Introduction

Rosamond; or, A Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of an American Female under the Popish Priests, in the Island of Cuba (1836); *Father Eustace: A Tale of the Jesuits* (1847) by Frances Trollope; *Six Hours in a Convent: or The Stolen Nuns!* (1854) by Charles Frothingham; *The Jesuit's Daughter: A Novel for Americans to Read* (1854) by Ned Buntline; *The Archbishop; or, Romanism in the United States* (1855) by Orvilla Belisle; *Overdale; or, The Story of a Pervert: A Tale for the Times* (1869) by Emma Jane Worboise. How did such narratives, with their eighteenth-century titles and seventeenth-century bigotry, come to be written and read in the nineteenth century? And there were many more, some obscure but others – like Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery* (1836) and Charles Kingsley's *Westward, Ho!* (1855) – wildly and widely popular. If these tales were to be believed (and any number of them were), across the United States and Great Britain and throughout the nineteenth century, women were being kidnapped from confessionals, imprisoned and raped in convents; Inquisitors continued to maintain and use hidden torture chambers; Jesuits practiced their time-honored treacheries; nuns posing as governesses corrupted Protestant children; priests hovered at deathbeds, snatching away family fortunes; Papal emissaries plotted to overthrow government power; Mother Superiors tyrannized over helpless girls, barring all parental intervention. While the belated presence of these "no-popery" narratives may seem puzzling, unlikelier still appears the readiness of writers like Sarah Josepha Hale, Charlotte Brontë, Benjamin Disraeli, and Henry James to borrow plots, characters, and imagery from the ready materials of anti-Catholic fiction.

In 1871, Harriet Beecher Stowe complained – perhaps disingenuously – that narrative fiction had become the primary genre for religious discourse: "Hath any one in our day, as in St. Paul's, a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation, forthwith he wraps it up in a serial story."[1] *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* explores why this might

be so. Why did fiction seem the appropriate form for religious controversy? Conversely, what did the images, plots, rhetoric, and characters of anti-Catholicism offer nineteenth-century novelists?

Reading widely and closely in Victorian anti-Catholic narrative makes clear that well-known stories and figures provide a narrative language for discussion and analysis of a range of cultural ideas and problems, including the roles of women, shifting definitions of masculinity, the status of marriage, education and citizenship, and literary professionalism, and, most importantly, Protestant self-critique. Stowe's metaphor is misleading, as her own example illustrates. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* powerfully moved its readership not by wrapping an intact sermon in a story but through what we might call a narrative theology. The social and political responses of Stowe's readership come about through engagement with her fiction as such: through the complex rhetorical manipulations of her narrative, the careful construction of emotional identification with its characters, the recognition of narrative conventions, the participation in plot tensions and anticipations.[2] Some anti-Catholic "novels" *are* little more than a doctrine wrapped in a fictional cover: minimally narrativized debates, designed so that the Protestant spokesperson may demonstrate (ostensibly to the other characters but actually to the patient Protestant reader) the errors of Catholic theology. Much of "Charlotte Elizabeth" (Charlotte Tonna's) fiction fits this "talking heads" description, as do books like Stephen Jenner's *Steepleton; High Church and Low Church: Being the Present Tendencies of Parties in the Church, Exhibited in the History of Frank Faithful* (1847). So, too, there are many nineteenth-century novels which include satiric depictions of a "Romish" character (Anthony Trollope's Barchester series is an obvious example). I have found more interesting those texts that make their arguments against Catholicism narratively – that is, in and through their plots and characters. Exploring what Jonathan Loesberg calls the "ideology of genre," *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* analyzes the plots and tropes of anti-Catholicism not as structures to be read through (as historians have too often done), but as fruitful objects of study themselves. Following Jameson, Loesberg argues for a possible congruence between the narrative structures of ideology and the generic and narrative structures of literature.[3] The formulaic conventions and formal variations of anti-Catholic fiction can be understood, then, as instances – rather than reflections – of the meaning-making that is ideology. This function is underscored when the plots and characters of anti-Catholic fiction find their ways into sermons, legal testimony, parliamentary proceedings, and newspaper reports. The narrative logics – what William Dean Howells calls the "foregone conclusion[s]" – of

anti-Catholic fiction, are, as his own love story about an Italian priest and an American couple illustrates, meaningful as attempts to engage with historical circumstances, literary precedents, and a contemporary readership. I want to recover the analytic tools of formalist consideration and close reading too often missing from our contemporary criticism by showing their compatibility with – indeed, I would argue their necessity for – historical study. We cannot understand either the popularity or the uses of these narratives by ignoring the forms they take. This book therefore begins the work of describing the forms of anti-Catholic fiction, outlining standard plots like the escaped nun's tale, the priest–wife–husband triangle, the brotherhood of young men challenging an incestuous holy father's control of his daughter, and showing how these narrative structures, at various historical moments, respond to and shape the cultural, political, and legal issues of the day.

THE PROTESTANT IMAGINARY

Both Britain and America had long traditions of anti-Catholicism, but specific events revivified them in the nineteenth century.[4] One was certainly the heavy Irish immigration to England and the United States following the 1845 failure of the potato crop. A million and a half Irish emigrated during the decade, most to the United States and England. The resulting changes in both countries were marked. The Roman Catholic population of the United States burgeoned, so much so that by 1850 Catholics comprised the single largest Christian denomination in the country.[5] The Northeast, where many Catholic immigrants settled, became the primary source of American anti-Catholic literature. The shifts in the British Isles were significant as well. In 1841, 400,000 Irish-born were living in England, Wales, and Scotland; by 1861, England and Wales together counted 600,000 inhabitants born in Ireland.[6]

Powerful as anti-Irish feeling was at times in both countries, it does not fully account for – nor is it identical with – the anti-Catholicism of the period.[7] For one thing, the considerable German immigration to the United States in the second half of the century also included a substantial number of Catholics who roused nativist American suspicions. Traditional Anglo-American associations of Catholicism with Southern Europe remained strong, as evidenced by repeated representations of sinister Italian and Spanish clerics and of the corruption of the Renaissance Papacy and the horrors of the Inquisition.[8] Nor were attacks on the Catholic Church confined to the ethnicity of its congregants. A variety of events

strengthened anti-Catholic sentiment in the nineteenth century: legislative changes in Britain, starting with the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1800 and including bills regarding support for Maynooth and the need for convent inspections; a series of sensational British legal cases like Metairie v. Wiseman and others, the Talbot case, Connelly v. Connelly, and Achilli v. Newman; and actions on the part of the Catholic Church, from the reinstitution of a Roman Catholic hierarchy in Britain to the sponsorship of the Leopold missionary movement in America. Significant, too, were changes within Protestantism itself, from the Tractarian and Ritualist movements within the Church of England to the growing heterogeneity of Protestant practices in both countries. Indeed, my argument is that what nineteenth-century anti-Catholic fiction tells us about are the Protestantisms of the period.

What did "Roman Catholic" mean to anti-Catholic novelists and their readerships? Roman Catholicism appears in England and America as foreign infiltration, as, variously, Irish, German, Italian, French influence. Yet anti-Catholic polemicists also simultaneously depict Catholicism as dangerous because it is a religion without a country; indeed, a religion inimical to nationhood. This threat is figured perhaps most vividly in Catherine Sinclair's appropriation of Eugene Sue's characterization of the Jesuits as the "Thugs of Christendom," an international brotherhood, sworn to secrecy and bent on world domination. Missionary activity in the American West, Rome's reestablishment of a church hierarchy in England (the so-called Papal Aggression) – activities like these confirmed Anglo-American fears that Catholic obedience to the Papacy was incompatible with either independent citizenship or loyal subjecthood. "CATHOLICS OWE NO ALLEGIANCE TO THE U. STATES," trumpets *Startling Facts for Native Americans called "Know-Nothings," or a Vivid Presentation of the Dangers to American Liberty, to be Apprehended from Foreign Influence* in 1855.[9] If Protestantism was understood as a defining aspect of "American" and "British," Catholicism was doubly dangerous, implying as it did both the immigrant's refusal to be converted from a prior nationality and membership in an anti-national organization.

This threat was given particular force by the Catholic Church's claim of authenticity – its self-identification as the unchanged and unchanging religion founded by Christ, the foundation for Catholic clerical authority and religious practices. Catholicism claimed to be, in every sense, the religion of "real presence." Protestants disputed the authenticity of Catholic belief and practices by describing Romanism as a religion of forms and surfaces: gilded decorations, ritualized behaviors, and mediated (through

clergy or saints) relations with God. In contrast, Protestant religiosity was said to be distinguished by its wholeness and integrity: individual reading of the Bible and personal experience of the divine make for a religion that runs deep. Unlike Catholicism, a religion which is theatrically performed, real (Protestant) Christianity permeates the believer, makes for a genuine, homogeneous self. But the teleology of Protestant history, which linked the global march of civilization to progressive religious development, reaching its apogee in the Protestant nationalism of Britain and America meant that, as Protestants looked back at the past, they were forced to see the Catholic Church as in some sense originary. Indeed, so powerfully is the claim of Catholic priority felt that Protestant polemic assimilates the Church of Rome with Judaism. While the trajectory and meaning of this religious teleology was, of course, understood distinctly in the two nations, what was shared was the resulting defensive characterization of nineteenth-century Catholicism as anachronistic: William Sewell calls Roman Catholicism "virtually a restoration of Judaism,"[10] and the Jesuit appears repeatedly in polemical fiction as the Wandering Jew, an unregenerate, archaic figure, stubbornly clinging to the idea of an "Old Testament" patriarchal God of harsh judgment and physical punishment.[11] Catholicism is the primitive that Protestantism leaves behind: a religion of holy fathers who demanded unquestioning obedience, a cult fixated on the body, both as the site of penitential torture and as target of sensuous appeal (incense, candles, brightly colored statues). Attributing such qualities to Catholics, nineteenth-century Protestants defined by contrast, as well as buttressed, what they saw as their own more appropriately modern belief in a feminized Christ, internalized self-discipline, and evolved spirituality. Especially in America, the domestic ideal of the patriarch leading his household in prayer had given way to the mother reading the Bible with the child. Victorian Protestants replaced the Catholic image of the Virgin Mary with the figure of the Protestant mother, who serves not as mediatrix but as inculcator of norms – an inculcation that proceeds through love. Anti-Catholic writers contrast this domestic ideal with the church- and priest-centered worship of Catholics.[12] What Franchot calls "the antidomestic cultural architecture"[13] of the confessional and the convent are depicted as sites of patriarchal bodily punishment, retrograde refusals of the religious progress signaled by Protestant self-examination and a spiritualized maternal intimacy. Catholic secrecy is shown as at once attacking and substituting for Protestant privacy.

Yet what was perceived as the archaic absolute authority of the Roman Catholic Church and its clergy evoked, for some Protestants, not only a horrified retreat, but also a longing for submission. The Church of

England's status as a national church and the state orthodoxies of early
America notwithstanding, Protestantism had, from its inception, empha-
sized the individual's unmediated relationship with God. If that tradition
helps explain Protestant abhorrence of what was understood as Catholic
clergy's power over parishioners, and, in turn, the Pope's ability to command
absolutely, growing challenges to a hierarchical, institutionalized Protes-
tantism in both countries suggests, in part, how such authority might
appear as a felt need. These mixed emotions were fostered throughout the
century by a variety of generational shifts – in theories of child-rearing
and education, in workplace experiences, in mobility, in the situations of
women, and in definitions of masculinity. Circulating around the image
of the Catholic spaces as the site, and the Pope as the embodiment, of
primitive externalized authority are nineteenth-century questions about
individual autonomy. The depictions of the confessional by Hawthorne,
Brontë, and James; the violent responses to the jurisdictions claimed by
Archbishop John Hughes of New York and Cardinal Wiseman in England
at mid-century; the extreme reactions to the papal declaration of infalli-
bility in later decades all point to a regressive "attraction of repulsion."[14]
James Parton, in a two-part article in the 1868 *Atlantic Monthly* on "Our
Roman Catholic Brethren," describes Catholic's enviable "*certainty*!" Parton
explains that "There is nothing they pity us so much for as the doubt and
uncertainty in which they suppose many of us are living concerning funda-
mental articles of faith. A Catholic cannot doubt; for the instant he doubts
he ceases to be a Catholic. . . . His priest is the director of his soul; he
has but to obey his direction." Parton blithely predicts that Catholicism
will become so Protestantized and Americanized in the United States that
"we [are] all going to be Roman Catholics, then, about the year 1945."[15]
For anti-Catholic writers, this is a nightmare vision, albeit one that they
fear is far more imminent. Nonetheless, the "*certainty*" that lies in obedi-
ence also appears as a dangerous attraction in anti-Catholic writings. The
authenticity of Catholic authority offers a possible antidote not only to
potential historical illegitimacy of the Protestant Church but also to the
felt inauthenticity of the nineteenth-century Protestant self. These mixed
emotions surface in the lovingly detailed scenes of sexual violence endemic
to the literature of anti-Catholicism, where the dynamics of recognition and
authentication are played out in scenes of bodily mutilation and penitential
practices. At work here, of course, is an inherited sexualized rhetoric of anti-
Catholicism, its central topics (e.g., the convent as the site of sadism) and its
traditional images (e.g., Rome as the Scarlet Woman).[16] Yet the catalogues
of Romanism's tortures that pervade nineteenth-century anti-Catholic

fiction are less expressions of an invariant psychoanalytic complex and more vehicles for the narrative analysis of contemporary cultural problems. The specific sado-masochisms of these texts, in fact, return us to the issues of obedience, autonomy, and authority central to what the Victorians saw as their rapidly and radically changing times.[17]

The nationalist religious teleology that marks Catholicism as a retrograde religion makes Catholicism Protestantism's – and thus, variously, Britain's and America's – past. Benedict Anderson describes the need to read "nationalism genealogically – as the expression of a historical condition of serial continuity,"[18] an understanding reflected in these novels' preoccupation with questions of origin, of legitimacy, of identity. Rapid demographic, legal, theological, and educational changes in Britain and America seem to have raised the old question of how Protestantism should maintain its authenticity in the face of Catholic priority with new urgency. Anti-Catholic novelists answer by telling the chronicles of Protestant America and Protestant Britain as originary family narratives, played out in inheritance plots, in stories structured by generational conflict, in the characters of missing or malevolent mothers and fathers, by depictions of incest and of triangular structures of desire. Fictions like Charles Kingsley's *Westward, Ho!* and William Sewell's *Hawkstone* position themselves as histories both national and psychological. *Hawkstone*, for example, attempts to trace the origins of religious and civil authority by telling a family narrative centered around what Sewell calls the primal sin, the sexualized rebellion against paternal authority, emblematized, he argues, by Oedipus.[19] Nativist American novelists in the 1850s depict United States history as a chronicle of sons' repeated attempts to bury and to resurrect their fathers. These historical warrants support my study's attempt, not to read through anti-Catholic fiction to psychoanalytic truth, but to think about why such stories "worked" for audiences and authors at the time and about what that work was.

Protestantism's Catholic past haunts the present in these narratives as the uncanny,[20] manifested in monsters both literal and metaphoric: the murdered and murdering father, the gang of thugs, the living dead, bloody bodies, vampires. As Homi Bhabha suggests, perhaps foremost among those "narratives and discourses that signify a sense of nationness" are those of "the *heimlich* pleasures of the hearth, the *unheimlich* terror of the space or race of the Other."[21] The enclosure of the confessional; the dungeons of the Inquisition; the Catholic realms of Canada, Cuba, and Ireland; the Spanish or Italian Jesuit; the Irish mob: all appear as familiar yet foreign presences making themselves at home in England and America.

What makes Catholics so uncannily threatening to Protestants in America and Britain is precisely the historical relationships of the two churches. Protestantism's legitimacy depends upon tracing its origins to, and differentiating itself from, Roman Catholicism. Catholics are thus what Catherine Sinclair calls "unknown relatives": at once familiar and unfamiliar, homely and foreign. Anti-Catholic literature recurrently figures the dangers of the Catholic who "passes" as Protestant: the Jesuit hidden in our midst, the spouse who leads a double (religious) life, the servant who reports family secrets to her confessor. The concept of "mimicry" proves useful in understanding nineteenth-century attitudes towards what were perceived as Catholic infiltration and corruption (dovetailing as it does with traditional Protestant accusations of Catholic superficiality and duplicity). Exemplary here is Sinclair's *Beatrice* in which Catholicism is represented as a kind of colonial counter-invasion. Polemical Protestant writers like Sinclair consistently depict all things Roman Catholic as false and partial – almost-but-not-quite-Christian: the maimed Bible that is the Breviary; the de-gendered celibate clergy – a man in a skirt and a woman shorn of her hair–; the pretty poison of illustrated children's books that secretly inculcate Romanism; the priest who substitutes himself for fathers both biological and heavenly. If the figure of the Confidence Man reflects uneasiness about identity and authenticity rampant in newly mobile, urban nineteenth-century America,[22] these reappearances of the Confidence Man's iconographic ancestor, the Jesuit, also bespeak the uncertainties of the period. Melodramas of conspiracy, as Robert Levine has shown, suit nineteenth-century writers who have a "sense of living in a culture that was unsettled and unsettling."[23] In both Britain and America, what the gaze of the mimicry man reveals, I argue, is the fissures within Protestant America and Britain themselves.

Through an oppositional logic, the Roman Catholic is presented as a ground for the national identities of America and Britain, and the American and the Briton. But what polemical writers consistently depict as the presence of Catholic influence in the Protestant home signals a dynamic that is more complex than the binary logic of a foreign Catholic "Them" versus a familiar Protestant "Us." The Catholic hegemony that Protestant polemic insistently "discovers" is belied by the very multiplicity of the Catholic groups and practices attacked: Jesuits, Carmelites, Irish immigrant families, Italian peasants, Spanish clergy, Archbishop Hughes, Cardinal Wiseman, Pope Pius IX. Similarly, the variety of Protestant identities in the period demonstrates just how limited the explanatory power of a strict system of binary opposition is in this instance. The Protestantisms that "Maria Monk," Sarah Josepha Hale, Frances Trollope, William Sewell, Ned
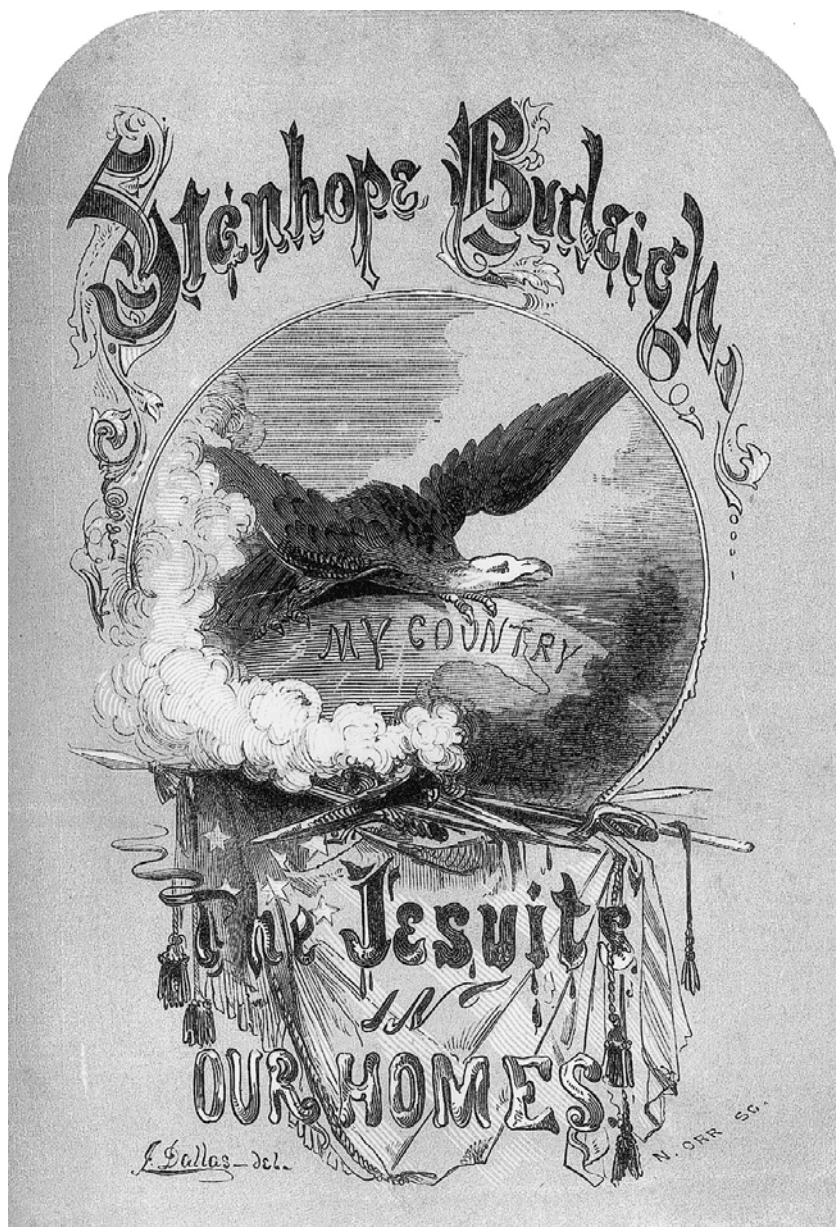
Plate 1   The Jesuit threat to American homes and liberties. *Stanhope Burleigh*, Helen Dhu [Charles Edwards Lester], 1855.

Plate 2   "What, Not come into my own house." *Punch*, 1850.

Buntline, Charles Kingsley, and Robert Buchanan describe are distinct and diverse. Yet "Roman Catholic" serves as a useful construct through which they can write the religion that each sees as constitutive of national identity. In fictions written to muster and solidify the identity and unity of "their" Protestant audiences, anti-Catholic writers unwittingly reveal that, as Homi Bhabha maintains, "The 'other' is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we *think* we speak most intimately and indigenously 'between ourselves.'"[24]

Many Victorian parlors contained exotic art and furniture. Uneasily "folded into" the dominant culture, the foreign object at home marks "material and cultural victories" over the Other, at the same time that it (literally) opens the door to contamination by the foreign.[25] Even more threatening is the entry of the foreign subject into the home (Plates 1 and 2). Nineteenth-century fiction consistently imagines Catholicism's troubling presence in America and Britain as a family story. What should have been, from the Protestant point of view, a successive chronology – a religious and nationalized narrative of progress and modernity – is frustrated by Rome's stubborn refusal to die and be replaced. The old religion uncannily persists in the modern. And it persists as a foreign relative, a husband, a wife, a daughter, a father. Anglo-American Protestantisms are intimately and