



## Reading Mysteries at Bath and Northanger

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THE FIRST SENTENCE of *Northanger Abbey* informs us that this will be a novel about reading novels: “No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine” declares the narrator (5), assuming that novel-readers like you and me, whose readerly expectations have been shaped by our previous reading of novels, are about to be confounded by Catherine.<sup>1</sup> Just a few pages later we learn that reading—this thing that we are doing—is also what the heroine does: “from fifteen to seventeen [Catherine] was in training for a heroine; she read all such works as heroines must read to supply their memories with those quotations which are so serviceable and so soothing in the vicissitudes of their eventful lives” (7). If *Northanger Abbey* is a novel about reading novels, Catherine is its chief reader. By the fifth chapter, the heroine and her best friend have “shut themselves up, to read novels together” (30), just as we, the readers of *Northanger Abbey*, are doing as we read this sentence: the activity of reading is thus embedded within the novel both as a plot element and as a theme that launches the narrator into her stirring defense of the genre. Even in the final chapter, the narrator calls attention to “the tell-tale compression of the pages” to remind us that we are reading a physical artifact called a book (259). From first to last, then, *Northanger Abbey* is framed as a reflexive challenge to readers.<sup>2</sup>

That challenge becomes explicit in the “only a novel” passage:  
“And what are you reading, Miss ——?” “Oh! it is only a novel!”  
replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected

indifference, or momentary shame.—“It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda;” or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language. (31)

This is a fine call-to-arms, but, curiously, the novels praised here—Frances Burney’s *Cecilia* and *Camilla* and Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda*—are not the novels that Catherine and Isabella are actually reading. William Galperin argues that this “paean to the novel that . . . has little bearing on the specific reading habits of which it is ostensibly a defense” creates a distinction between the “probabilistic” narrator (who praises the “probable” fictions of Burney and Edgeworth) and “a protocol of reading that follows the example of *readers in the novel* in opposing the narrator’s stricture and aims” (144–45).<sup>3</sup> Indeed, readers of this novel, if they are sensitive to the challenge facing them, may well question whether the narrator is defending *all* novels, or only *some* novels: whether, that is, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is also a work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed.<sup>4</sup>

Burney and Edgeworth were generally excepted by those “Reviewers” who “talk in threadbare strains of the trash with which the press now groans” (30) because they wrote serious conduct novels that told probable stories in the best chosen language. Both writers, moreover, in the tradition of Defoe and Richardson, took pains to distinguish their own serious “works” from mere “novels.” Burney’s “Advertisement” to her 1796 *Camilla* begins, “The Author of this little Work . . .,” while Edgeworth is even more explicit (and typical) in her “Advertisement” to her 1801 *Belinda*:

The following work is offered to the public as a Moral Tale—the author not wishing to acknowledge a Novel. Were all novels like those of . . . miss Burney . . . , she would adopt the name of novel with delight: But so much folly, error, and vice are disseminated in books classed under this denomination, that it is hoped the wish to assume another title will be attributed to feelings that are laudable, and not fastidious. (3)

Despite the effort that Burney and Edgeworth made to present their novels as “good” rather than “bad” novels, however, when blue-stocking Hester Lynch Thrale wrote to her dearest friend Frances Burney in 1784 describing the “works” that she read to her daughters, Burney’s own novels were conspicuously absent from the reading régime:

I have however read to them the Bible from beginning to end, and the Roman & English Histories, Milton, Shakespeare, Pope & Young's Works from Head to Heal. Warton & Johnson's Criticisms on the Poets, besides a complete System of Dramatic Writing: & classical—I mean English Classics—they are most perfectly acquainted with. Such works of Voltaire too as were not dangerous we have worked at; Rollin des Belles Lettres, & a Hundred more. (23 March 1784)<sup>5</sup>

Those “Hundred more” works did not necessarily include *Evelina* or *Cecilia*, for Thrale's letter paraphrases a similar passage that she had written about ten days earlier in *Thraliana*, in which she mentions “some elegant Novels as Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield, Voltaire's Zadig &c.” but—again—not either of her friend's highly-praised works (Thrale 1:591). Even a novelist's best friend cannot be counted upon to provide “protection and regard” (30).

Furthermore, as the *Northanger* narrator points out, anti-novel messages were sometimes, ironically, embedded within novels that teach through precept and example the dangers of novel-reading. In *Belinda*, for example, the exemplary Mr. Percival condemns the idea inculcated by “unjust novel writers” that “delicacy” forbids a woman from forming a second attachment, even if she must marry another than her first love: “Pernicious doctrine! false as it is pernicious! The struggles between duty and passion may be the charm of romance, but must be the misery of real life” (256). The same novel features a young girl, Virginia St. Pierre, raised in Rousseauian innocence by the hero, who is corrupted by reading romances.

Quixotic novels that dramatized the dangers of confounding fiction with real life continued to appear throughout Austen's lifetime. She was enjoying Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) two generations after it was published, and in 1814 she also relished *The Heroine*, Barrett's 1813 updating of the genre (see Austen's letters to Cassandra, 7 January 1807 and 2 March 1814). Scott's 1814 *Waverley*, too, is a kind of quixotic novel, for young Waverley is drawn to the Jacobite rebels because of his boyish indulgence in mediaeval romances. Clearly, at the end of the eighteenth century, novels still needed defending not only from critics and moralists, but even from other novelists.

For readers of *this* novel, however, the question remains: which novels are being defended? Each of the “only a novel!” novels singled out for praise in *Northanger Abbey* recounts the story of a genteel, principled, country-bred young lady's introduction to society, and each portrays the vicissitudes of courtship that the heroine endures before she is safely united to the handsome,

worthy young man whom she has loved since the first volume. Of course, *Northanger Abbey*, too, is about a genteel, principled, country-bred young lady's introduction to society, and it too recounts the vicissitudes of courtship that the heroine endures before she is safely united to the handsome, worthy young man whom she has loved since the first volume. But *Northanger Abbey*, uniquely, erases the boundaries between "good" and "bad" categories of novels. Not only does Austen mock the common cant by putting conventional anti-novel sentiments into the mouth of the egregious John Thorpe, but more significantly, when Catherine apologizes to witty Henry Tilney for reading *Udolpho*, sadly conceding that "gentlemen read better books," he cheerfully asserts, "The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid. I have read all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and most of them with great pleasure" (107-08). Henry, clearly disdaining the conventional anti-novel sentiments of Mr. Percival, confesses delight in *Udolpho*.

*Udolpho*, too, can be described as a novel about a genteel, principled, country-bred young lady's introduction to society, one that recounts the vicissitudes of courtship that the heroine endures before she is safely united to the handsome, worthy young man whom she has loved since the first volume. Moreover, Radcliffe's heroine, Emily St. Aubert, faces psychological and moral challenges quite similar to those confronting Burney and Edgeworth's heroines. Emily's father, St. Aubert, is as anxious as Camilla's father, Mr. Tyrold, to school his daughter in emotional self-restraint and fortitude, and Emily, like Edgeworth's Belinda Portman, must learn to adapt to different patriarchal social conventions as she moves from one household to another. Furthermore, all three heroines must cope with an embarrassment of suitors.

The "vicissitudes" experienced by Radcliffe's heroines, however, go far beyond the embarrassing violations of ballroom decorum, verbal misunderstandings, inadequate guardians, importunate suitors, misleading appearances, or empty purses that plague the heroines of Burney and Edgeworth novels, while Radcliffe's displacement of extreme plot events to distant times and places, like the fairy-tale "true history" romances of a century earlier that were mocked in *The Female Quixote*, meant that readers could not easily mistake her tales as guides to modern living—despite the anachronistically modern sensibility of her heroines.

Yet even in the midland counties of England, contemporary novel heroines might experience gothic perils of abduction, seduction, imprisonment, and violent death. Camilla's father, for example, lands in debtor's prison, while

her sister Eugenia is abducted by a man who, first, forces her into marriage, and then, while threatening to shoot her, accidentally kills himself. Cecilia, too, witnesses her guardian's dramatic suicide at Vauxhall and is later imprisoned in a pawn shop. Both heroines suffer temporary madness complete with gothic visions. Clearly, a heroine doesn't have to travel to the Alps or the Apennines, or back two centuries in time, to have lurid adventures.

The contemporary distinction between "good" and "bad" novels—between Burney and Edgeworth, on the one hand, and Radcliffe on the other—derived not from the presence or absence of gothic plot elements but rather from the nature of the mysteries faced by the heroine. The mysteries in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* consist of questions about unexplained phenomena—plaintive music heard in the night, sinister locked rooms, obscure documents, sad nuns, secret passages, hooded strangers, absent wives—for which explanations are provided in full only after volumes of further adventures. These mysteries, artificially constructed and woven into complex plots, are intended to delight readers by cultivating intense sensations of fear and suspense that can only be satisfied by further reading. The revelations at the end of Radcliffe's novels are often anti-climactic because the explanations are almost beside the point. What matters are the sensations provoked by the mystery, not the satisfaction of solving the mystery.

*Northanger Abbey* testifies to the addictive quality of these sensations. When Catherine joins Isabella in the Pump Room at the start of Chapter Six, Isabella interrupts her own raptures upon the hat that she saw in Milsom Street to ask,

"But, my dearest Catherine, what have you been doing with yourself all this morning?—Have you gone on with Udolpho?"

"Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil."

"Are you, indeed? How delightful! Oh! I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world! Are not you wild to know?"

"Oh! yes, quite; what can it be?—*But do not tell me—I would not be told upon any account.* I know it must be a skeleton, I am sure it is Laurentina's skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it. I assure you, if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for all the world." (32-33, my emphasis)

Significantly, Catherine does not *want* to be told the secret, for knowledge

would erase imagination. A short while later, she is “left to the *luxury of a raised, restless, and frightened imagination* over the pages of Udolpho, lost from all worldly concerns of dressing and dinner” (46, my emphasis). *Udolpho*’s withheld information, the gaps in the narrative, permit Catherine, as reader, to imagine what the narrative will not state, and to experience pleasurable, because safe, sensations of suspense and fear.

These passages suggest that Catherine, under Isabella’s corrupting influence, is in danger of becoming addicted to suspenseful, sensational fiction, the literary crack-cocaine of the 1790s. But I don’t think we have to worry about Catherine. Throughout the Bath chapters, she proves an excellent empiricist who never interprets reality through the paradigm of fiction, and who learns pretty quickly to read that unstable text, John Thorpe, a man who is both hyperbolic and self-contradictory. While at Northanger, she also learns to decode Isabella’s hypocrisies. And until very late in the novel, she keeps insisting that what happens in novels cannot possibly happen to her.

Even more significantly, she speaks with pleasure about another novel written two generations earlier and still popular in the Morland household: Samuel Richardson’s *Sir Charles Grandison*. Published in 1753–54, it was already half a century old when Austen was writing *Northanger Abbey*. Isabella is shocked when Catherine praises the novel:

“Sir Charles Grandison! That is an amazing *horrid* book, is it not?—I remember Miss Andrews could not get through the first volume.”

“It is not like Udolpho at all; but yet I think it is very *entertaining*.”

“Do you indeed!—you surprize me; I thought it had not been readable.” (35, my emphasis)

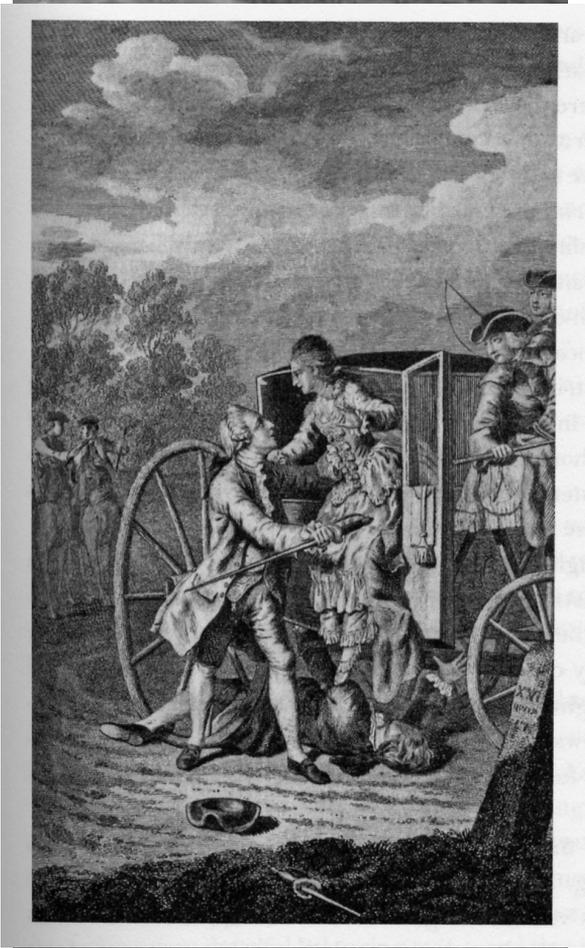
When Isabella calls *Grandison* “horrid,” she is using the word in a very different sense than Catherine had just a page or two earlier when she asked Isabella about the seven gothic novels recommended by Miss Andrews: “but are they all *horrid*, are you sure they are all *horrid*?” (33, my emphasis). Just a chapter later, Isabella’s brother John Thorpe assures Catherine that Burney’s *Camilla* (published, in 1796, with “Miss J. Austen, Steventon” listed among the paid subscribers) “is the *horriddest* nonsense you can imagine” (43, my emphasis). Hilariously, Thorpe thus inverts conventional critical judgment, condemning *Camilla* as improbable while praising Matthew Lewis’s over-the-top gothic novel *The Monk* and claiming that Radcliffe’s novels had “some . . . nature in *them*” (43). The double use of the word “horrid” to mean both scary and

boring is one of several examples of semantic confusion in *Northanger Abbey* (think of the “something very shocking indeed” to come out of London), which in this case serves to link the respectable novels of Richardson and Burney to the racier romances of Radcliffe.

Of course, “horrid” *Sir Charles Grandison* was the paradigmatic account of a genteel, principled, country-bred young lady’s introduction to society and the vicissitudes of courtship that she endures before she is safely united to the handsome, worthy young man whom she has loved since the first volume. Jane Austen could refer with confidence to Richardson’s last novel, knowing that her readers were as likely to have read it as *Udolpho*. Everyone knew *Grandison*, or at least, knew about it, since it served as a template for generations of novelists (Harris xiv, xxii-xxiii). So what challenges or *longeurs* did Miss Andrews encounter in that first volume of *Grandison* that rendered it so very much more horrid, in the negative sense, than *The Mysteries of Udolpho*?

There are no black veils in Volume One of *Sir Charles Grandison*. Instead, we meet Harriet Byron, a lovely, lively, good-humored, well-bred young lady of twenty who is supported by a network of family and friends. In the opening chapters, set in her native Northampton, Harriet is beset by suitors, but she is holding out for Mr. Right, for she must both love and honor the man to whom she would vow obedience. When she arrives in London for the season, she wins still more hearts. Volume One is mostly taken up with Harriet’s attempts to let her many ardent suitors down gently. One of them, however—Sir Hargrave Pollexfen—won’t take no for an answer. Harriet repeatedly rejects his heart, hand, title, and fortune, telling him, much as Elizabeth Bennet will later tell Darcy, that his arrogance is ungentlemanly and that she will no longer admit him to her society. He responds by abducting her after a masquerade ball. In this epistolary novel, we learn the details about her brief, terrifying imprisonment from Harriet herself only after she has been rescued by Sir Charles Grandison, who accidentally happens upon her distress and responds with courageous, disinterested chivalry.

Sir Charles—the inspiration for Austen’s parodic Charles Adams, the dazzling hero of “Jack & Alice”—is a model gentleman: handsome, brave, principled, warm-hearted, discreet, chivalrous, charming, and rich. If Richardson’s *Clarissa* was meant to be a Christian heroine, his Sir Charles, he claimed, was offered as “the Example of a Man acting uniformly well thro’ a Variety of trying Scenes, because all his Actions are regulated by one steady Principle: A Man of Religion and Virtue; of Liveliness and Spirit; accomplished and agreeable; happy in himself, and a Blessing to others” (4).



*Sir Charles Grandison  
delivering Harriet Byron  
from the clutches of Sir  
Hargrave Pollexfen, by Isaac  
Taylor. Thomas Cadell  
(1778). © Trustees of the  
British Museum.*

That's how Harriet Byron sees him. By the end of Volume One, she is an intimate family friend, utterly smitten by her savior, who gallantly claims her as a third sister, while her friends happily await his declaration. But it will take six more volumes before they are united. Many of those chapters are set in Italy, where Sir Charles may already have committed himself to another worthy young lady, the Signora Clementina della Poretta, daughter of the Marchese della Poretta. In those later volumes, when Sir Charles returns to Italy to sort out his obligations to the lovely Clementina, things become rather gothic. Well, it *is* Italy after all, and as Jocelyn Harris notes in her introduction to *Grandison*,

The Italian episodes are particularly redolent of romance, from the love between Sir Charles as Abelard and Clementina as Eloisa to the tyranny of the parents . . . . In Italy live women with real titles, large fortunes, and romance names like Clementina, Olivia, and Laurana, who for love stab, speak in the broken accents of a Portuguese Nun, and even run mad. Confidants, orange groves, temples; the apparatus of confinement and torture; persecution by Church and state; disguises and assassins: Richardson researched for this part of the work with care, but the heightening of what he chose is the method of romance. (xvii)

In later volumes, or at least, in the Italian episodes, *Sir Charles Grandison* might indeed qualify as “horrid” in Catherine’s approving sense of the word as well as in Isabella and John Thorpe’s dismissive sense. Its suspense, however, derives not from gothic mysteries but from questions of character and psychology: will Sir Charles choose Harriet or Clementina?

*Grandison’s* plot is highly episodic, for Richardson kept inventing events and circumstances to illustrate the conduct-book morals that he wanted to dramatize. Nevertheless, the first volume, with lively dialogue recorded in the letters and Harriet’s witty commentary upon her various acquaintances and relationships, is light, bright, sparkling, and laced with Richardson’s psychological acuity. Miss Andrews’s dismissal, therefore, is akin to my saying (as indeed, I did say when I was fourteen) that I couldn’t get past the first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*.

The first volume of *Sir Charles Grandison* in the *Oxford World’s Classics* edition is 221 pages long. Roughly the same number of pages of *Udolpho* brings us to . . . the black veil!<sup>6</sup> But a great deal more happens in Radcliffe’s pages than in Richardson’s. By the time we reach that veil on page 305 of this 875-page edition (Chapter Two, Volume Two, if you’re counting), the beautiful, sensitive, virtuous heroine, Emily St. Aubert, has met and fallen in love with a worthy young man, the Chevalier Valancourt, of whom her father approves; she has encountered some unexplained mysteries; suffers the loss of her beloved parents; and is forced to live with her selfish, worldly, widowed aunt Madame Cheron, who first forbids her to have any contact with her lover, then approves their engagement. But when Madame Cheron suddenly marries her sinister Italian suitor, Signor Montoni, Emily is once again forbidden to see Valancourt. Montoni then hurries Emily, her aunt, and their servant Annette away from Gascony over the mountains to his palazzo in corrupt Venice, then to a villa, where he tries to force her to marry the smitten Count

Morano; and finally to Udolpho, Montoni's remote, decaying castle in the Tuscan Apennines. Only at this point, as Emily and Annette explore their new quarters, do they enter

a chamber, hung with pictures. . . . Passing the light hastily over several . . . pictures, [Emily] came to one concealed by a veil of black silk. The singularity of the circumstance struck her, and she stopped before it, wishing to remove the veil and examine what could thus carefully be concealed, but somewhat wanting courage. "Holy Virgin! what can this mean?" exclaimed Annette. "This is surely the picture they told me of at Venice."

"What picture?" said Emily. "Why a picture—a picture," replied Annette, hesitatingly—"but I never could make out exactly what it was about, either."

"Remove the veil, Annette."

"What! I, ma'amselle!—I! not for the world!" Emily, turning around, saw Annette's countenance grow pale. "And pray, what have you heard of this picture, to terrify you so, my good girl?" said she. "Nothing, ma'amselle: I have heard nothing, only let us find our way out." (305)

Eventually, despite her mistress's orders, the frightened Annette retreats with the light, forcing Emily to follow.

"What is the reason of this Annette?" said Emily, when she overtook her, "what have you heard concerning that picture, which makes you so unwilling to stay when I bid you?"

"I don't know what is the reason, ma'amselle," replied Annette, "nor any thing about that picture, only I have heard, there is something very dreadful belonging to it—and that it has been covered up in black *ever since*—and that nobody has looked at it for a great many years—and"—"Well, Annette," said Emily, smiling, "I perceive it is as you say—that you know nothing about the picture." (305-06)

The full passage (I have cut it considerably) employs a common trope in Radcliffe, wherein a comic servant questioned by his or her master or mistress resists all pressure to tell the tale quickly, thus burlesquing Radcliffe's own narrative techniques. Despite Annette's reluctance, Emily determines to revisit that room, so, twenty pages later, "with faltering steps" she approaches the picture "and then, with a timid hand, lifted the veil; but instantly let it fall—perceiving that what it had concealed was no picture, and before she could leave the chamber, she dropped senseless on the floor" (325).

The narrator will still not let us see behind that veil. All we are allowed to know is the effect of the hidden image upon poor Emily, who first faints, then is filled with horror and dread (326). Emily guards this secret from Annette, from her aunt Madame Montoni, and from us, the readers of *Udolpho*, since we do not learn what Emily saw until the penultimate chapter of this long work. Only then does Radcliffe lift the black silk veil to reveal—nothing very terrifying: the waxen image of a worm-eaten woman, a *memento mori*, which Emily had misread for the real thing. This is perhaps the most extreme example of Radcliffe's technique: she stimulates us to anticipate dreadful discoveries, only to offer, after hundreds of pages of anxious anticipation, an anti-climactic, rational explanation. Radcliffe thus has it both ways: as readers, we are prompted to imagine a decaying corpse behind that veil, but when at long last the author satisfies our curiosity, she can laugh at us for falling into the same foolish error as did Emily.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, the mysteries of *Northanger Abbey*, like those of *Grandison*, are the common mysteries of human behavior. Everywhere Catherine goes in Bath, she encounters people like Isabella and John Thorpe, or General Tilney, who say one thing but mean another. They are vexed texts for Catherine to read. Even Henry and Eleanor Tilney, who speak the counterintuitive language of the picturesque, use words in baffling ways. The *Udolpho* mysteries delight Catherine, but the mysteries of people puzzle and disturb her. She begs Isabella not to reveal the mysteries of *Udolpho*, but she actively seeks to solve the mysteries of those who, like General Tilney, “say one thing so positively, and mean another all the while,” complaining, “How were people, at that rate, to be understood?” (218).

Only at *Northanger* does she fall back upon fictional models for understanding human behavior. In this she is encouraged by Henry's own parodic gothic tale, spun as he drives her to *Northanger*. She protests, “Oh! but this will not happen to me, I am sure” (162), but bits of his story *do* happen to her as she finds herself reenacting scenes, albeit comically deflated, that parody Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (alone in a room in an abbey, discovering a mysterious document in a chest!), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (the guest of a tyrannical host who never speaks of his dead wife and hides her picture from view!), and eventually *The Italian* (her dashing lover will marry her despite unreasonable parental opposition!).<sup>8</sup> Henry has, in effect, spread a black silk veil over *Northanger Abbey*, and when Catherine lifts it, she misreads what she sees. Since goodhearted, candid Catherine believes that evil people exist only in novels, she can only read the hypocrisy and selfishness of the General's be-

havior in relation to fictional templates, thus coming to conflate Northanger Abbey with an abbey or castle in the Alps or Pyrenees and imagining General Tilney to be a wife-murderer in the style of the Marquis de Montalt, Signor Montoni, or the evil monk Schedoni. Catherine, however, is a sensible girl. When Henry affirms his father's probity and rebukes her suspicions, "The visions of romance were over. . . . Most grievously was she humbled" (204). Her essential common sense is reestablished, and her naive candor is revised by a healthy sense of the complexity of human nature, for now, "among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad" (205-06). That mixture, that staining of her previously unspotted view of human behavior, marks Catherine's maturity as a true heroine. Now she incorporates into her view of ordinary human nature those gothic motives—greed, selfishness, insensitivity to the suffering of others—that she had hitherto believed to occur only in books.

By this point, readers of this novel recognize that General Tilney, motivated by the base emotions of greed and vanity, is a domestic tyrant who not only blights the happiness of his children but also turns a young lady for whom he has assumed parental responsibility, and to whom he owes his protection, out of his house on short notice to find her own way home by post-chaise. For an English gentleman, this is a crime indeed. Certainly Eleanor feels it to be so, crying to Catherine: "Good God! what will your father and mother say! After courting you away from the protection of real friends to this—almost double distance from your home, to have you driven out of the house, without the considerations even of decent civility!" (232). Such an act, Eleanor insists, "is of the greatest consequence; to comfort, appearance, propriety, to your family, to the world" (233). Clearly General Tilney's actions fundamentally betray the values of his class and society. In some ways his crime is even more shocking than the criminal acts of Radcliffe's villains—who had the excuse, after all, of living in less law-abiding times and places.<sup>9</sup>

So maybe *The Mysteries of Udolpho* really does turn out to be, along with *Sir Charles Grandison*, *Cecilia*, *Camilla*, and *Belinda*, a reliable guide to human behavior in the midland counties of England. After all, it is only a novel (not *The Spectator*, nor even *The Mirror*) that guides Catherine as she attempts to read the mysteries of Northanger Abbey. The heroine of this novel happily patronizes her fellow heroines, and we, the readers of this novel, can profit from her experience.

## NOTES

1. Galperin, also reading this sentence as “plainly an attack on readerly expectation or on the appetite for heroines who are extraordinary in every way,” argues that the narrator’s irony becomes “unstable” as Catherine’s “ordinary” proclivities are called “unaccountable” (141).
2. Among the many critics who have made this observation, see Bander 220; Galperin 142; Grogan 9–10, 18–20, 23; Todd 36.
3. Readers of the novel, Galperin argues, must do better than the “inattentive” narrator (142).
4. Or even, whether powerful minds can derive rich, morally-correct readings from any text—a question debated throughout the eighteenth century by critics who blamed writers for the harmful effects of novels on readers, and by novelists who, in their prefaces, insisted that their works were morally intended and that it was a reader’s responsibility to read the work correctly. See Bander for a summary of this debate.
5. Austen later parodies Thrale’s epistolary style in a letter to Cassandra, 11 June 1799.
6. I am allowing *Udolpho* a few extra pages because the font size in the Penguin edition is a bit larger than that of the Oxford *Grandison*, but as a rough estimate, *Grandison*’s first volume contains about the same number of words as the first third of *Udolpho*—the point at which we reach the black silk veil.
7. For a more politicized reading of Austen’s debt to Radcliffe’s displacement of violence from narrative to imagination, see Clara Tuite, who argues that “Radcliffe’s female Gothic offers a representation not of violence but of the heroine’s interior apprehension and imaginative production of violence” through her use of free indirect discourse, “a mode of representing female interiority” that uses the “doubling” of voices (the narrator’s and the character’s) akin to the double voice of parody (62).
8. Convincing arguments have been made for other sources of Henry’s tale. See, for example, Sheila Graham-Smith.
9. See also Dussinger.

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