's addiction to Gothic novels causes her to abandon reason and make serious mistakes when she envisions herself as a Radcliffean heroine, critics label Austen's novel as only a satire of the Gothic. Beth Lau argues that Austen "was among the first to portray the Gothic novel's absurdities and potential danger to impressionable young readers" and that her novel "remains the most successful and enduring of all the Gothic satires" (32, 24). Michael Williams, in support of this theory, claims this opinion so universal that "everybody knows that *Northanger Abbey* is a parody of the Gothic novel" (1). This is not the case, however. Maria Jerinic disagrees with critics who think *Northanger Abbey* "a mere parody of the gothic novel," stressing that Austen's "strong social critique does not point a finger" at the genre (140). Instead, "the object of Austen's parody and the real threat to women … is men" (138). To reveal this threat, Austen does not ridicule the Gothic; she uses it as a smokescreen.

Mary Poovey agrees that Austen's novels give insight into eighteenth-century women's issues and puts Austen in dialogue with more outspoken feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley, claiming that, despite Austen's "famous decorum and reserve" and her "attitude toward propriety," her novels echo the "symbolic responses to the ideological situation[s]" Wollstonecraft and Shelley overtly exposed (Poovey xvii).

Even though Poovey acknowledges that Austen's "irony and skillful manipulation of point of view … 'resolved'—at least at the level of art—some of the most debilitating ideological contradictions of this period of chaotic change," she chooses not to explore Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and therefore misses an opportunity to expose the "debilitating ideological contradictions" she sought (xvii). The Gothic grants Austen freedom to explore ideas she could not explore in domestic fiction, which was fenced in with rules as strenuous as the conduct literature Austen planned to dismantle. By bringing the Gothic's hyperbolic nature down to reality, Austen reminded her readers that Radcliffe's "extreme" setting and plot illuminated a "historical, material reality to the sufferings she describes" (Cottom 65). Under the guise of the Gothic, Austen exposes the sufferings—sexual, physical, and emotional—of women symbolized in Gothic horrors and tackles the passive "heroine" conduct literature espoused.

While conduct literature indoctrinated girls to quietly wait for life to happen to them, Austen wastes no time in creating a new heroine, not simply an every-woman's heroine, but one who challenges reality's status quo. Catherine, from the start, rebels, refuses to sit quietly, and pursues her passions and with her "preference for openness and directness … dismantles the social world of manipulation and repression" (Cordón 58). In this spirit of full disclosure, Austen begins her heroine's tale with this introduction: "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine" (Austen, *Northanger* 5). Unlike Radcliffe's Adeline, Catherine was not born nor groomed for heroism; instead, "she is … the ordinary woman of the nineteenth century, a creature of flesh and blood comically presented in such commonplace circumstances as to assume a symbolic status representing all those

unknown persons whose lives will be uneventful, desperate, and tedious" (Glock 37). Despite her slow start to heroine-hood, her training accelerates when she turns fifteen and reads excerpts from Alexander Pope and William Shakespeare, which, as Susan Fraiman notes, are "taken wholly out of context," alerting the reader to Catherine's dismissive reading of important literature and proving she reads for entertainment instead of knowledge—which sets her up for failure in the end (Austen, *Northanger* 7-8n).

Austen's emphasis on Catherine's foibles, including an aversion to learning feminine accomplishments, separates Catherine from socially acceptable womanly behaviors, especially those mandated in conduct literature, and establishes two things. First, it separates Catherine from the "beautiful orphan heiresses of gothic and sentimental fiction" (Cordón 44). Second, Catherine, having "escaped the traditional pursuits for girls, … has not been warped into an artificial social female" and is free from the shackles of the patriarchal script imprisoning women's minds and tongues, resulting in a heroine whose "words and … actions reflect her actual desires rather than her culture's opinion of what they should be" (44). Catherine, despite "[l]iving in a culture that preferred its women to be simpering or silent," uses her voice to "speak her mind" (41). With Catherine as her mouthpiece, Austen could fight against the "'masculine' domination of … discourse … codified in conduct books … laying out behavioral norms for women" that "exert[ed] 'masculine' control on women" and "perpetuate[d] the inferiority of women" (43). Catherine's actions in her common-life adventures prove the necessity of women using their voices and wielding sensibility. Austen's readers could emulate heroines, and because they could relate to Catherine, they might learn how to sharpen their sensibility to survive societal pitfalls.

To prove that suffering did exist outside the Gothic, Austen placed her ordinary heroine within the common setting of Bath, and in such an environment, women needed more than conduct literature's empty promises; they, like Gothic heroines, needed keen sensibility. Radcliffe's heroines often get served with a creepy castle or cold abbey or a dank dungeon complete with rotting corpse. Via an environment sans abbey—at least, at the beginning—or dungeon, Austen creates an atmosphere that should feel safe but does not. No matter the seeming innocuous circumstances Catherine traverses, she connects with unsavory characters with insidious Gothic intentions, establishing that "suffering and terrors on a Gothic scale were as much a part of Austen's England as they were a part of past history" (Cottom 65). In placing Catherine in bustling Bath, overflowing with temptations and strangers, Austen obscures Catherine's knowledge, proving that unknown dangers exist within known social pleasures.

To conquer these unknowns, Catherine will need the proper education; however, her reluctance to immerse herself beyond any text's surface stymies her ability to fend off dangers. In losing herself in Radcliffe's books instead of learning from them, Catherine dooms herself to repeat the Gothic heroine's mistakes. Catherine's inability to properly digest the literary worlds she experiences, *not* her reading them, supersedes her struggles to separate fiction from reality. Catherine's already shallow book consumption is heightened in her new friendship with Isabella Thorpe and their shared addiction to Gothics that never goes beyond an appreciation for the "horrid" (Austen, *Northanger* 26). Their conversations around the Gothic's plots lack any intellectual or educational substance, stagnating them in vapid, inconsequential discourse. They debate nothing; they discuss nothing. Catherine has attached herself to a literate but nonsensical, vapid

girl who proceeds to push Catherine, already teetering over the abyss of a too-active imagination, into reading without thinking about or applying what she reads to her life.

Catherine's ignorant reading of the Gothic does not challenge the Gothic, as Austen satirizes readers' shallow consumption of Gothic novels and not the novels themselves. Soon after introducing the girls' hobby, Austen defends novels, arguing that novels, such as "Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda"[5]—novels with definite Gothic elements in them—display "the most thorough knowledge of human nature" (*Northanger* 23). If Austen's defense does not suffice, the brutish John Thorpe's dismissal of them proves the genre's legitimacy. Austen's highlighting of Thorpe's awkwardness sets the tone for his character, and it does not take long before he declares, "I never read novels" as "they are the stupidest things in creation" (31). [6] Austen, not satisfied with making him look a buffoon, questions his morality, as the only novels he ever enjoyed were *Tom Jones* and *The Monk*. According to Fraiman, both were considered immodest during this period, and Austen had a particular "dislike … on moral grounds" for *Tom Jones* (Austen, *Northanger* 31n). Within one page of text, Austen reveals that Thorpe, not novels, is "stupid" and harmful, and that Catherine, who corrects Thorpe's assumptions about them, possesses the knowledge for using them to her advantage. If only Catherine paid attention to the Gothic's lessons on human nature, she might have escaped the pitfalls she blunders

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[5] According to Fraiman, Austen's inclusion of Francis Burney's *Cecilia* (1782) and *Camilla* (1796) and Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) give credence to early critics' suspicions that Austen was a feminist. By including these women authors within her text, Austen argues "against the conventional bias in favor of male writers, male genres, and male-centered periodicals such as *The Spectator"* (23n).

[6] Upon meeting Catherine, John Thorpe greets her with a "whole scrape and half a short bow" (Austen, *Northanger* 28). According to Fraiman, this is meant to show the man's awkwardness (28n). Taken in context with Austen's less-than-complimentary description of him, Austen probably wanted her readers to dislike Thorpe from the start and know he was not to be trusted.

into. However, her failure to glean the coded survival messages leads her to navigate dangers imperfectly.

While Radcliffe's heroine, Adeline, had super-sensibility from the start, proving the importance of all three components of sensibility—perception, feeling, and sympathy—Austen concentrates on the powers of perception and the consequences when Catherine struggles to define her environment and the people within it. Catherine proves her sensibility upon her first adventure into difficult interactions, where she displays it in Bath's social landscape without so much as an introduction. As innocuous as it sounds, "Bath was a city of strangers" and "as new visitors arrived and others left, hierarchies shifted and relationships were thrown into relief, or receded from prominence," all culminating in a sense of "isolation" (Benis 182). Catherine's first ball in Bath illustrates this loneliness. Her hoped-for special night turns into a socially awkward farce not the least assisted by Mrs. Allen's insipid wishes of having "a large acquaintance here" (Austen, *Northanger* 12). Even though Catherine has no power to increase their acquaintance, she feels the situation's discomfort and insists to Mrs. Allen that they leave as "the gentlemen and ladies at [the] table look as if they wondered why we came here—we seem forcing ourselves into their party" (12). Despite Mrs. Allen's agreement with Catherine's assessment, she does nothing but fiddle with her muslin dress. Catherine's sensibility displays itself for, unlike Mrs. Allen, she can perceive her tablemates' emotions. Refusing to drop the subject, Catherine again says, "[H]ad not we better go away" (12). Mrs. Allen, unlike her young charge, lacks sensibility and therefore does not know how to react to or escape certain situations. Catherine's introduction to danger,

albeit not as nefarious as an abandoned abbey with a predatory male on the loose, illustrates society's dangers masked within stringent codes of behavior.

Catherine may have exhibited stellar sensibility when she sensed the above situation's precariousness, but she abandons this power when she incorrectly believes in the goodness of a situation and its inhabitants, especially in her trust in the seemingly harmless Isabella Thorpe. This ill choice in friends represents a figurative and literal problem. Isabella's character, a picture of what Catherine might have been if not freed from the "conduct books [that] encourage[d] women to be superficial," is illustrative of Gothic doubling (Cordón 43). In typical conduct literature style, Austen offered a "good" and "bad" girl to push an agenda. However, she eventually makes the conduct literature poster girl, Isabella, look the fool with her two-timing heart and ignoble ending, and promotes the girl who disregarded conduct literature's commands and actively pursues her goals to heroine.

Beyond the figurative, Catherine's friendship with Isabella signals her first failure in wielding sensibility. Ecstatic at having an acquaintance with whom she can parade around Bath, Catherine turns a blind eye to sensibility or sense and within days, forms a "quick" and "warm" friendship with Isabella (Austen, *Northanger* 22). Instead of fostering a steady, growing relationship, Catherine throws herself into a friendship with Isabella Thorpe that should have taken months, not days, to establish. But, as Waldo Glock points out, "[T]he parody of Gothic extravagance emphasizes meaning by symbolizing the part that fantasy plays in man's life, and the dangers of a too uncritical reliance on imagination unaided by judgment" (36). Catherine's desperation for an acquaintance in Bath supersedes the sensibility shown earlier in her first adventure into

society. Here, Austen does more than "spoof … the instantaneous sympathetic bonds that unite characters in eighteenth-century sentimental literature" (Neill 166); she also paints a picture of a desperate girl in an unknown setting with no one. Without Isabella, Catherine is doomed to sit beside Mrs. Allen and her precious dresses, watching others' adventures instead of living her own. Catherine does the only thing she thinks she can do. She abandons what sensibility she has for societal safety in a friendship, attaching herself to a "shallow, manipulative, mercenary" young lady, who will impact her negatively (Austen, *Northanger* 166). Catherine's toxic relationship with Isabella, her unintelligent reading of novels, and her willingness to set aside sense and sensibility creates a shadowy separation between fiction and reality, obscuring Catherine's perceptions of friend and foe.

Much like Radcliffe's extraordinary Gothic universe, which veils truths behind lies, Austen's ordinary world mimics the veiled lies obscuring truth from women. This battle to separate fiction from reality is due to ambiguity surrounding conduct literature's regulations that entrapped even rule-following women. While Austen's heroine does not tread a Gothic castle's unlit walkways, every step Regency Era women took along civilized streets hid dangers because "there are no guarantees in their world. Whether they know it or not, women in these novels are always trapped in uncertainty even as they are called upon to make certain decisions about their own behavior and the behavior of others" (Cottom 71). Catherine's first task entails deciphering the ambiguity of a seemingly simple open carriage drive.

However ambiguous the rules or the times in which Catherine abandons her sensibility for the illusion of safety in friendship, Catherine's sensibility suffers no ambiguity concerning John Thorpe, and she shivers upon meeting him. Little does

Catherine know that he will immerse her not into a world full of bandits and haunted abbeys but a "mundane … 'adventure' a 'real' adolescent girl might expect to experience at the turn of the nineteenth century" (Neill 182). For Catherine, this mundane adventure manifests in a threatened carriage ride with John. After droning on about the speed of his horse and open carriage, he informs her he "will drive [her] out in [his carriage] every day" (Austen, *Northanger* 30). Thorpe's audacity would have shocked Austen's readers, and even Catherine senses his impropriety and feels "distress" over this social conduct breach (30). Neither Isabella nor Catherine's brother, James, sense the proposal's enormity or the danger to Catherine's reputation should she accept.

Catherine, despite feeling something off with John Thorpe, allows Isabella to sway her judgment. After Isabella claims that John Thorpe thinks Catherine "the most charming girl in the world," Catherine, instead of answering, "I do not like him at all," takes Isabella's and James's connections to John into consideration and states, "I like him very much; he seems very agreeable" (30). Catherine's war with sensibility "underscore[s] the realistic, but seemingly innocuous, dangers and misfortunes that beset [her]" and also "expose[s] the … social threats that young women face in [Austen's] society, threats that are made even more alarming by young women's ignorance of or passive acceptance of them" (Fuller 92). Catherine breaks the mold, however, and refuses to play the passive role with Thorpe, and even when caught in inescapable situations with him, she asserts herself against his subjugation, even if only with her words.

This subjugation begins with obscurity, the result of trickery, which entangles Catherine in a web of lies and endangers her virtue. Thorpe—who has visions of Catherine as a rich heiress dancing through his head—tricks her out of her promised

walking adventure with the Tilneys, and she consents to go with him in his open carriage. While this may seem a breach of the behavior endorsed by conduct literature, Catherine assumes what conduct manuals preach: men protect women. Besides, days before Mrs. Allen, her trusted guardian, had pronounced that "there could be no impropriety in her going with Mr. Thorpe" (Austen, *Northanger* 41). Despite her sensibility prompting her to decline the offer, John's lies about the Tilneys' reneging on their promised walk with her obscures her reasoning, and she accepts his driving proposal. She soon realizes Thorpe lied to her about the Tilneys' abandoning her, and upon seeing them stare after her in confusion, she demands, "Stop, stop, Mr. Thorpe. … Stop, stop, I will get out this moment. … Pray, pray stop. … I cannot go on—I will not go on" (58-59). To Catherine's entreaties, Thorpe "laughed, smacked his whip, encouraged his horse, made odd noises, and drove on" (59). Trapped in Thorpe's speeding curricle, Catherine cannot escape, and despite feeling "angry and vexed," she has "no power of getting away," so she "was obliged to give up … and submit" (59).

Austen, notorious for pushing unmentionable topics such as sex and violence off stage, uses language depicting not an unwanted carriage drive but rape. While the language is indicative of physical rape, Thorpe does not touch her; however, he does not need to violate her body to rob Catherine of voice and choice, which could have led to her ruination, despite her innocence. Juxtaposed against Henry Tilney's comment days before that "man has the advantage of choice, woman only the power of refusal," Austen disproves his assumption that all men will allow a woman's refusal (51). In the carriage ride with Thorpe, Catherine's refusal matters not. Despite her cries for him to stop, he whips his horse harder and takes Catherine farther from what she desires.

Catherine, however, does not play the demure woman conduct literature advised women to be upon sensing danger; instead, she vocalizes her discontent, questions Thorpe's intentions, and accuses him of dishonesty. When he does not relinquish his innocence, Catherine, not taken in by his lies, treats him with contempt. As her "complaisance was no longer what it had been," in his tedious company, "she listened reluctantly, and her replies were short" (Austen, *Northanger* 59). Conduct literature authors would have written Catherine off as a brutish woman for abandoning her delicacy, but Austen, having lit a fire under her heroine's independence, fans the flames. Upon James's decision to abandon their trip to Blaize Castle, Thorpe abuses him to Catherine, calling him "a fool for not keeping a horse and gig of his own" (60). Catherine drops all civility and "warmly" states, "No, he is not" (60). After this exchange, Catherine feels no compunction to act kindly toward Thorpe, who has shown his true colors. Little does she know at this point that this struggle has strengthened her for the next scene with him.

Now disgusted by Thorpe, Catherine struggles to escape his notice and his carriage, where she has no power. However, those conduct literature promised would care for her assume his good intentions and push her back into his arms. A dust-up ensues when Catherine refuses to break her promise with the Tilneys to round out her brother and the Thorpe's driving party. Having already experienced a carriage ride with Thorpe, one reminiscent of Gothic villains whisking their prey into violence, Catherine now understands that men do not always have women's interests at heart. She begs to remain for the Tilneys and earns nothing but a sound scolding. James, who exhibits no sensibility concerning Catherine's promised engagement with the Tilneys, makes Catherine feel

ashamed of her empathy toward her friends and states, “I shall think you quite unkind, if you still refuse” (Austen, *Northanger* 67). This reproach hurts Catherine as it “was the first time [he] openly sid[ed] against her,” and when she still chooses her promise over a whim, he says, “I did not think you had been so obstinate. … [Y]ou were not used to be so hard to persuade; you once were the kindest, best-tempered of my sisters” (67). More than a cut to Catherine’s heart, James’s statement echoes of conduct literature’s assertion that “the acceptable female is ‘obliging,’ while the unacceptable young woman is ‘indecent’” (Cordón 43). John’s stating this proves conduct literature’s insidiousness; Catherine’s “attacker” was not a stranger, nor even Thorpe, but a family member.

Thorpe, however, does not cease his heiress hunting, and when Catherine states she will not go driving with him—again—he—again—attempts to derail Catherine’s relationship with the Tilneys by telling lies to Eleanor. When he reveals his dastardly deed, Catherine cries, “I cannot submit to this” and would have run from the room if the Thorpe siblings had not grabbed her hands (Austen, *Northanger* 68). With one hand caught in Isabella’s clutches and the other trapped in John’s, Catherine fights and declares, “Mr. Thorpe had no business to invent any such message” (68). He still holds her fast, however, and lies that the Tilneys are gone, to which Catherine cries, “[W]herever they are I will go after them. … If I could not be persuaded into doing what I thought wrong, I never will be tricked into it” (68). Catherine fighting to free herself from the grasp of Mr. Thorpe has echoes of Radcliffe’s Gothic world. However, Catherine does not struggle in a forest or castle with overtly villainous cads but in the Allen’s drawing room in civilized Bath with people who should treat her with compassion, creating a terrifying scene because of its reality. When Catherine demands,

"Let me go, Mr. Thorpe," the reader can imagine her struggling against his hands, his fingers digging into her flesh (68).

Kimberley Cox, through her connections between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature and the modern #MeToo movement, argues that hand holding represented "not the moment of penetration but rather the hand-grabbing that precedes or facilitates that moment that instantiates the violence and violation to follow" (2). Thorpe's unwelcome grasp illustrates his disregard "to her level of comfort and displeasure," illustrating Cox's argument that "hand-grabbing in literature makes sexual violence not only visible, but palpable in a new way" (4-5). While Thorpe's "Libertine masculinity" fits the associated "force and violence," Catherine breaks free from both Thorpe's grasp and the "chaste femininity … associated with sexual passivity, submission, and endurance" (Cox 15), and she runs after the Tilneys "not repent[ing] her resistance" of the Thorpes and James's wishes (Austen, *Northanger* 69). Trusting her sensibility, Catherine paves her own path, decries the excuses of supposedly trustworthy friends, and enacts her independence. According to Daniel Cottom, "When a woman … comes to be threatened by an ambiguity or an actual danger in the world around her, she may be held responsible for her situation if she has not been perfectly passive, projecting an image of total unconsciousness, ceding all interpretation to those men who have the authority in her world" (73). Catherine, feeling threatened, abandons perfect passivity, does not pretend "unconsciousness" of the situation, and does not give credence to even her beloved brother's persuasion, proving women can use their voices against patriarchal authority.

Although Catherine sticks to her promise and rights Thorpe's wrongs against the Tilneys, her unrewarded sensibility due to people's mixed reviews of her decision prompts her to seek the Allen's approbation. After realizing that Catherine refused to join the driving party, Mr. Allen states, "These schemes are not at all the thing. Young men and women driving about the country in open carriages … going to inns and public places together! It is not right" (Austen, *Northanger* 71). To this, Mrs. Allen adds her opinion that open carriages are nasty things as "the wind takes your hair and your bonnet in every direction" (71). But when pressed for a deeper response to Mr. Allen's question, "Do you not think it has an odd appearance, if young ladies are frequently driven about in them by young men, to whom they are not even related," she admits "Yes … a very odd appearance indeed. I cannot bear to see it" (71).

Mr. Allen's speech, Mrs. Allen's insipid response, and the younger generation's blasé attitude toward the carriage ride reveal the contradictory advice given women. Set in sand, societal commandments shapeshifted with whomever held the upper hand at the time. Differing opinions swirl around Catherine, and she, not knowing the rules to the game, questions her guardians on remaining silent if they "thought [she] was doing wrong" (71). Mrs. Allen proves her inadequacy and argues that "young people *will* be young people" (71). Oddly enough, Catherine, an inexperienced young woman, not the experienced Mrs. Allen, senses the danger of an illicit open carriage drive and that it is "something of real consequence" (71). Mr. Allen, who displays more sensibility than his wife, advises Catherine to "not go out with Mr. Thorpe any more" (71). When two people from the same generation can hardly agree on a situation's propriety, a naïve young woman, pressured by her trusted brother and best friend, cannot know which rules to

follow and which to ignore. Just like Adeline, Catherine suffers due to her guardians' inept sensibility and inability to protect her, despite conduct literature's promises of such an agreeable arrangement. Catherine's proven sensibility, however, insinuates that perceptions of one's environment supersede the countless rules governing behaviors within it, despite the ambiguity over rules or mediocre guardians.

Before Catherine's true Gothic journey begins, she has established herself as a young woman of sense and sensibility. She has read John Thorpe correctly from the beginning, has adapted her behavior to endure his rattling discussions, and when she needs to escape his notice or touch, has adapted to new situations with cleverness and physical force when necessary. While Bath is not a Gothic setting and John Thorpe is not a cad with villainy tattooed across his forehead, what Catherine experiences with Thorpe is as dangerous to her as any Gothic plot. Had Thorpe succeeded in wooing her, distancing her from the Tilneys, exposing her to public ridicule and ruin, Catherine would have never fulfilled her destiny: a love match with Henry Tilney, which echoes of Gothic heroines' nightmares of not marrying the men they wish. And while Thorpe did not attempt to kill her—as any good Gothic villain should do—he possessed the potential to destroy her happiness, her independence, her identity. In knowing she needed to escape Thorpe, Catherine displays a sensibility comparable to Gothic heroines. Her ability to stand up for herself, to project her opinions, and to call out men's dishonesty breaks every conduct literature rule and establishes her as a true every-woman's hero.

Her stellar sensibility does not last long, however, and when she leaves reality behind for the romance of an abbey with the Tilneys, her adventure in a Gothic setting will test her sensibility. Before leaving for Northanger Abbey, Catherine's sensibility

perceives something off about General Tilney. Despite his polite attentions and his numerous compliments, "it had been a release to get away from him" (Austen, *Northanger* 88). She cannot rectify her thoughts toward his actions, and deciding that "[i]t could not be [his] fault," as he was "a very charming man," "attribute[s]" her feelings to "her own stupidity" (88). These feelings accelerate as her acquaintance with the General increases. Within Northanger Abbey's confines and with prior misreadings of Gothic tales exaggerating her imagination, a Gothic fog obscures Catherine's perceptions, and she dives headlong into error.

Needing to explain the reason for her "relieved" spirits every time he leaves her, she contrives to connect his evil presence with an evil deed (123). What better object than his dead wife and what better setting for a murder than an abbey? Despite its modern makeover from prior Tilney generations, Catherine refuses to relinquish the mystery and builds her case against him. Upon hearing that he avoided his late wife's favorite walking paths, Catherine is convinced of "[Mrs. Tilney's] unhappiness in marriage," is certain the General "had been an unkind husband," and abandons her perceptive reasoning, concluding that the General is guilty of murder (124, 128). While her sensibility had warned her of the General's untrustworthiness, her over-active Gothic imagination feeds on the mystery of the abbey and Mrs. Tilney's untimely death. Catherine, stripped of sensibility's reasoning powers and left with heightened emotions, echoes Wollstonecraft's fears that "plac[ing] high value on sensibility" would "damage … women because it was not accompanied by … reason" (Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility* xxx). Catherine's stint at Northanger Abbey and her assumptions about the General illustrate Wollstonecraft's concern. Instead of using reason and sensibility,

Catherine abandons both and admits to Henry that she suspects his father of murder. The damage Wollstonecraft alludes to takes shape in Austen's world as a broken heart, overwhelming shame, and the possibility of a love forever ruined due to Catherine's illogical thinking.

Catherine's thinking may have taken illogical avenues, but her perceptions concerning the General are not entirely unfounded, proving sensibility's life-saving capacity, as well as the fact that villains do not always have scars. Villains come in all shapes and sizes, and sometimes a Gothic adventure happens when women simply step over the threshold. After comprehending her error in suspecting the General of killing his wife, an ashamed Catherine realizes her "voluntary, self-created delusion" and her "craving to be frightened" created a perfect breeding ground for her Gothic adventures (Austen, *Northanger* 137). With the Gothic veil torn from her eyes, Catherine's sensibility can again work to its full potential. While the General had not been a tender husband, which gave Mrs. Tilney "much to bear," his actions did not equate to her death. An unkind husband he was; a violent one he was not (136).

However, just because the General is not deadly does not make him not dangerous, which challenges the promised safety of the domestic sphere. General Tilney should have protected Eleanor and his wife from the world's dangers, not embodied them. His unreasonable expectations of his children and his abuse of his wife might not have killed outright, but they did have the power to kill their psyche. Catherine correctly ascertains that while she had incorrectly "suspect[ed] [the General] of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarcely sinned against his character, or magnified his cruelty" (170). After experiencing her harrowing Gothic adventures, Catherine learns the

domestic sphere could not ensure women's safety. Through Catherine's enlightenment, Austen taught women to use their sensibility to judge scenarios and people for themselves.

Austen reinforces the idea that women should have the freedom to think for themselves and questions the notion that men judge people and situations better. Using Henry Tilney as a non-example of sensibility, Austen insinuates women, not men, embody sensibility's "exquisitely polished instinct" (Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility* 1). After Henry discovers Catherine's libelous thoughts concerning the General, he launches into his "We are English" speech (Austen, *Northanger* 136). His speech, however, does not add up. To every question he asks, such as "do our laws connive [such atrocities]" and "could [atrocities] be perpetrated without being known … where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing," Catherine could have answered yes (136). Despite the country, the age, the education, the laws, and "neighborhood[s] of voluntary spies," Britain secreted domestic atrocities everywhere (136). If Tilney's speech had any merit, conduct literature's rules to keep women safe from danger were moot. If Tilney spoke the truth, his father's treatment of Catherine was a behavioral anomaly. If Tilney spoke with confidence, he was ignorant of reality's dangers. However, unlike Catherine, he was never on the receiving end of these atrocities; a simple carriage ride would not have ruined him; a long journey, unescorted with no money, would not have threatened his "physical safety" or "virtue" (158); and landing many miles from his love would not have separated him from her forever.

Fraiman argues that readers should account for Austen's satire when reading Tilney's mention of "voluntary spies," as the idea of "security" takes on the "Gothic

tones" of "surveillance" (136n). Fraiman states "The effect is to ironize Henry's critique of Catherine and to suggest the complexity of Austen's relation to the Gothic: If the heroine's dark suspicions are overdrawn, the hero's cheery confidence may be equally misplaced" (136n). Glock agrees and states, "[T]he proof that Henry can be mistaken, that evil does exit in England, is emphatically demonstrated by the events at Northanger Abbey which culminated in the General's gratuitous acts of cruelty" (41-42). Catherine's enemy might not have been a murdering uncle; but her true enemy, the man who exiles her without protector, strips away the "Gothic episodes" which "imply that evil is illusory," establishing that "evil is … real" (43). By incorporating Gothic dangers and encouraging her readers to learn from Gothic heroines' mistakes, Austen advises her readers to apply their God-given common sense, use their sensibility wisely, act when necessary, and read *all* literature for knowledge, not titillation.

Catherine's sensibility, though misguided at times, challenges the passivity conduct literature instilled in young women, which encouraged women—in all avenues of life, including love—to remain inactive until men directed otherwise. Catherine receives a noble end fit for any Gothic heroine, and because she defies conduct literature's love advice and shows her affection for Henry, she gets her man in the end due to *her* action, not her lover's. Had she followed Gregory's admonishment that "love is not to begin on [women's] part, but is entirely to be the consequence of [men's] attachment to [them]," Catherine would not have won her ultimate desire: Henry Tilney (81). Instead, Austen, who from her battle cries against "a celebrated writer" who "maintained that no young lady can be justified in falling in love before the gentleman's

love is declared," negates Samuel Richardson's[7] advice and declares that "[Henry's] affection originated in nothing better than gratitude,[8] or … that persuasion of her partiality for him had been the only cause of giving her serious thought" (Austen, *Northanger* 17, 168). This notion, both in escaping danger and pursuing desires, dismantles the worldly advice for women to wait for rescue and highlights how Catherine's ability to act saved her from an ignoble end. Her mother, assured of Catherine's safety, even admits that "it is a great comfort to find that [Catherine] is not a poor helpless creature, but can shift very well for herself" (164). Catherine's sensibility perceived a soul mate in Tilney; Catherine's willingness to break with the gender roles endorsed by conduct literature rewards her with her goal of marrying a man she initially chose—not one who first chose her.

Catherine's lessons learned through her mistakes do not define her heroine's journey. While not perfect all the time, Catherine's innate sensibility rarely fails her. She might ignore it, talk herself out of it, or misjudge it, but it exists so that when danger threatens Catherine, she can survive her ignoble exile from Northanger Abbey with a grace made for a bona fide heroine. Even though Catherine's sensibility concludes the wrong reason to distrust the General, she still perceives what others do not about him. Granted, her imagination feeds off obscurity, and like that of her Gothic counterpart, Adeline, Catherine's mind distorts the truth. Even though Catherine's sensibility might not latch onto the General's true evilness, it does protect her against his villainous actions

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[7] In *The Rambler*, a periodical edited by Samuel Johnson, Samuel Richardson contributes a letter stating "[t]hat a young lady should be in love, and the love of the young gentlemen undeclared, is an heterodoxy which prudence, and even policy, must not allow" (Austen 17).

[8] In another perceived undercut to conduct literature, Austen uses the same language Gregory does and twists his dialogue to fit her narrative. His advice to young ladies in love? "When you perceive [a man's attachment to you], it excites your gratitude; this gratitude rises into preference, and this preference … advances to … attachment … and [is] the food of love" (82-83).

toward her. When he drives her from his home in disgrace, Catherine's sensibility, at one point tricking her into hyperbolizing false events, emboldens her with dignity.

In realizing that evil does happen to ordinary women, not just heroines in Gothic novels, Catherine learns a valuable lesson about sensibility and stands, as Conger puts it, "an approximation of Radcliffe's ideal of rational sensibility" (19-20). Like a Gothic heroine in one of Radcliffe's novels, Catherine Morland learns that a healthy sensibility brings about self-awareness. By underlying the satirized plots with this constant theme of sensibility, Austen's "*Northanger Abbey* does not mark the death of Radcliffe's sensibility but rather its fruitful transfiguration" (22). While some have considered it nothing more than a parody of the Radcliffian Gothic, Austen's *Northanger Abbey* does more than mock Gothic tropes. Austen checks all the Gothic's boxes: heroine (imperfect); villain (dastardly); an abbey (modernized but hiding past evils); and the thread holding it all together, a commonsense approach to sensibility. With a Gothic backdrop, Austen dismantled conduct literature's promises, and through her heroine's lessons in sensibility, taught her readers how to use the Gothic to traverse the world's dangers. Catherine, though not born a Gothic heroine, becomes one—a real one.

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While Radcliffe and Austen used the Gothic to subvert conduct literature's lies for their contemporary readers, twenty-first-century readers can and should glean the same lessons taught within *The Romance of the Forest* and *Northanger Abbey*. Modern women may not have the likes of Allestree, Gregory, or Gisborne laying out strict codes of behavior; however, conduct literature is not dead. It survives in social media, women's magazines, and archaic gender roles, which influence how women see themselves and

how society views women. Women may not have villains stalking their every step, waiting in the dark to assault them; however, villains do exist, and while they may not take the form of an evil Marquis, they do take the form of a Thorpe or General Tilney, who see women as a commodity, not as a human. So, modern women must dust off their sensibilities and become everyday heroines of their own stories. Women must sharpen their perceptions, train their emotions, and invoke empathy to defeat their enemies because, as Adeline and Catherine find out, the Gothic does not simply exist in ancient, fantastical, extraordinary worlds. It exists today, in the ordinary and the mundane realities of everyday life.

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