THE DANGEROUS AND DEVIOUS STRATEGY OF BEING UNINTELLIGIBLE: WOMEN’S RHETORIC IN GOTHIC NOVELS, 1798-1815

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Melissa Kay Bentley, B.A.

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Melissa Kay Bentley, M.A.

Thesis Advisor: Patrick O’Malley, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the discursive strategies employed by female Gothic novelists in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain. At time of the French Revolution, ruling patriarchy enforced strong, ideologically laden binaries: male/female, rational/irrational, public/private, etc. Since these binaries were organized around principles of opposition, women, on the “wrong” side of the binary were disempowered. Charlotte Lennox’s The Female Quixote demonstrates repressive ideological education at work: Arabella, the protagonist, is devious and unintelligible and is forcibly made to fit within the rigid binary. To prevent oppression and vindicate themselves to ruling patriarchy, many women in the years following turned to the Gothic, a devious genre that focuses on the symbol of female entrapment and resists forcible closure. Perplexingly, female Gothic novels of this period appropriate binaries, concluding with shockingly abrupt finality. This thesis argues that women needed to express themselves intelligibly within these confines or else risk forced capitulation. To do so, women needed to be proficient in both patriarchy’s and their own interpretive strategies and discourses and reconcile two antithetical poles. Only once women were able to gain discursive fluency could they fashion their views as concordant with patriarchal values. Women employed a wide array of rhetorical strategies to express themselves in patriarchy’s idiolect: 1.
capitulation, 2. deception, 3. semantic reinscription, and 4. satire. To explore these strategies, this thesis analyzes Gothic novels written in the late 1790’s and early nineteenth century: Charlotte Dacre’s Zofloya, Sydney Owenson’s The Wild Irish Girl, F.C. Patrick’s More Ghosts!, and Jane Austen’s Northanger Abbey.
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INTRODUCTION

The Subversive Gothic

In Jane Austen’s Gothic parody, *Northanger Abbey* Catherine Morland finds herself linguistically at odds with pedantic Henry Tilney while engaged in conversation:

“I do not understand you.”

“Then we are on very unequal terms, for I understand you perfectly well.”

“Me?—yes; I cannot speak well enough to be unintelligible.”

“Bravo!—an excellent satire on modern language.” (105)

In this instance, Catherine feels linguistic and ontological vulnerability under the penetrating gaze of her suitor and tutor, Henry. Indeed, as Henry corrects her language and grammar, he keenly reads her and evaluates her progress in the gamut of semantic competency. Her anxiety is justified; in their influential work, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar outline the dangers of being “understood perfectly well.” It leaves her open to manipulation and objectification; it is the way of Western patriarchy:

The roots of “authority” tell us, after all, that if woman is man’s property then he must have authored her, just as surely as they tell us that if he authored her she must be his property. As a creation “penned” by man, moreover, woman has been “penned up” or “penned in.” As a sort of “sentence” man has spoken, she has herself been “sentenced”: fated, jailed, for he has both “indicted” her and “indicted” her. As a thought he has “framed,” she has been both “framed” (enclosed) in his texts, glyphs,
Patriarchy, in order to control and dominate, defines, delineates, and thus creates. The nakedness that intelligibility imposes is, furthermore, one tied up in the linguistic quandary of the eighteenth century, the age of Johnson’s dictionary. Thus to be unintelligible, to remain on the periphery of understanding, it would seem, would give one the advantage. Gilbert and Gubar argue that the Gothic’s conventions of “unspeakability,” female entrapment, and temporal and spatial distance—in sum, its unintelligibility—gave women a coding system to speak about the everyday. That Catherine, an ardent reader of the Female Gothic, senses this advantage is significant. A common feminist critique of the Gothic of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century argues that, conventionally, it is a women’s genre—what is more, it is a feminist genre.

Building upon Gilbert and Gubar’s work, Eugenia DeLamotte asserts that the ubiquitous “nameless dread” of the Gothic is, in fact, the fear of being named. Though a woman’s intelligibility may meet the demands of patriarchy, intelligibility leaves her wholly in its power, likely to be buried alive and incarcerated in its discourse (151-3). Manifest in the Gothic’s conventionally elevated and removed discourses on nightmarish terrors is women’s fear of being repressed, oppressed, and confined within Enlightenment, rationalist discourse.

1 Paul Morrison’s essay “Enclosed in Openness: Northanger Abbey and the Domestic Carceral,” which will be further examined in my discussion of Northanger Abbey in Chapter IV, claims that Henry Tilney’s rational, patriarchal discourse utilizes visibility
The Gothic, however, ostensibly serves not only as a means to express female entrapment and anxiety, what DeLamotte calls the “the nightmarish reality of the daylight world,” but also as a means of combating it (151). A.A. Markley argues that “the conventions of the wildly popular Gothic novel provided the perfect context for signifying the subjugation of women” (58). Citing Diane Hoeveler’s term, “Gothic feminism,” Markley argues that the Gothic stands as a valuable tool for reform, particularly feminist reform, because its very form works against cultural norms. Such studies as Robert Kiely’s The Romantic Novel have focused on the Gothic’s tendency to create a literary tradition of its own, rupturing and subverting the very social structures it builds upon. According to Kiely, the Gothic’s refusal of societal norms and defiance of categorization allows it to problematize and enrich the status quo. Far from accepting ideological norms, “the best romantic fiction does not embrace a frozen antithesis; on the contrary, it releases a dynamic antagonism. [. . .] [T]heir primary tendency is to destroy (or, at the very least, undermine) particular narrative conventions. Romantic novels thrive like parasites on structures whose ruin is the source of their life” (2). Kiely’s notion of destructive, transcendent forms resembles Edmund Burke’s definition of the sublime. In A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime, and Beautiful Burke remarks:

[L]et it be considered that hardly any thing can strike the mind with its greatness, which does not make some sort of approach towards infinity;

much the same way as Bentham’s panopticon and, troublingly, the Gothic. As Henry admonishes Catherine to examine her conduct and the world around her, “he unwittingly provides an argument not for the irrelevance of the gothic carceral but for its reinscription in the mode of panoptic visibility or legibility: horror, like charity, begins at home” (21).
which nothing can do whilst we are able to perceive its bounds; but to see an object distinctly, and to perceive its bounds, is one and the same thing.

A clear idea is therefore another name for a little idea. (106)

Burke argues that while clarity might be more easily comprehensible, it only achieves mere affectation, a second-rate representation of reality. However, emotional affect—that is the excitement of passions provoked by the sublime, terrible unknown—expands thought. Thus the more infinite sensations of terror, awe, and pain, the characteristics of the Gothic, enable expression beyond the quotidian, normative view. Achieving higher, sublime thought is only accomplished through defying clarity, through daring to become unintelligible. To intellectuals of eighteenth-century Romanticism, transcendence required transgressions in form and function.

For Enlightenment thinkers, this transgression was a crime, breaking fundamental ideological laws. The Gothic’s most defining characteristic acted contrary to the primary Enlightenment impetus: the need to make the unintelligible intelligible. Education in the Enlightenment consisted of training in identifying, speaking, defining, and classifying. Much of the rhetorical, Enlightenment theory prevailing in the eighteenth century stems from seventeenth-century theorist John Locke who explains that the tool of understanding and intelligibility is language. The purpose of language is two-fold: to record thoughts and to communicate these thoughts to others (817). Unlike Burke, Locke does not consider the potentially constructive effects of unintelligibility but rather focuses upon the need for precision and clarity, particularly in language; uncertainty in language is called an “imperfection” (817) and ambiguous usage an “abuse” (825). Because
confusion occurs when “any word does not excite in the hearer the same idea which it stands for in the mind of the speaker” (817), Locke argues that a common lexicon and language is necessary in order to achieve social progress and constructive dialogue. Ultimately, he proclaims: “Si non vis intelligi, debes neglegi,” or, “If it doesn’t make sense, it can be disregarded” (820). According to Locke, a speaker can only transmit and educate when speaking a common language. Education is linguistic before it is conceptual; students initially learn proper terms and names. Having mastered a lexicon, they can then transmit the ideas that those terms embody. Classification, definition, and transferability are necessary tools in order to transmit meaning and interpretations.

While Locke maintains that there is no governing authority to “establish the precise signification of words” (819), men such as Johnson certainly attempted to. Locke’s notion of a common language is decidedly democratic; however, the environment of eighteenth-century Britain, as I will discuss in more detail later, did not consider women a part of the “common” whole. They were thus cut out from the process of defining and interpreting, depriving them of the right of self-definition. Ultimately, as Michel Foucault explains, naming and organizing is an authoritative act, one that defines, creates, and enforces normative standards:

One might say that it is the Name that organizes all Classical discourse; to speak or to write is not to say things or to express oneself, it is not a matter of playing with language, it is to make one’s way towards the sovereign act of naming, to move, through language, towards the place where things and words are cojoined in their common essence, which makes it possible
Rather than an object to be shaped at the will of the subject it signifies, the Name, as an authoritative decree, acts upon the subject, forcing the subject to signify what the Name means. Enforcing congruence and coherence, it solidifies its own meaning and sovereignty. Further, the purpose of language and words is naming, the final, authoritative act. Apparent in this concept is Foucault’s complex interconnectivity between language, identity, and power. Inasmuch as the Name provides identity to the signifier, the provider of the Name likewise provides the identity. Language and naming, according to Foucault, always act politically. In his critical study of power structures, *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains that authority and power lie in creating binaries, a process not unlike naming: “all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal)” (Foucault 553). In a system of binaries, the act of naming assigns the subject an ideologically laden definition. Binaries serve as the linguistic method for containing and controlling. The binary system and the valuation method extend insidiously into every category of life: male/female, strong/weak, proper/improper, black/white. In creating opposing names, authority creates a system of valuation. If “sane” is good, conversely, “mad” is bad. If “normal” is accepted, “abnormal” must not be. This is what I call the either/or binary. As ruling ideology posits and favors particular ends of the either/or binary, its gives their subjects a choice: you are either in or you are out. Binary naming and defining, acting like a network of enclosures, keeps out those who do not fit, allowing the normative standards to be upheld. Easily
transmissible, these ideas ensure the perpetuation of ideology by excluding anomalies. Naming in the eighteenth century ensured clear, bounded, and concise ideas, the sort that Burke deprecated.

Nevertheless, Foucault’s hypothesis finds strength in the form and function of the novel. Through enclosing and defining, language brings closure. In Narrative and Its Discontents, D.A. Miller argues that the bulk of any novel focuses on introducing opposition, creating conflict, and problematizing idyllic narratives. However, authority—whether it be the narrator, author, or dominant character in the plot—pronounces the final word which must close and end all rebellious or unprincipled discourses: “Moral ideology imposes a set of right names on feeling and conduct, and the resolution of plot names the ultimate direction or sense of a movement whose logic was hidden and dispersed” (45). The narratable, or that which is inconclusive, deviant, and otherwise unintelligible, resembles the Gothic in its dedication to postponing, problematizing, or defying meaning. Conversely, closure, or that which is final, “right,” and authoritative, is achieved through enforcing binaries. Ideology, through language, forces the narratable to fit within a suitable name or ends it altogether. Foucault states, “the name is the end of discourse” (qtd. in Miller 45). While the Gothic does indeed attempt to question and subvert proper naming, exploring conflicting definitions and conceptions, Miller observes that in the novel, naming, acts with objective finality, working towards formal and moral coherence. Naming demands both the closure of the narratable unknowability and the reform of deviance so that it may fit into a proper, delineated form. Ideologically, it is morally requisite.
In this light, the term “Gothic novel” becomes a conflicted term. Every novel must have a last page, a final word. Gothic novels particularly, Kiely notes, have “troubled and unsatisfactory endings” which endeavor to bring unknowability to an impossibly pristine finish (252). For Kiely, forced and forcible endings betray the Gothic novel’s generic “resistance to conclusiveness” and temporal and spatial restlessness (252). He further contends that these moral and reductive endings, which strive to undercut the sublime unknowability of the Gothic, stem from a desire to appease readers. These endings’ ingenuous tones are attributable to inherited, insufficiently rhetoric:

If the Hall of Eblis scene in *Vathek* is read as a moral commentary on the rest of the book, the reader is likely to rebel, just as he does at the strong moral overtones at the endings of *The Monk, Waverly, Frankenstein*, and *Melmoth the Wanderer*. The difficulty is not necessarily that the moral commentary is without its own wisdom, but that it does not address itself to and certainly does not “solve” the psychological problems that have been so impressively raised earlier in each narrative. (253)

To Kiely, the often repressive conclusions, which would end narratability and its sublime possibilities, are nothing short of betrayal to the very genre. But Cannon Schmitt unexpectedly traces power-building binaries within the purportedly subversive Gothic novel. For Schmitt, the Gothic of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries solidifies normative identity even as it focuses upon aberrations: "The Gothic is preoccupied with opposing binaries: inside/outside, sadistic male/victimized female, and doubled characters who despise and torment one another. Xenophobia may be read as this
preoccupation carried to the level of nation” (Schmitt 13). Thus while Schmitt acknowledges, as Kiely, that the Gothic focuses on the “indecipherable, illegible, or unspeakable words” (12), he suggests that it does so primarily to reaffirm negatively what is, conversely, decipherable, legible, and intelligible. Inasmuch as there can be no sameness without otherness, there can be no concluding principle without conflicting values. Even in being labeled a subversive genre, the Gothic novel solidifies the other side of the binary; it affirms what it protests.

**Imprisoning Unintelligibility**

Certainly, the desire to be unintelligible and thus to transcend oppressive or limiting social structures is appealing, as Catherine Morland observes. The Gothic’s subversion and destruction of conventional, societal values and conceptions is likewise an alluring method for resistance and even transcendence, but is it an effective one? As the Gothic defies definition—and therefore transmission—it cannot serve as an educative tool. In flagrantly defying naming, logic, or ideology at large, Gothic messages

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2 While the Gothic has commonly been reduced to a formula of predictable scenes and settings—ruinous castles, family secrets, medieval settings, and the supernatural—Eve Sedgwick in *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* notes that “Gothic” has not been the most supple or useful of critical adjectives” (3). According to Sedgwick, the Gothic erects barriers which not even language can overcome. The result, what is referred to in Gothic novels as “the unspeakable,” defies classification, comprehension, or transmission. In the unspeakable lies the essence of Gothicness. This term is not to be conflated or confused with my use of unintelligible. Whereas the unspeakable is the suppression of language, communication, or knowledge, unintelligibility is the result of imperfect understanding. Certainly the unspeakable can produce unintelligibility – that which is not uttered cannot be understood – but unintelligibility is not necessarily unspeakable. Quite the contrary, I argue that the unintelligible will be spoken; if the unintelligible does not make herself translatable into authoritative discourse, authority will venture the translation, often at great violence.
questioned morality, making their use as a vehicle for ideological change limited. Without the sovereign power of naming or the ideological enforcement intrinsic to binary systems, the Gothic could not perpetuate its own, subversive ideology; paradoxically, its emphasis on unintelligibility ensures this. By Kiely’s definition, the Gothic is unsuitable for constructive purposes, and not all women found power in the role of destroyer. For those female authors of the Gothic, then, unintelligibility had the potential to bar them from constructive purposes and a thriving arena of debate. While Gilbert and Gubar’s conceptualization of a codified and subversive discourse in the Gothic would indeed provide women with an ability to “[express] an indictment of patriarchy that could hardly be considered proper or even permissible in Austen's day” (128), it would not allow for effective protest. Thus women found themselves unable to confront the patriarchal system or marshal others to their cause.

In the Gothic, those women who do not speak—who give messages subtly, interruptedly, or passively—are those who are most often brutalized. One need not look further than the passive resistance of quintessential Gothic heroine Emily St. Aubert of Ann Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* to see that, far from a method of subversion, unintelligibility and incomprehensibility become means of entrapment. As Emily attempts to deny her consent to an arranged marriage to Count Morano, Montoni utilizes her unintelligibility to secure her silence:

"I now perceive, sir, that you are under a very great error, and that I have been equally mistaken."

"No more duplicity, I entreat; be open and candid, if it be possible."
"I have always been so, sir; and can claim no merit in such conduct, for I have had nothing to conceal."

"How is this, Signor?" cried Morano, with trembling emotion.

"Suspend your judgment, Count," replied Montoni, "the wiles of a female heart are unsearchable. Now, Madam, your explanation. [. . .] I must do you the justice to own, that you are very ingenious at this same art of misunderstanding."

Emily tried to restrain the tears that came to her eyes, and to answer with becoming firmness, "Allow me, sir, to explain myself fully, or to be wholly silent." (Radcliffe II.97-99)

What follows for Emily, of course, is continual silence and submission in response to Montoni’s repeated brutalities. This scenario illustrates a narrative trajectory noted by Miller. A narratable moment is “a moment in which meaning is postponed . . . or scattered along the ground of various possibilities” (22). As Emily tries to validate herself in finding an alternate meaning to Montoni’s interpretation of her own actions, she creates duplicate messages, proclaiming all views universally as “misunderstandings.” In short, as she entertains contrary meanings simultaneously, resisting the comprehensible and clear “either/or,” she presents her discourse as problematic and deviant, a discourse that must either be translated into patriarchy’s idiolect or silenced. Structurally, the novel responds to the moral imperative of closure. Miller explains that an intervening force, be
it a character or author, is always called for. As long as alternatives are entertained, as long as deviant behavior is permitted, no moral purpose or message can be conclusive. “Closure,” Miller says, “needs to be a moment of suppression” (xii). As Montoni attempts to establish himself as the authority, we see suppression at work: it is owing to Montoni’s accusation of Emily as “unsearchable,” lacking precision or consistency in meaning—in short, undecipherable and unintelligible—that he is able to dismiss and discredit her words. Distressingly, the rhetorical response Emily employs, becoming unintelligible, only works at counter-purposes and in fact accomplishes Montoni’s suppression: In order to retain her dignity or to prevent Montoni from further twisting what words she has provided, Emily becomes “wholly silent,” encouraging her own condemnation. Women who might, for deviant purposes, withhold their words in order to preserve themselves from the violence of misinterpretation and authoritative scrutiny are, regardless, classified, categorized, and imprisoned—if not by their own pronouncements, then by others’. The absence of meaning becomes a justification for suppression and naming. They become, as Gilbert and Gubar illustrate, objectified products of writing, ciphers to be filled with patriarchal ideals.

This thesis examines female-authored Gothic novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century which have “troubled and unsatisfactory endings” (Kiely 252) in order to illustrate that the paradox within the Gothic is rhetorically utilized by female authors in an attempt to access power. While not proposing a wholesale subscription to authoritative ideology on the part of female authors, I, like Miller, note significant instances of formalistic capitulation that nonetheless question the very forms they
employ. Rather than argue that the Gothic is either subversive or authoritative in function, I argue for a dialogic conception between authority and subversion demonstrated through the genre of the Gothic itself. I explore why women seeking empowerment in a genre that came to be seen as their own might benefit in putting on the tight skin of authoritative language even after experiencing the unbridled freedom the Gothic had to offer them.

**Avenues to Power**

Emily’s predicament is certainly not limited to French ingénues in sixteenth-century Italy. Gilbert and Gubar, DeLamotte, and Schmitt all argue that the Gothic’s victimized women embody the situation of British women at the time Radcliffe was writing. This study will focus on power dynamics in Gothic novels at the time of the French Revolution and immediately following, when the position of women was particularly precarious. While feminist critics continue to debate the level of women’s autonomy in patriarchal, eighteenth-century Britain, Gilbert and Gubar’s portrait of female entrapment does not fully account for the complex political and social dynamics of revolutionary Britain. In their introduction to *Women in the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Clíona Ó Gallchóir, and Penny Warburton argue, “it would be wrong to imply that women were only the objects of public opinion. They could simultaneously act as the subject, object, and predicate of gossip. As writers, women were also, of course, the manipulators of public opinion” (10). In *English Feminists and their Opponents in the 1790’s: Unsex’d and Proper Females*, William Stafford also
observes that despite being formally closed out of the gallery of the House of Commons in 1778, women were hardly shut out from political discussion. London’s salons, coffeehouses, and other avenues were still open to them (50). Further, the socially acceptable, Rousseauian ideal of motherhood allowed women a specific realm of influence as they raised families in the private sphere in preparation for them to enter the public (54). *Northanger Abbey*’s Elinor Tilney makes this claim: “A mother could have been always present. A mother would have been a constant friend; her influence would have been beyond all others” (Austen 143). Eger and her co-authors argue against a strict conception of separation of spheres or a complete powerlessness of women in this era, for women were able to write, to discuss, to raise children, to influence husbands to vote, to choose their own spouses, and to retain portions of their property. As the binaries of spheres and gender-bound limitations began to crumble in practice they became more adamant in theory (2). That “spheres” were employed at all in debates proves to Stafford that these distinctions were “didactic rather than descriptive” and on the verge of collapse (45). According to Miller, the “need for controls” betrays “uneasiness” with an absolute power structure, “[f]or the regulations would be unnecessary if nothing resisted them, and the restrictions came into force for a reason” (Miller xiv). The public/private and male/female binaries were, predictably, reductive, now allowing for existing deviations already present in the system.

While testifying of deviance and aberrations' presence—as all binaries do—the gender-laden terms named and assessed individuals, enforcing ideology. The fact remains this: men held legislative, political, and social power, and women could access it only in
their relationships to (and through) them. While DeLamotte, echoing Gilbert and Gubar, highlights the limited scope of women’s authority and power, lamenting that “[women’s] only power was the power of ‘influence’” (DeLamotte 151), I posit that the power of influence takes on various forms and methods. However powerful or influential women might become, their only viable avenue to power was through men. Their power to write was notable because it allowed them the opportunity to respond to, converse with, and influence men with their words. Their power as mothers came from forming and educating young men who would then enter the public sphere. In some boroughs, Stafford notes, women could even go so far as to confer their votes upon a male relative (51). In those boroughs where women did not have the right to vote, they, like Abigail Adams, could draw upon the sympathies of their men, recalling to their minds their dutiful service as mothers, daughters, and sisters, and plead with them to “remember the women.” In Debating the Revolution, Chris Evans quotes an English gentleman in a letter to a foreigner, who boasts, “our women are as free as our men” (112). The praise is meant to reflect the progress and civilized state of Great Britain and, indeed, women in Britain enjoyed more influence than any other country at the time. However, they were viewed only complementarily: women’s roles and rights were weighted against and understood in relation to men’s.

With the French Revolution in 1789 came an increased fervor for increasing rights of citizens. Notable activists such as Olympe De Gouges, Pauline Léon and Théroigne de Méricourt clamored for full and active citizenship, to be valued not through their relationship to men but through their relationship to their country. Evans observes
that discussions of power in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain were invariably viewed in juxtaposition to the French Revolution. Despite geographical distance from the French Revolution, the ideas rooted themselves into British society. Evans explains that the French Decree of Fraternity, which offered military support and assistance to any who sought to fight tyranny in their own countries, brought revolution to the surface. In Sheffield, there were insurrections. In Ireland, the United Irishmen sought independence and staged an uprising. The King’s own coach was mobbed in route to Parliament. Dread of total anarchy, regicide, and dissolution of the ancien régime characterized not only the political but also the social and literary climate of Britain. Fear of the Terror was made apparent in Prime Minister William Pitt’s series of repressive measures: the Treason and Seditious Meetings Act (popularly referred to as “the Gagging Acts”) of 1795, the Insurrection Act of 1796, and the 1796 “Insurrection Act.” These acts served as bulwarks against any who might renounce authority. As subversive possibilities entered the climate of late eighteenth-century Britain, changing power definitions, censorship made it became increasingly difficult to speak. Women striving for increased rights needed to avoid censure. Radical groups such as the Jacobins also purportedly fought for a free, equal republic, seeking a total overthrow of preexisting institutions. Critics applied the name “Jacobin” negatively to anyone who spoke too boldly against patriarchy. Thus, these women needed to cautiously and prudently appear to reform rather than renounce existing ideology.

Stafford maintains that while most women in the 1790's “were reluctant to mount a head-on challenge to the gender binary,” they nevertheless “took the discourses
available to them” and turned them to their own advantage (215). I claim that these strategies worked within the intelligible confines of patriarchal discourse; women adopt, modify, and revise authoritative binaries. In the Gothic texts Zofloya The Wild Irish Girl, More Ghosts!, and Northanger Abbey, female authors employ four rhetorical techniques in order to access power: capitulation, deception, reinscription, and satire. In capitulating, women adopt patriarchy’s ideology as their own, repeating and reproducing its either/or binaries. Capitulation requires absolute adherence; women conform themselves to fit within the confines of ideology. Through obedience, these women receive the approbation of patriarchy and are admitted into the community. The second technique, deception, subversively masquerades as obedience. While parroting the patriarchal discourse and performing normative standards, women employing deception merely feign an either/or binary. In appearing to concede to their desires, these women manipulate not only patriarchal discourse but even the men themselves. A third technique, reinscription, attempts to modify authoritative binaries by incorporating more inclusive definitions. The result is a both/and structure in which both men and women establish cultural tenets. Finally, satire repeats and incorporates the authoritative discourse into its own in order to subvert and question patriarchy. By unsettling authoritative binaries, satire rather employs a neither/nor structure. I look at Mary Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication of the Rights of Woman in order to ground these rhetorical techniques within the context of contemporary commentary upon women’s status. While in France, a country hypocritically crying “liberté, fraternité, égalité,” many female activists were punished and silenced by the guillotine, in Britain, Mary Wollstonecraft published A Vindication of
the Rights of Woman in 1792. Lamenting the deplorable state of women’s character, education, and political and social position, Wollstonecraft clearly and logically advocated equal rights and education in order to empower women and create a nation of equals.

In a time of censure and persecution, one sound principle might be to “blindly submit to authority,” taking what steps necessary to appear pleasing to their masters (Wollstonecraft 27). However, I will examine the detrimental effects of submission later in this introduction in my analysis of The Female Quixote. Wollstonecraft noted that the result, docile obedience, was the prevailing characteristic of women at her time and suggested that men had encouraged slavish appeasement since at least Milton’s Paradise Lost. Women were viewed as subservient, inferior, and objects of gratification: “he meant to deprive us of souls and insinuate that we were beings only designed by sweet attractive grace, and docile blind obedience, to gratify the senses of man when he can no longer soar on the wing of contemplation” (22). Such a definition of womanhood, she argues, reduces women to creatures incapable of rational thought who will through “outward obedience. . . obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, every thing else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives” (22). The gender binary, as Foucault argues, is not only enforced but also perpetuated though a forceful naming. As Wollstonecraft insists that “men have increased [women’s] inferiority” (39), her implications are clear: men have consciously manipulated the definition of women, scripting their lives and roles. Female obedience to the man’s term “woman” only confirms this male-aggrandizing definition. Wollstonecraft explains that just as a child is
viewed as naturally subservient because he is not granted dependence, a woman who is not permitted to signify anything beyond a pleasing servant will appear to be subservient by nature. In this way, the Name of “woman” as a subservient entity insidiously reinforces patriarchal ideology. Rhetorically, women who sought to access the power of authority’s approbation would duplicate the Name and the binaries and values of ruling ideology. Wollstonecraft, finding this rhetorical method degrading and deplorable, nevertheless acknowledges its prevalence in late eighteenth-century Britain:

[women] have been ridiculed of repeating “a set of phrases learnt by rote,” when nothing could be more natural, considering the education they receive, and that their “highest praise is to obey, unargued”—the will of man. If they be not allowed to have reason sufficient to govern their own conduct—why, all they learn—must be learned by rote! (124)

Reproduction and reinforcement take on a more literal meaning as one considers the role women played as wives and mothers. In marriage, a woman was to bequeath her money and belongings to her husband, submitting to him wholly. While not always possible to provide the husband with riches, the wife was most certainly expected to provide a male heir—to *reproduce* another man. Responsible for the initial education of her son, it was her duty to teach him the values of the father. Not only does she become the woman her husband wishes her to be, she is also integral in helping her sons become the men her husband would wish them to be. This process of repeating and reproducing “a set of phrases”—what I call the either/or binaries of patriarchal discourse—demeans and reduces women to the very position men would have them hold: beneath them. However,
it does, as even Wollstonecraft acknowledges, give women the security of the patriarchy’s approval—so long as they are appealing, a space in time which Wollstonecraft attributes to no more than twenty years.

Appealing need not always require the slavish obedience that Wollstonecraft rails against. A second method, one I examine in my discussion of Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya* in Chapter I, is accessing power through deception. Wollstonecraft asks, “is she [. . .] to condescend to use art and feign a sickly delicacy in order to secure her husband’s affection?” (32) Wollstonecraft acknowledges that a woman may receive the same power of approbation supine women obtain by masking individuality but argues that deception is the tactic of mistresses, not honorable women (31). However, Scottish Enlightenment thinker Dr. John Gregory advises women to feign, masquerade, and deceive men in order to please men and guarantee acceptance. Even Rousseau argues for feminine manipulation. The woman is to play upon the man’s feelings, desires, and emotions in order to appear pleasing; this, in turn, will give her what she wants:

> She should learn to penetrate into their real sentiments from their conversation, their actions, their looks, and gestures. She would also have the art, by her own conversation, actions, looks, and gestures, to communicate those sentiments which are agreeable to them, *without seeming to intend it*. [. . .] The world is the book of women” (qtd in Wollstonecraft 43, emphasis added).

A woman seeking to achieve this end can read men and their expectations; she comprehends the obligations of the “masculine acceptation of the word [woman]” (182).
Through seeing herself through patriarchy’s interpretive lens, she can dissimulate, modifying her behavior and discourse to suit his expectations. Unlike blind obedience and replication of either/or discourse, this method of gaining power is consciously contrived. Whereas the woman of an impoverished education, learning only by rote, cannot help but regurgitate, the woman capable of dissimulation is *naturally* otherwise; her transformation into the desired woman is only superficial. Subservient women repeat blindly the either/or mandates of patriarchal discourse, viewing themselves as in fact inferior (in contrast to the superior man), but the deceptive women only feign an either/or binary, claiming to be subservient to men while in actuality viewing themselves as superior. Wollstonecraft scorns this disingenuous trick, regarding them as brutal Turkish bashaws who “they have more real power than their masters (43). As I will argue in Chapter I, the success of dissimulation is powerful, even permitting for a time, tyranny. Wollstonecraft acknowledges that expert dissimulators “may well glory in their illicit sway” (43).

Wollstonecraft argues for an egalitarian companionship that is undeniably more sincere and fulfilling than deception. Wollstonecraft’s ideal gender dynamic is not a binary at all but rather and inclusive both/and system which allows the same rights, education, and virtues to for both male and female. Centering on strengthening the body and heart through sentiment and reason concurrently, Wollstonecraft responds to Rousseau’s ideal education when she boldly proclaims, “I extend it to women, and confidently assert that they have been drawn out of their sphere by false refinement, and not by an endeavour to acquire masculine qualities” (24). An equal education, she posits,
will not eliminate masculinity and femininity, but will allow each genders to more develop their particular virtues. This vision of power is what I call a “both/and” structure: both men and women are able to enjoy privileges as equal members in learning and life; they are able to enjoy benefits on both sides of the binary. Further, Wollstonecraft argues the old binaries are fabricated and flawed: a woman need not choose between being intelligent and being feminine, being genuine and being pleasing. She can, in a both/and structure, be both. Proponents of egalitarian gender relations call attention to the unnatural and artificial nature of the very things ideology dubs “natural.” Wollstonecraft question men’s—and most particularly Rousseau’s—use of “natural” in describing female characteristics:

If they told us that in a pre-existent state the soul was fond of dress, and brought this inclination with it into a new body, I should listen to them with a half smile, as I often do when I hear a rant about innate elegance.— But if he only meant to say that the exercise of the faculties will produce this fondness—I deny it.—It is not natural; but arises, like false ambition in men, from a love of power. (31)

Wollstonecraft proclaims: “Girls and boys, in short, would play harmlessly together, if the distinction of sex was not inculcated long before nature makes any difference” (47). In order to glimpse a truly natural existence that prevailed before the simulations of ideology, these women these women conflate ideological divisions and expand

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3 Indeed, Wollstonecraft firmly believes that a mutual admiration of a companion’s actual (not simulated) virtues, is what distinguishes fleeting passion from true and lasting companionate friendship (33, 174).
idiolectual meanings. Rather than an overt redefinition of ideological terms, casting out old meanings in order to make room for new (or rather, meanings predating ideological repression), a both/and viewpoint reinscribes ideological distinctions and divisions by admitting rather than excluding difference. In such a process, women might allow themselves to be included in the power structure. In Chapter II, I argue that Sydney Owenson adheres to Wollstonecraft’s inclusive new order. Writing as an Irish woman, she constructs an inclusive new order. *The Wild Irish Girl*, through inculcating discourse and belief beyond the contained binaries of eighteenth-century patriarchal discourse, is able to broaden the ideology of Britain so that it might likewise include her.

Far from enforcing or refining the system, a fourth rhetorical strategy, satire, employs and incorporates the authoritative idiolect into its own discourse in order to discredit the very sources of ruling ideology. Following Wollstonecraft’s tradition—though perhaps not wholly her strategy—of Wollstonecraft, in 1798, Mary Robinson published *Thoughts on the Condition of Women*. The work, Stafford notes, was well-received even by the men it criticized: “The conservative reviews did not bother to destroy it, and the *Monthly Review* was too amused to take it seriously” (220). Similarly, Eliza Hamilton’s *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* in 1796 engaged directly with many of the controversial issues of the 1790s primarily because its light, witty banter is diverting. According to Stafford, Hamilton’s “ironic mode is a good defense, a well-chosen rhetorical strategy; the ironic is always more difficult to attack than the earnest” (33). As with the submissive woman, the author of satire repeats authoritative discourse yet does so not to perpetuate but rather diminish the original discourse.
However, satire has the benefit of also appearing to please, similar to the second method of masquerade. Unlike masquerade, however, satire maintains its success even after the dissimulation has been revealed.

Satire not only presents its subversive meaning in a pleasing manner, it creates ironic distance that questions the very structure of ideology’s binaries. Mary Hays’ 1798 *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain* typifies ironic boldness. Through employing a gentle tone she assuages the reader’s anxiety, “[l]ittle mines are exploded beneath the unwary reader, who has been lulled into a false sense of security” (Stafford 220). Satire can best be described as employing a neither/nor system, undercutting the ideological either/or binary and exploding the original discourse, rendering previous classifications impracticable. The subversive effect of irony and parody is a matter which Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin explores extensively in his works. In “Discourse in the Novel,” Bakhtin argues that parody and irony, through exaggeration, trivialize and dethrone authority. In objectifying the normative language of a given social group, an author employing satire “[forces] his own intentions to refract and diffuse themselves through the medium of this common view that has become embodied in language (a view that is always superficial and frequently hypocritical)” (302). While using the very language of the discourse it ridicules, satire destroys the semantic stability of an idiolect; the original discourse, in fact, becomes unintelligible. The repeated discourse becomes foreign when placed in a new context: “But this is not just another’s speech in the same ‘language’ – it is another’s utterance in a language that is itself ‘other’ to the author as well” (303). In satire's uncanny repetition, the original author's own words gain a new otherness; this
allows the author to distance himself from the words, to examine them objectively, and to see the reductive discourse as a listener. Thus authority, not the subject, is educated. Satire reverses power structures; through using men’s words, women are able to render the men unintelligible. It is in context of this theory of satire that I examine the curious Gothic satire *More Ghosts!* by F.C. Patrick in Chapter IV. As a poor Anglo-Irish widow, Patrick is largely disempowered; however, through parody, Patrick can dethrone every facet of society.

While certainly four differing avenues to power, these techniques all emphasize the necessity of learning and utilizing patriarchal discourse. In a time of linguistic and political upheaval, women needed to choose their rhetoric with precision and demonstrate discursive awareness. This is the lesson of Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*. Only in learning the discourse of authority can a woman protect herself from Henry Tilney’s invasive scrutiny. Chapter Five considers how discursive awareness and composite identity may prevent female entrapment. While each method has its benefits, which I will illustrate in more detail in the chapters to follow, they also had their apparent weaknesses and limitations. She is likewise able to portray a composite gender construction: Henry Tilney shares a love of the female Gothic. For women seeking ideological change, education of readers, particularly those readers already in power, is paramount. For this reason, I have chosen texts within the Gothic genre that attempt to instruct the reader, particularly in their didactic conclusions. While Kiely may find these endings unsatisfactory and contradictory, I find in them evidence of true female power at work.
The Doomed Fate of the Female Quixote

Written forty years before these texts, Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* establishes a literary tradition that future female authors would respond to. As an early female *bildungsroman* it shows the possibilities a woman had in education – or rather, the possibilities a woman *didn’t* have. Though a privileged, attractive heiress, Arabella, the protagonist of *The Female Quixote* is subjected and forced to submit by the end of the novel. I argue that *The Female Quixote* had done its work by the 1790s; it instructed women on how not to conduct themselves, though perhaps not wholly in the way Lennox anticipated. In failing to present herself suitably to authorities, Arabella refuses to work within their system. Instead, she asserts herself as the authority, with a boldness and directness that, unlike other rhetorical methods women might use, provides none of the security that functioning within the system might offer. Arabella does not suggest reform; she stages a coup. Arabella thus makes herself vulnerable to discipline as an extremely deviant member of society. Women might learn, then, that they are to work within the comprehensible bounds of the system. This Lennox does, in part, through submission to authoritative binaries and decrees of patriarchy. However, like Arabella, Lennox herself is reduced to submissively reaffirming another’s discourse; capitulation as an avenue to power, is counter-productive. *The Female Quixote* stands as a cautionary tale, warning female readers of the risk of being unintelligible and wholeheartedly appropriating patriarchal discourse.

Arabella initially appears to be a model to be followed by women seeking to gain power. She makes herself the total authority, expressing herself through romance
conventions. At first, Arabella has a clear and authoritative conception of herself that she projects to the world, expecting not only acceptance but also deference. While following the established laws set forth in romances, Arabella also distinguishes and accentuates her own particular virtues. Prior to attending a ball in Bath, Arabella fashions a dress, according to a style of romance heroine “Princess Julia,” that despite its absurdity becomes Arabella in more ways than one: “Upon the whole, nothing could be more singularly becoming than her Dress; or set off with greater Advantage the striking Beauties of her Person” (271). Not only does the gown accentuate her beauty, it is in fact more suited to display her “native Dignity” than the common, though fashionable, dresses of the other ladies in attendance (272). The dress, noted as being without hoops and therefore following her natural form, displays her body with little affectation. The knotted diamonds upon the sleeves and bodice display her wealth, and the singular style sets her apart from other young ladies in attendance. The dress not only is becoming on Arabella, as a mode of expression; it becomes an emblem of her.

As Arabella’s identity becomes one inherently tied up in the conventions of romance, it follows that Arabella must, if she seeks to become the governing authority, legitimate romance ideology as the dominating discourse. Love becomes the governing virtue; courtship, the focus and obsession of romance, is one of her chief and only permissible avenue to power. Stafford notes that women’s emphasis on the romance at the time was “in part due to the fact that its concern was with a special moment of female power; poised between the authority of her father and the authority of her husband, the heroine enjoyed a brief period of momentous choice” (77). Arabella becomes a dictator
as she, the object of love and future conquest, commands the lover. She literally dictates protocol as he seeks her hand: “Love requires a more unlimited Obedience from its Slaves, than any other Monarch can expect from his Subjects; an Obedience which is circumscrib’d by no Laws whatever, and dependent upon nothing but itself” (321).

Arabella, in the conventions of romance, an arbiter of protocol and behavior, and she can be as arbitrary as she pleases. Arabella’s use of sensibility and romantic passion she excites is intended to expand her affect, placing herself as regent in the Empire of Love. Not surprisingly, her methods in securing dominance mirror Montoni’s: she must silence dissenting voices, using the silence to doubly proclaim her mastery. As her uncle Charles attempts to couch a command within an apology, Arabella gives a bold decree: “Seek not, I beseech you . . . to destroy that Belief I am willing to give your Words, by any more Attempts at this time to persuade me; for truly, I shall interpret your Solicitude no way in your Favour; therefore, if you desire I should be convinced you are sincere, let the Silence I require of you, be one Proof of it” (204). For his transgressive, displeasing speech, Arabella threatens her uncle, the patriarch in her life, with intentional misinterpretation and denunciation. Not surprisingly, Sir Charles remains silent for a time.

Richard Barney’s study of novels of education, *Plots of Enlightenment*, argues that "Arabella's stalwart commitment to romance is in effect a preemptive strike against the normalizing force at least implicit in masculine attempts to reeducate her, and as such, it is direct, aggressive, and unapologetic in its aim to subdue the men around her" (Barney 274). She exults in a reverse tyranny, suppressing those who would suppress her,
utterly and completely disregarding the power that patriarchy might have. Arabella is aware that "in the face of England's disadvantageous social hierarchy," women must secure their own “Empire of Love” (Lennox 274). Consequently, her censure is most apparent in her dealings with her lover and cousin, Glanville. When Glanville protests Arabella’s indifferent and domineering treatment, Arabella once more asserts control:

Nay, interrupted Arabella, since my Empire over you is not so absolute as I thought; and since you think it fit to reserve to yourself the Liberty of dying, contrary to my desire; I think I had better resolve not to make any treaty with you. [. . .] since I have commanded you to live, I will also permit you to love me, in order to make the Life I have bestowed on you, worthy your Acceptance. Make me no Reply, said she, putting her Hand on his Mouth; but begin from this Moment to obey me. (136)

Arabella’s methods are cleverly and insidiously executed. Sensing her “Empire” to be at risk, she makes an appearance of compromise in order to entice him and further secure her hold upon him: he is permitted to love her. This is, however, conditional upon his penitence. What was once a transgression is now a concession—but the hold she intends to have over the mutual partner in this agreement is absolute. As she did with Sir Charles, Arabella asserts that compliance earns the men around her certain permissions, be it love or forgiveness; paradoxically, bondage gives them a degree of freedom. They must, if seeking access to future favor, reaffirm their penitent behavior through silence.

Despite the totalizing language of romance that Arabella enlists to her cause, her predicament is precarious; though she must attempt to establish unquestioned dominance
in order to achieve autonomy, she must also keep her environment in a state of flux and incompleteness, a state which the logical and systematic culture of the Enlightenment rebels against. As an object of love that must be won, she holds sway in the unsettled business of courtship. In her article “Narratives and Counter-Narratives,” Anna Uddén notes that “[b]elieving herself to be a heroine of romance, Arabella craves adventures in which she herself would play the principle part” (445). However, once the object is conquered, the owner – in this case, the husband – becomes master. As such, Arabella continually focuses on the process of courtship and never the end, intentionally and repeatedly complicating, deferring, and prolonging closure. Indeed, Arabella’s notion of a history is one of narratable moments. To her cousin, Arabella outlines her requisites for the life of a heroine: she causes quarrels between servants, instigates bloodshed, and undergoes persecutions for the sake of love (Lennox 111). That Arabella’s histories hinge primarily upon strife, bloodshed, violent emotion, and destruction evidences Miller’s assertion that “only insufficiencies, defaults, deferrals, can be ‘told’” (3). Indeed, Arabella imagines perfectly innocent individuals to be capable of rape and all manner of knavery or accuses her lovers of a lack of ardor in order to create conflict over which she can preside. Arabella has learned from the greatest romance heroines how to master the tale and drag it on for pages through such episodes and “adventures.” She finds justification in citing the example of another heroine, Mandana who bade her lover, “the greatest King on Earth,” to conceal his love despite “Ten Years of the most faithful Services, and concealed Torments” (Lennox 111). Though Miss Glanville, in amazement, feels deferral to be imprudent, for it brings about changes in her face and frustrates her lover, Arabella
responds, “one never has the Idea of an Heroine older than Eighteen, tho’ her History begins at that Age; and the Events, which compose it, contain the Space of Twenty more” (111). In a world such as Arabella’s, time must be suspended until the end of her story. In creating the narratable, Arabella is able to preside as author, albeit of a deficient world. By making herself the center and cause of romantic duels, lover’s illnesses, and servants’ quarrels, Arabella is the center of attention, but she is also, troublingly, the cause of society’s evils.

What others see as frivolous and deficient is, in fact, the necessary condition of existence in her world, uncertainty alone allowing her, the deviant voice and tyrannness, to continue her reign. Thus, though Arabella takes kindly to the intelligent, well-read and nameless Countess, she resists her history and manner of living: “I was born and christen’d, had a useful and proper Education, receiv’d the Addresses of my Lord – through the Recommendation of my Parents, and marry’d him with their Consent and my own inclination” which “[differs] very little from those of other Women of the same Rank, who have a moderate Share of Sense, Prudence, and Virtue” (327). Uddén explains that “this may be a life, but it is no narrative: it is indeed a barren territory” (Uddén 447). Deborah Ross, in “Mirror, Mirror,” furthers this claim: “Arabella is slow to get this message, perhaps because the life the Countess describes, unlike that of romance heroines, fails to satisfy her will to power” (464). The life and role that patriarchal society has determined for her provide little excitement, singularity, or autonomy. Thus she refuses to let anyone write her tale for her: “The Question, said Arabella, is not whether I ought to be offended at being loved, but whether it is not an Offence to be told I am so”
Arabella resists narratable closure and the power of the names that patriarchy has determined for her: motherly, obedient, proper, woman. She instead chooses to prolong conflict by capitalizing upon her deviance, making her wholly unintelligible for as long as possible. This aim is directly at odds with Glanville’s. He concludes that “he could not think of marrying Arabella, till the Whims her Romances had put into her Head, were eraz’d by a better Knowledge of Life and Manners. But he added with a Sigh, That he knew not how this Reformation would be effected” (340).

Arabella is dangerously putting herself beyond the bounds of acceptable behavior within eighteenth-century Enlightenment society, for she refuses to acknowledge its existence at all. Arabella refuses to let anyone conclude her narratability. For Glanville, the ending is paramount and is directly at odds with Arabella’s technique of deferral and the subsequent unintelligibility. To become his wife, Arabella can be neither insular nor deviant. She must come to mean what society has defined her role to be through submission.

Arabella’s capitulation results from her inability to translate and define herself within the already existing patriarchal idiolect. While familiar with and exacting obedience to romance conventions, she is dangerously unaware and thus disobedient to patriarchal discourse. Often being accused of speaking in nonsensical monologues, giving “Answers so little to the Purpose” (101), Arabella is, through her adherence to romance, unintelligible. While Arabella knows the rules which govern her own, inner world, she cares little and thus knows little about others’ conventions, determined to “[follow] no Fashion but her own Taste” (271). Though this allows the freedom of expression that
Arabella clearly enjoys, it leaves her vulnerable to scrutiny and destined for misinterpretation. According to Locke, only in adopting a universally comprehensible language can messages be transmitted and education possible. Ideological education therefore begins with the learning of proper terms before moving on to the transmission of ideas those terms embody. Arabella presents herself not only through her speech but, as I have already noted, her dress. All external signifiers function as a form of expression. Thus in speaking, dressing, and overall comportment, Arabella invokes a discourse and language; this language, however, is not the normative one. She remains insensible of this risk: “The Surprize Arabella’s unusual Appearance gave to the whole Company, was very visible to every one but herself” (271). Caught within her own interpretive community, Arabella does not acknowledge others. Rather, Arabella carries on her own way, reconciling what experiences she has in “reality” within the romance tradition regardless of other’s protests. What is more, the marveling response she receives is conventional within the setting of a romance. Glanville notes that “she had such a strange Facility in reconciling every Incident to her own fantastick Ideas, that every new Object added Strength to the fatal Deception she laboured under” (340). Thus Arabella is able to exclaim, even while examining at quotidian experience: “These things [romance adventures] happen every Day” (72).

It is not Arabella’s wholehearted subscription to romances that troubles members of society; it is the incomprehensibility and her inability to utilize the predominant and common discourse. Though she has great knowledge of herself and her own discourse—that of the romance—Arabella is unable to make herself intelligible to others; she speaks
a figurative, foreign language. Those seeking to understand her must, as students of language, undergo education. Regardless of Granville’s eventual comprehension through repeated indoctrination, his need to “cure” her bespeaks necessary narratable suppression and closure. Mere translation is insufficient. *The Female Quixote*’s emphasis on using language and discourse applicable to contemporary, “real” situations builds upon Locke’s firm belief that language usage must adhere to common usage. To enforce an outmoded ideology is to force a minor view upon an unwilling majority. In enforcing or expecting antiquated values and language at odds with dominant ideology, Arabella in fact commits linguistic tyranny and therefore must learn the discourse of her contemporary majority.

Locke writes:

> He that imagined to himself substances such as never have been and filled his head with ideas which have not any correspondence with the real nature of things, to which yet he gives settled and defined names, may fill his discourse, and perhaps another man’s head, with the fantastical imaginations of his own brain, but will be very far from advancing thereby one jot in real and true knowledge. (826)

Thus Arabella’s language, it might be said, is not founded upon the “real” but physical and fantastical manifestation of vapidity. In such a conception of knowledge and truth, Arabella can never arrive at a position of enlightenment. Without linguistic ethos, she is an ignorant, laughable ruler. Even once Arabella defines herself in terms of romance, it is clear that the patriarchal ideology must be brought *in* to Arabella. Therefore novels of education contain scenes like that in *The Female Quixote* in which the (usually female)
protagonist is provided with an authoritative idiolect to which she is forced to submit, adopting the new discourse as her own in order to become suitably indoctrinated.

Authorial Interventions

While Lennox manages to reconcile conflicting ideologies by the end of her book, she does nothing to further the case of female autonomy. In * Appearing to Diminish*, Lorna Ellis explains: “*The Female Quixote* does not resolve the dilemma of how to maintain female agency in mid-eighteenth century fiction. There is no compromise here between the powerful romance heroine, as Arabella appears at the beginning and what she becomes: the silenced eighteenth-century non-heroine, whose story ends when she is ‘cured’ of her romantic expectations” (64). In tying-up Arabella’s self-confidence and power in romance – a convention that must be toppled by the end of the novel -- Lennox has created a poor solution, indeed. While Ellis explains that the female *bildungsroman* “allows [a female protagonist] to redirect that self-confidence and self-control into more socially acceptable, and socially profitable, channels,” there is no such luxury afforded to Arabella; she must be silent because the language she has hitherto learned is unsuitable. There is no “emphasis on the protagonist’s agency, self-reflection, and reintegration with society” (71). Impossibly, Arabella must keep, as Ross notes, those attributes of female sensibility in her, which would make her a good, subservient wife, but yet renounce the very same passionate sensibility that leads her to crave romantic adventures and adoration.
Lennox’s attempt at securing self-autonomy comes at the expense of her own protagonist’s. As Arabella’s actual creator, Charlotte Lennox executes the invasive education and final naming, though acted out in the play through various masculine figures. In so doing, Lennox succeeds where Arabella fails: she allies herself with the ruling patriarchal ideology prior to a forced submission. While Arabella may not be aware of the losing battle she wages, Lennox certainly is. Choosing to align herself with the victorious, Lennox entitles Chapter XI, the scene in which Arabella undergoes her most rigorous schooling under the tutelage of the Doctor, “Being in the Author’s Opinion, the best Chapter in this History” (368). However, Lennox’s deference to authority is as total as Arabella’s, taking hold until the external manifestations of Lennox’s credo are but reiterations of the common, male-centered view. A common speculation,⁴ that Lennox’s mentor, Samuel Johnson, may have gone so far as to pen the Doctor’s words himself casts new light on this. The “best Chapter” may not be of Lennox’s own composition, merely one she has included, absorbed, and repeated. In any case, critics note the particularly Johnsonian discourse. As the Doctor will accept nothing short of a total renunciation of her former views, teaching models of Christian virtue, charity, and patience, he appears to enforce Johnson’s philosophy that “characters should not be ‘mixed,’ and that virtue should be rewarded and vice punished. (Like Wilde’s Miss

⁴ For more, see Anna Uddén’s article, “Narratives and Counter-Narratives: Quixotic Hermeneutics in Eighteenth-Century England,” and Duncan Isles’ Appendix: “Johnson, Richardson, and The Female Quixote” which chronicles the level and extent of Johnson’s involvement. Some critics, like Isles, propose that Johnson may have in fact written the words. This theory was first put forward by Rev. John Mitford in The Gentleman’s Magazine, August 1843. A stylistic examination supporting this hypothesis can be found in the explanatory notes of page 414 of Dalziel’s edition of The Female Quixote.
Prism, he felt ‘that is what Fiction means’)” (Uddén 457). Ross likewise notes: “Johnsonian didactic fiction, on the other hand, encourages the suppression of all qualities not found in the character designated as ideal” (468). Arabella is judged even by her own author who, likewise adopting the either/or discourse, pronounces the transformation as a great success in order to bring about an optimistic and moral closure. The suppression of deviance, Foucault’s very definition of authoritative binaries, becomes vastly apparent as Arabella is taught how to properly fit into her category. Those who do not make such capitulations – such as the effeminate and rakish Bellmour or bawdy Miss Glanville – are cast out from social grace. Lennox’s closure of the novel appears to function in a very abrupt, very final manner, ending a nine-volume novel in two brief pages during which, notably, no voice is heard but the narrator’s. Lennox’s definition of “happy ending” is, as any definition is, reductive and constrictive. Uddén elaborates: “Never did a novel so loudly proclaim its own realism in direct opposition to the romance, which Lennox’s narrator seems unequivocally to condemn” (456). Lennox cuts out any subversive language with her binaries of sane/insane, novel/romance, and male/female more zealously than ever affirming herself to be in agreement with the priest’s strong pronouncements.

Submissive writers paradoxically demonstrated a route of access through reproducing the power of the dominant, patriarchal ideology, which happily lends that power to even a powerless woman for the perpetuation and propagation of its ideological discourse. Thereby, women can become authorized sources of authority without breaking their role as obedient women. In so doing, Lennox has gained some access to power. Two
influential critics of the day, Fielding and Johnson, hailed Lennox as a worthy and moral satirist and considered her a suitable educator to young women. Lennox, through her text, has access to a wider audience with the approbation of the patriarchy. There is boldness in Lennox’s either/or closure and asides addressed to her reader that bespeak her ability to preempt criticism. Uddén proposes that because, rather than despite, Lennox’s ability to utilize dominant discourse, she is able to preserve the reputation of female authors; her novel “is one of those novels that seem to anticipate their own reception: it forecloses the kind of fault-finding reception that women’s novels were subject to in the eighteenth century” (448). While this awareness and method may fail in producing a female role model, Lennox nevertheless is able to preempt any violence upon herself. However, Lennox has become the submissive model that Wollstonecraft detests. Only repeating, she does not question or reform patriarchy.

The adoption of conclusive endings and authorial addresses that we see in Gothic *bildungsroman* which will be studied in this work are the author’s mediatory stances: they define themselves before readers define them. They explain, name, and draw limits upon their meaning self-consciously, creating themselves in seeming alliance with the dominant discourse as they speak. However, unlike Lennox, the authors I will examine find ways in which to challenge, subvert, or question, rather than reproduce patriarchy. In this way, they are able to learn from both Arabella and Lennox: from Arabella, they learn they must preempt criticism and to appear concordant with normative discourse. In Lennox, they learn that mere repetition of a repressive binary does little to further female

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5 See Anna Uddén, “Narratives and Counter-Narratives.”
autonomy. Ellis explains that the only power women have is to fashion themselves and manipulate patriarchal conventions imposed upon them. To some extent, this is the case Gilbert and Gubar lay out in *Madwoman* – authors hide real meaning in unsuspicious forms. To do so also however, requires an education in masculine expectations and the ability to anticipate critique through viewing oneself in the light of the authority. This can be accomplished through feigning obedience with a duplicitous either/or binary, expanding and blending authoritative binaries to include new possibilities in a both/and system, or in repeating the discourse of patriarchy, draw attention to the fallacy of binaries altogether. Thus I would add that these female authors attempted to defend themselves against tyranny through appearing to the authorities as intelligible and reformed creations of patriarchy.
CHAPTER I

“Affecting in Reality”: Foucault and Feminine Masquerade in Zofloya

The conflict of Charlotte Dacre’s 1806 novel, Zofloya, is initially the same as The Female Quixote: reforming poor manners due to a negligent education. However, the first authoritative male to enter the scene, Ardolph, appears as no gallant Glanville but rather an aggressive Montoni. As might be expected from an archetypal Gothic villain, Ardolph attempts to confine and contain his female charge, Victoria, in order to prevent subversion. Nevertheless, Ardolph’s stated aim is not unlike Glanville’s zealous attempts to “cure” Arabella of a poor education in order to reap the benefits. Ardolph also claims to “shew her her faults” and “[teach] her to amend them” (70). Like both Glanville and Montoni, Ardolph molds his female subject to fit more harmoniously within the constraints of his ideological system: he forces her to signify his assigned meaning. Ardolph’s methods are singularly Foucauldian. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault argues that “the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body” (549). Victoria must not only submit and relinquish her own particular views – “sins” within Ardolph’s system – but also must be reformed into a model that will uphold and further his own aims. He will thus make her innocuous and submissive but will couch this within the seemingly pleasant discourse of Christian reform and improvement. What is notable, however, is that Ardolph’s educator is not himself nor any other male, but the Signora di Modena, who uses this endorsement in order to exercise her own capricious and cruel desires upon the subjected female. Thus begins the trend repeatedly demonstrated in Zofloya: woman’s dominance over both men and women. Victoria,
Signora di Modena, and Megalena Strozzi, like Lennox herself, seem to gain access through performing obedient femininity yet manage to employ subtle deception. Dacre’s women gain approbation and approval to speak and act on behalf of patriarchy.

The first truly duplicitous model we encounter is Signora di Modena who, acting as proxy for Count Ardolph, is able to act as custodian of Victoria. The Count acknowledges di Modena to be a carefully chosen surrogate, for he explains that he places in her “a confidence [he] could not certainly repose in any other female” (68). Indeed, it is not a privilege that he grants to even his lover, Victoria’s mother. Victoria’s mother, sensing an unjust exercise of power over her daughter as well as a usurpation of natural roles, resists di Modena’s involvement but is told she is “no judge” in the matter and that the Signora alone has this task for she “will only act as circumstances may require; to her conduct and discretion you may safely commit your daughter” (69). This pronouncement notes the distinction between the two female caretakers of Victoria as perceived by Ardolph and serves to explain why it is di Modena, not Laurina, who becomes the discipliner. Laurina is barred from exercising judgment and is commanded to “commit” her daughter to di Modena, though this act is only nominally within Laurina’s power; Ardolph knows he has already given di Modena the necessary permissions to control Victoria, with or without Laurina’s consent. By contrast, Ardolph implores di Modena d to use her own discretion. Ardolph’s trust that di Modena’s actions will suit his purposes comes primarily from the security his influence offers: “He had skillfully touched the spring, the only spring upon which any feeling, or any principle of the Signora, hung – Interest” (69). While Ardolph must sever the bond between mother
and daughter in order to have true control over Laurina, he is satisfied that the Signora is already under in his power and thus proclaims: “Deign to act in this affair, Signora, with that zeal and punctuality, which your piety will teach you to exert for the salvation of a soul, and with that prudence, which has hitherto appeared so eminently to distinguish your own conduct in life” (69). Thus di Modena is given the liberty of exercising her own agency, since she has already set its boundaries. Freedom in such a structure as Ardolph’s only comes, paradoxically, through submitting completely. Di Modena appears much like conservative and counterrevolutionary female authors of the late eighteenth century. In *Modes of Discipline*, Lisa Wood explains that “[w]omen were authorized by the conservative press to adopt an authoritative voice in print, as long as their didactic purpose recognizably aligned with the antirevolutionary effort” (102). Like Lennox, or counter-conservative authors, di Modena has learned what the authority desires from her—capitulation—and is certain to give it so that she might be able to speak.

There is one crucial distinction between the Signora and conservative counterrevolutionaries: di Modena certainly does not embody the Christian principles she would impose upon her captive, Victoria. Indeed, she merely demonstrates “the shew of virtue in its most ungraceful form, pride, and affectation” (Dacre 70). Virtue is rather an enticing and unassuming vehicle for duplicity, enabling her to torment and gain pleasure within the system, for she is “happy to have a human being, and, above all, an ardent and high-spirited creature, to tyrannise over” (73). Feigning the discourse of the ruling

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6 As discussed in the prior chapter, this is the same method that Arabella employs in her treatment of both Glanville and Sir Charles; it is the method of an absolute authority, or a tyrant.
ideology however, has given her a source of empowerment adaptable to personal ends. Di
Modena’s masquerade, however, does not counteract her subservience but rather gives
further proof of it. Masquerade and dissimulation require an awareness of how one is
perceived. They must acknowledge not only how they might be received but also how
they ought to appear. Foucault’s vision of the Panopticon, that prison of society that
disciplines its members and inmates, centers on these principles of visibility. In sensing
surveillance, an inmate preempts censure and modifies his behavior to bring it into
accordance with ideological standards. “Hence,” explains Foucault, “the major effect of
the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a sense of conscious and permanent visibility that
assures the automatic functioning of power” (554). Di Modena’s “shew of virtue”
presupposes not only an audience, the prison guard, but also a desired normative value,
Christian virtue. Thus, though di Modena has gained power within the system, she is,
nevertheless, an inmate of it, acknowledging Ardolph’s influence over her actions and,
with the acceptance of the ring, entering into a binding agreement with it. She, along with
other women who would perpetuate ideological norms, sincerely or no, is inmates that
have been “caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers”
(555).

Ardolph would similarly impose a Panoptic education upon Victoria; his
injunction that Victoria be contained and confined within her room until “time and
reflection” allow her to see her faults invokes a similarly Foucauldian discipline (Dacre
70). As regulating members of society, both di Modena and Ardolph endeavor to make
Victoria’s discipline not merely external, coming from their corporeal punishments, but
internal, coming from her own perception and fear of punishment. As with the Doctor in *The Female Quixote*, these tutors are not content with their pupil’s progress until they have managed to incorporate patriarchal ideology into their very manner of thinking. They wish, in short, to make punishment lead to self-discipline and allow her to be “the principle of [her] own subjection” (Foucault 556). However, both Ardolph and di Modena want an individualized power and personal control, a principle directly at odds with the function of the Panopticon; di Modena wishes the power to be directly attributable to her, the sole persecutor. Likewise, Ardolph desires Victoria to become wholly subjected to him. The guard of the Panopticon, however, is meant to be unseen: “it automatizes and disindividualizes power. [. . . ] The ceremonies, the rituals, the marks by which the sovereign’s surplus power are manifested are useless [. . . ] it does not matter who exercises power” (555). Power can be held by anyone who upholds the values; anyone can be a guard in the prison and likewise, anyone the prisoner. As with di Modena, Foucauldian discipline works upon Victoria, but to startlingly subversive effect:

> The cold and unfeeling Signora [. . . ] resolved that no refreshment should be offered her till she came, and with proper apologies for her conduct, requested it [. . . ] How grieved and disappointed then was she to find the fury of the morning sunk into calm, and, as it appeared, patient submission. (73)

The Signora is grieved because, though the acquiescence is there, she cannot consider herself the individualized actuator. Victoria, quelling the anger she would naturally be inclined to express, disciplines herself, preempting the Signora’s punishment. Victoria
gains the satisfaction not only of disciplining herself but also of thwarting di Modena’s desires through appearing to be disciplined.

It seems that the primary lesson Victoria has learned from her captor is not the subservient Christian virtue she was supposed to absorb, but rather the art of deception:

A few days after this comparative liberty had been allowed her, the Signora, by Catau, requested her presence in the drawing-room. In strict pursuance of the conduct she had prescribed herself, she instantly obeyed, and regretted only that her pallid cheek and sunken eye were evidenced of her suffering beyond her power to conceal, and would gratify, as she feared, the malignancy of her tyrant. She entered the apartment, however, with an air of neither sullen nor acknowledged resentment, but placid, cool, and unembarrassed. Thus, too, did she learn the most refined artifice, which, by practice, became imbued into the mass of her other evil qualities.

The Signora, somewhat discomfited by the unexpected demeanour of Victoria, having previously arranged her hard features for the intended expression of severe reprimand, knew not for the moment how to receive her: at length, she said – ‘Be seated, child.’

With secret scorn and hate, Victoria obeyed. (75)

Victoria continues to conceal her true nature “secretly” and with “artifice” and in this, gains power. Far from appearing the supine inmate, she enters with an air of composed authority, “unembarrassed” because she has made certain to be free from censure. Thus
even as Victoria obeys, she slowly steals power from her captor. While di Modena’s attempt to gain power through subservience in fact imprisons her, Victoria’s subservience accomplishes her freedom. Victoria is able to read Catau’s desire for companionship and, feigning concern and companionship, secures her aid in escape by “[assuming] gentleness and forbearance” (79). The manipulation of modes is more marked – and more successful with Victoria, who allows herself to be self-“disciplined” in order to get what she wants and deprive her captor—a stand-in for male authority—the satisfaction of disciplining and punishing.

An emblem of ingenious reversals, Victoria uses subservience to ensnare and deceive her captors. Thus when her suitor, Berenza, shows the same propensity towards reform as Glanville with Arabella, it is Victoria who comes out victorious. As in Arabella’s case, Victoria’s willful behavior is described in terms of infection and illness for which a cure must be procured for a healthy, advantageous marriage: “‘Can I,’ [Berenza] asked himself, ‘be *rationally* happy, with a being imperfect as she now is? No; unless I can modify the strong features of her character into the *nobler* virtues. I feel that all her other attractions will be insufficient to fill up my craving heart”’ (90). The necessity to, as Miller describes, bring a “structure of insufficiency” to a close is only strengthened as characters push towards perfection and completion; intervention is necessary in order to end the “inchoate, unfinished state” (Miller 7). Firm in his resolve, Berenza, like Glanville, dreams not of violent governance but rather of bringing Victoria to a level of self-discipline so that he might be viewed not as tyrant but a lover. Berenza believes himself to be the controlling, driving force in the relationship, even as Glanville
attempts to soothe the sting of education with assurances of love. Nevertheless, he, too attempts to define her. After a pleasing speech, Berenza commends her: “that is spoken like yourself” (Dacre 94). Berenza is not telling her what she should be but what she in fact is. He gives her little say in her own definition for she, as his object, is his to do with what he will: “My mistress, too, must be mine exclusively, heart and soul: others may gaze and sigh for her, but must not dare approach” (95). These are the conditions of Berenza’s love and acceptance. They are also they are expressly the ones she refuses to meet; she sequesters her heart and soul from him in order to maintain her independence. Nevertheless, the role of unconditional lover is precisely the role she performs.

Ellis states that this dissimulation is a necessary step in female development. Unlike their male counterparts, female protagonists in *bildungsromane* need to accommodate a system which may be hostile to them: “she is forced to learn that because society constructs an image of her based on her actions and her countenance, it is in her best interest actively to mold her behavior in ways that allow her to control that image” (79). Thus Victoria vows, “I must endeavour, then, to suit my conduct to the fastidious delicacy of his ideas” (Dacre 97). The female *bildungsroman* centers on agency, self-reflection, and reintegration with society (Ellis 25). “By teaching their protagonists how to understand and work within the limits of their societies,” Ellis argues, “authors of female *Bildungsromane* allow their heroines to mature or ‘grow up’—to understand themselves and their relationship to their environment, and to negotiate that environment in order to maintain some form of agency” (18). Ultimately, Ellis claims, society does not care about the core and internal transformation of a female protagonist so much as they
value what is externally manifest. To put this in Lockean terms, Victoria, rather than externalizing her interior thoughts, has rather donned the exterior thoughts of another to avoid the necessity of revealing anything further. To put this in Foucauldian terms, Victoria has begun to see herself as others see her and modifies her behavior in order to meet expectations and thus avoid discipline. Through externalizing something that was never internalized—patience, obedience, virtue—Victoria pacifies patriarchal regulations. Free from censure, Victoria then has the liberty of fashioning herself and maintaining, albeit secretly, her internal desires.

With Berenza, she gives her captor pleasure, “affecting in reality” to be the mistress of his dreams (Dacre 98). Victoria transforms herself into the image of “an innocent and lovely girl” Berenza so longs to obtain (99). Victoria feigns an elaborate “unconscious” confession of love. “[F]aintly giving utterance,” as she whispers her desires, Victoria intentionally deliberately performs an accidental confession. Upon discovery, Victoria “[affects surprise and shame at the sight of Berenza;” she covers her face and diverts her gaze modestly Victoria portrays herself as vulnerable and modest even as she calculatingly gloats in her victory (98). Wollstonecraft’s critique is particularly pertinent: “Women, deluded by these sentiments, sometimes boast of their weakness, cunningly obtaining power by playing on the weakness of men; and they may well glory in their illicit sway, for, like Turkish bashaws, they have more real power than their masters: but virtue is sacrificed to temporary gratifications, and the respectability of life to the triumph of an hour” (Wollstonecraft 43). Indeed, after her affected, dream-like confession of love, Berenza, the “master” of her heart is “deprived of the power of
speech” (99). In meeting his expectations, Victoria satisfies her lover, thus ending his attempts to reform her. Her education is complete, and she is able to dominate him through what he perceives to be virtuous influence, an allowable, feminine power. What she does with such positions, however, is undoubtedly beyond the scope of acceptable behavior. In following through the motions of dutiful wife, affecting the role of nurse in his illness, Victoria in reality acts as his murderer. Under the guise of patriarchal, authorized feminine authority, therefore, Victoria manages to exert her own will and further her own desires, but she does so in the perceived terms of the ruling ideology. With the incorruptible Henriquez, seduction is more difficult and necessitates a literal change in appearances. “He would have loved you,” Zofloya suggests, “had you chanced to have resembled Lilla” (211). Predictably, assuming Lilla’s outward appearance is all it takes to seduce and win Henriquez who does not look beyond superficial manifestations for traces of his lover.

Though deception may be easy to accomplish, it proves unsustainable and, in the end, Victoria’s best attempts at deceiving are thwarted. Wollstonecraft contends, “Women, it is true, obtaining power by unjust means, by practising or fostering vice, evidently lose the rank which reason would assign them, and they become either abject

Victoria is not the only woman to seduce and quell through deception. Megalena Strozzi likewise “affects in reality” when seducing her young lover, Leonardo: “she spared no artifice or allurement to induce him to protract his stay beneath her roof. She devoted herself to fascinate and seduce him, and day after day contrived fresh cause to prevent his departure. By degrees these artifices, as Megalena had hoped they would, became unnecessary: it was now him who forebore to press the subject, who sought excuses to remain, and who constantly trembled” (121). Megalena, through artifice and calculated displays of affection, is not only able to entice her lover into staying, she is able to pass on, like a virus, the infection of supine affection.
slaves or capricious tyrants” (Wollstonecraft 49). Victoria becomes both. Clever men outmaneuver women by using women's own tools of subtle and enticing deception against them. No one dissimulates better than Zofloya. Sensing his “mistress’s” eyes upon him, Zofloya makes a display of cherishing a handkerchief spotted with her blood: “Then seeming suddenly to recollect himself, he appeared struck with confusion at his own audacity” (154, emphasis added). Zofloya’s displays of exaggerated humility ingratiate him to Victoria, as do his frequent promises of assistance until she comes to rely completely upon his assistance. As Victoria ponders how to secure Henriquez, she appeals to Zofloya: “Can you instruct me? can you arrange? can you direct the confused suggestions of my brain?” Zofloya knows too well that to appear what in actuality his is—the master of her thoughts—would offend and thus responds, “I think I could assist you, fair Signora!” Victoria’s words are telling: “Oh, Zofloya, you would bind me forever to you!” (156). The final statement is true enough. Zofloya’s assurances that “Your fate, your fortune, fair Signora, will be of your own making: I am but the humble tool, the slave of your wishes” are the lies and deception necessary to purchase her compliance and will. Like her own victims, Victoria does not realize that she has lost control but allows herself to be contented by beguiling deception. Scarcely perceiving, Victoria has become her own disciplinarian, molding herself into what Zofloya desires: “I did not seek you, because it increases my triumph and my pleasure that you should will me into your presence; with joy do I promote your wishes, but with redoubled joy when you yourself invite me” (182). Zofloya’s words, which might denote a desire to be desired, are in
actuality the pronouncement of success; Victoria has become her own vehicle of destruction.

Charlotte Dacre may be pointing then to the hypocrisy and danger of those women who would manipulate authority for the furtherance of their own cause – this is, in fact, the mode of the devil – but it is also the novelist’s *modus operandi*. As Kiely notes within the Gothic novel, *Zofloya*’s abrupt didactic ending does not match the bulk of the work and thus comes across as incongruous and disingenuous. Despite providing pages of scintillating travesty and moral depravity, Dacre primly provides the closing lines in the form of an either/or binary: “Either we must suppose that the love of evil is born with us (which would be an insult to the Deity), or we must attribute them (as appears more consonant with reason) to the suggestions of infernal influence” (255). Her conclusion has the moral benefit not only of praising God but of encouraging accountability. However, both God and accountability have, until the very last page, been absent in the book. Nevertheless, in sermonizing, Dacre asserts herself as a moral authority, aligned with the conservative and moral values upheld by ruling ideology. Dacre here appears the virtuous paragon, not unlike other contemporary writers resisting improper education and licentiousness.

However, in Dacre’s hands, this manipulation and disingenuousness functions as more than a desire to instruct or even, as Kiely posits, to pacify readers; through appeasing and *seducing* readers it is an avenue to power and is, in fact, one of the only ways a woman can be harmoniously educated in both the feminine and masculine mode. The only empowering education for women – one which Arabella learns too late to be of
use but which Victoria and Dacre both employ – comes in knowing how one will be seen
and appearing as though a reformed individual. According to Ellis, this self-conscious
manipulation “created a model for female development that provided women with a
sophisticated understanding of their constricted place in society while encouraging them
to manipulate societal expectation in order to promote their own welfare” (23). Inasmuch
as women were authorized to speak boldly against speaking boldly, according to Wood,
Dacre could write with approbation “as long as their didactic purpose recognizably
aligned with the antirevolutionary effort” (Wood 102). The familiar either/or binary
renouncing corruption and promoting virtuous education is indeed a conservative and
virtuous moral to be derived; Dacre is, in this instance, employing artful disguise.

Dacre’s methods might not have been as glaringly obvious as they now seem. Wood
notes that even conservative writers found themselves in the quandary of needing
to employ the very methods they denounced. Conservative writers justified didactic
novels by adhering to the utile et dulce formula: only that which is pleasing will ever be
read; in order to impact readers, there must be a wide circulation. Godwin writes to his
editors: “It is now known to philosophers, that the spirit and character of the government
intrudes itself into every rank of society. But this is a truth highly worthy to be
communicated to persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to
reach” (qtd. in Markley 6). Thus “conservative contemporaries agreed that the ‘vehicles’
that convey the ‘poison’ of radical philosophy also provide the best method for
countering revolutionary theory” (Wood 15). Infectious attributes of the popular novel
were to be counteracted with direct and didactic addresses to the audience (86).
Accordingly, Dacre exclaims, “Unhappy girl! whom Nature organised offended with mankind, and whom education, that might have corrected, tended only to confirm this depravity” (97) just as readily as she proclaims at the closure of Leonardo’s tale of seduction, “Let other mothers tremble at this reflection, and pause on mediated guilt” (113) and “Why art thou doomed, Leonardo, to add another blot to the page which registers Laurina’s crimes?” (120). Dacre ardently preaches at length on both the follies of Victoria’s natural, avaricious nature and her flawed and incomplete education at the hands of her mother. The result is a defense that appears too studied to be sincere. The defense also, unfortunately undercuts her concluding, authoritative either/or pronouncement, for Dacre has demonstrated quite clearly that it is not either nature or education but both. Far from Dacre’s closing either/or assertion, Dacre attempts to entertain both possibilities, maintaining that Victoria’s downfall is both attributable to both nature and influence. Dacre clearly struggled with the inability to bend the either/or strictures of the time. Likewise, Dacre is unable to maintain generic rigidity. While Dacre attempts, in the closing lines, to portray Victoria’s behavior as cautionary tale, she has also painted the tale as one of exhilarating power. Despite various assertions that Victoria is “miserable, because guilty” (199) and an unsex’d and repulsive being with a “masculine spirit” (190), Dacre still allows her readers to be drawn in to voyeuristically encounter the lurid actions of her protagonist. The asides are a feeble, non-fictive attempt to distance readers from what reads in scenes as nothing short of pornography. Adriana Craciun in her introduction to the novel observes that “Dacre’s contradictory accounts of
Victoria’s ‘evil’ render any moralizing pretences the novel may profess dangerously unconvincing” (16).

Dacre attempts to access the same avenue of power that Lennox does but with far less success. Critics at the time found this performance to be a disingenuous trick.

Craciun’s introduction quotes one contemporary critic of *The Annual Review*:

There is a voluptuousness of language and allusion, pervading these volumes, which we should have hoped, that the delicacy of a female pen would have refused to trace; and there is an exhibition of wantonness of harlotry, which we would have hoped, that the delicacy of the female mind, would have been shocked to imagine. (qtd. in Craciun 10)

*The General Review* observes: “Zofloya has no pretension to rank as a moral work” (qtd. in Craciun 16). Dacre was clearly and despite appearances, they claimed, writing what she wanted to write: depraved prose in the guise of virtue. Herein lies the danger of duplicity within the system: it cannot sustain itself. Because the either/or binary require renouncing one opposing value and accepting another, duplicity (an attempt to play it both ways), is directly at odds. Like the corpse of Berenza, it will be found out once the illusions are dropped. Only one message, one method, one voice is allowed in authoritative speech; in showing her two methods, Dacre dooms her work.
CHAPTER II

“So many languages a man knows, so many times is he a man”: Semantic Expansion in *The Wild Irish Girl*

While critics and readers come to question the integrity of Dacre’s due to her attempt to bend the rigid strictures of either/or discourse, the message of Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* relies upon it. Unlike Dacre, Owenson does not seek to portray her narrative in terms of either/or. Written in 1806 in the wake of the 1800 Act of Union between Ireland and England, *The Wild Irish Girl* attempts to mediate between English and Irish, man and woman, mute subservience and vocal rebellion. In “The Mild Irish Girl: Domesticating the National Tale,” Thomas Tracy argues that the Act of Union functioned as a repressive act, meant to simultaneously quell rebellions abroad and within the empire, notably Napoleonic aggression and Irish republicanism (83). Like other female authors writing at the time, Owenson found herself in a precarious situation as she sought to assert herself without eliciting censure. In writing a Gothic and instructive novel—both forms allowed women within the confines of eighteenth-century society—Owenson not only submitted her opinions to the world; she created the world as she hoped it might become. Consciously fashioning an exotic and mysterious Irish noblewoman as a love interest for her novel, Owenson established an ideal not only for female but also male conduct. Glorvina appears an inexplicable unity of virtues; her English lover, Horatio, marvels, “I never beheld such an union of intelligence and simplicity, infantine playfulness and profound reflexion, as her character exhibits” (Owenson 92). Glorvina, unlike Victoria or even Arabella, is able to use her mysterious
and conflicting dual nature to her advantage. She uses it as an opportunity to fashion and define herself.

Previously I have remarked on the rhetorical resemblance between author and protagonist. However, nowhere is this conflation as transparent as in Owenson’s case.⁸ The daughter of a Catholic Irishman and an English Protestant, Sydney herself embodies two incongruous identities: Irish and English. In her introduction to The Wild Irish Girl, Kathryn Kirkpatrick acknowledges that as a public literary figure, Owenson’s origins were perpetually debated. As might be anticipated by a society seeking to name and classify, English society wished to know which identity she would choose. Notably, Owenson never completely bound herself to an imposed name; she “[crossed] boundaries between classes, cultures, and gender roles” (ix). While indeed calling herself “Irish,” Owenson resisted the prior definitions of the term, endeavoring to present herself, like Glorvina, as at once exotic and wild and cultured and learned. Responding to the aftereffects of the 1800 Act of Union, The Wild Irish Girl is subtitled “A National Tale.” In the rhetorical setting of 1806, the word “National,” like “Union,” was politically charged and precarious. Though the Act of Union in 1800 created a united kingdom between England and Ireland, it did not create an equal one. Ireland itself was divided between the Anglo-Irish, who were successors of the Protestant Ascendancy, and the Irish Catholics. While the Anglo-Irish enjoyed every liberty in their country, the Catholics suffered a long history of suppression and disenfranchisement. With the Act of Union, Catholics hoped for a Catholic Emancipation, which might allow them to hold

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⁸ Kathryn Kirkpatrick notes that in certain circles of society, Owenson was actually called “Glorvina” and argues that Owenson in fact performed this role for an English audience.
office. Many, most notably the United Irishmen, held the revolutionary belief of self-governance, yet notably Owenson did not push for a break with Britain’s government. In *The Wild Irish Girl*, she encourages the union, though with significant qualifications. In this tale, Owenson argues for a union of identities—both within an individual and between separate individuals. “Union” is used for pointed effect, appearing over twenty times in the latter half of her novel, strongly encouraging a union of minds, hearts, identities, and even nationalities. Her “union,” unlike that of the United Irishmen, does not mean merely between fellow Irishmen but also all members of the kingdom.

Owenson, like other female writers of the time, does not rebel outright. Rather, she tries to access what power she can from within the system. She questions previously reductive terms—“Irish,” “woman,” “nation,” and “Catholic”—and modifies them, expanding semantic borders and including prior definitions which had previously been cast out, thereby allowing a linguistic and ontological union of terms and meanings. Owenson’s both/and approach, which allows for this union, intentionally conflates ideologically constructed binaries, proving compatibility rather than encouraging separation and division. This chapter explores how, as figures embodying foreign and unintelligible virtues, both Glorvina and Sidney Owenson employ the third rhetoric of inclusive “both/and” in order to permit a union of equals.

While blending popular genres, employing conventions of the Gothic novel, *bildungsroman*, and national narrative, *The Wild Irish Girl* nevertheless defies conventional formulae. The three genres all center upon contact with and renunciation of the foreign, deviant, or unknown. Ireland in *The Wild Irish Girl* becomes a country as
wild and Gothic as Radcliffe’s Italy: it is a foreign land peopled by fallen monarchs with suppressed histories and dotted with ruinous mounds. The young explorer embarks upon a solitary mission and must encounter family secrets, even risking incest in his love for Glorvina. Schmitt notes that the Gothic’s fixation on negative definitions and binaries allows it to be a tool for nationalist identity. As a colonizer enters a foreign land, he is able to reaffirm what he is not. Additionally, I note that while abundantly explored, the foreign in the Gothic cannot be allowed to linger. In the Gothic, the foreign is punished and subdued, cast out, or dragged down to hell. Glorvina, as an embodiment of wild foreignness not only has the potential to invite Gothic xenophobia, but also incite patriarchy to discipline. She becomes the prime candidate for educative reform; viewed as a seductive yet unintelligible being, she closely resembles her predecessors Arabella and Victoria. Her lover, Horatio, writes to his friend of her character:

I fear, however, that this girl is already spoiled by the species of education she has received. The priest has more than once spoke to me of her erudition! Erudition! the pedantry of a schoolboy of the third class, I suppose. How much must a woman lose, and how little can she gain, by that communion which gives her our acquirements for her own graces! For my part, you know I have always kept clear of the bas-bleus; and would prefer one playful charm of Ninon, to all the classic lore of a Dacier. (65)
Like Arabella, Glorvina is seen as tainted and infected by her education that, in turn, makes her unpleasing and thus unsuitable for marriage. Horatio scoffs at the thought of being the lover of such a creature: “Lover!—Preposterous!” (65). He, like Berenza or Glanville, prefers a pleasing courtesan (Ninon) to a self-determined intellectual (Dacier).

In a nationalistic tale, the duty would fall to Horatio, the embodiment of Englishness, to discipline the colonized. Horatio is accustomed to wielding authority and judging those beneath him. Tracy compares *The Wild Irish Girl* to nationalistic traditions such as Shakespeare’s Henriad, particularly *Henry V*, and Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent* in which the foreign, colonized subject must learn not only the discourse and customs of their conquerors, they must also embrace a silent subservience to them. In a nationalistic tale, “a colonial adventurer’s seduction characteristically has clearly negative effects” (93). Thus, *The Wild Irish Girl* uses the genres that would discipline, subdue, and confine Glorvina and Ireland as a whole.

This would be contrary to Owenson’s purposes, however. Tracy claims that in breaking conventions, Owenson “transforms the national tale both generically and ideologically,” refusing to follow the narrative trajectory of either *Castle Rackrent* or *Henry V* (83). In writing *The Wild Irish Girl*, Owenson breaks traditional narrative styles just as she comes to break the cohesiveness of stereotypes and authoritative binaries. In order for her paradoxical heroine to survive and retain her individual character, the

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9 It is important to note that the ladies’ educations differ considerably. Arabella’s miseducation hinges upon the imperious mastery of Romantic convention, whereas Glorvina’s centers on a Wollstonecraftian ideal of egalitarian education based upon reason and logic. Wollstonecraft certainly would not approve of a comparison between educations, but it is likewise notable that, to English voices of authority like Horatio’s, the effect of each was the same.
environment in which she is placed must change. Glorvina’s tale might resemble
Arabella’s—one of male domination and female capitulation—were it not for this crucial
amendment. While in Zofloya Victoria modifies herself in order to fit the man’s
standards, the men of The Wild Irish Girl, by contrast, come to deplore such affectation.
Horatio comments:

   since I have known Glorvina, I shall never again endure that perpetuity of
   air, look, and address, which those who mistake formality for good-
   breeding are so apt to assume. Manners [. . .] should betray, by degrees,
   the expansion or contradiction of the feelings, as they are warmed by
   emotion or chilled by indifference. They should breathe the soul in order
to win it. (Owenson 195)

While a Glanville or a Berenza might have been satisfied with the appearance of manners
and good-breeding, happy to be deceived by pleasing displays, Horatio, Owenson’s ideal
male, craves to behold the soul of his partner, embracing rather than casting out the
foreign.

Neither does Owenson choose for Glorvina the docility of Emily or Arabella’s “emphatic
Silence” (Lennox 383). Notably there is no villain of The Wild Irish Girl to do the
silencing, save perhaps a general English prejudice that is never fully embodied in an
individual.¹⁰ Rather, all characters seem, by the end, to be in agreement. The real conflict

¹⁰ English prejudice and colonization, a historical fact rather than a villain, does indeed
act like a Montoni in this instance. The priest of Inismore, Glorvina’s estate, laments,
“Manuscripts, annals, and records, are not the treasures of a colonized or a conquered
country” (174). Like the fate of the imperiled and entrapped woman, Ireland is kept from
telling her own tale.
of the tale comes in Glorvina’s silence and subservience to the tenuous marriage contract between Horatio’s father, the Earl of M—, and herself. Glorvina’s filial obedience creates heartache for all three members involved in the romance. Horatio’s father laments: “She was silent—she was obedient—and I was—deceived” (Owenson 240). Unlike Dr. Gregory and quite like his own son, the Earl of M— does not value Glorvina’s silence but encourages her to make her true feelings known. Glorvina neither submissively repeats the either/or discourse of patriarchy, nor feigns it; and the men do not wish her to.

Far from the violent acts of segregation that stereotypes might perpetuate, the prevailing sentiment of tolerance allows Glorvina, as an unknown or liminal figure, to express herself in her own terms. Kirkpatrick notes that difference in *The Wild Irish Girl* “might be loved rather than hated” (xv.) Glorvina is praised for the “diametrically opposite” characteristics of natural modesty and bred elegance (Owenson 68): “Her blush was the effusion of nature; her bow the result of inculcation—the one spoke the native woman; the other the *ideal* princess” (68). However, Horatio prefers the “elegance of manner” which demonstrates the elegance of her soul rather than the propriety of social manners:

> This elegance of manner, then, must be the pure result of the elegance of soul; and if there is a charm in woman, I have hitherto vainly sought, and prized beyond all I have discovered, it is this refined, celestial, native elegance of soul, which effusing its spell through every thought, word, and motion, of its enviable possessor, resembles the peculiar property of gold,
which subtilely [sic] insinuates itself through the most minute and various particles, without losing any thing of its own intrinsic nature by the amalgamation. (70)

In contrast to his former assertion that he would prefer a courtesan to a scholar, Horatio now praises the candid, intimate elegance that Glorvina’s wild refinement represents. Like gold, Glorvina can be incorporated without losing her character. Though he does not understand her—and, in fact, continually protests his demonstrated affection for her—Horatio accepts her, stating: “I cannot well tell you what the Lady Glorvina is, for she is like nothing upon the face of God’s creation but herself” (41). Glorvina cannot and should not be defined in his words but rather her own. Her inherent contradiction renders his classification impossible. Rather than vanquishing, conquering, expelling, or dragging the unknown to Hell, as might be expected in the Gothic, Horatio marries her. The unknown in The Wild Irish Girl works contrary to the nationalistic purpose of the Gothic novel; it does not repress, control, or debar. It includes and welcomes. The root of this divergence is one in the same: Horatio is viewing himself as the other, not she. He modifies his behavior to her (and Owenson’s) standard.

His education whilst at the castle of Inismore covers the subjects of Irish culture, history, and language – all of which are necessary to decipher and win the heart of Glorvina. Closely resembling her own protagonist, Owenson also does not attempt to conform to the ideological expectations of the ruling patriarchy but rather instructs her predominately English, normative audience about the foreign culture and language of the Irish. Notably, the women of The Wild Irish Girl do not alter themselves to become
intelligible but rather provide men with a lexicon with which to understand the meanings they already have. The women are able to define themselves in their own words, and thus change the meanings of authoritative terms such as “woman,” “Irish,” or “union.” Only then, once the normate understands the other, is harmonious union made possible. Both Glorvina’s and Owenson’s styles are a mingling of disparate attributes. Kiely notes that this method was a common practice within the Gothic and that Gothic novelists “mingled styles as well as genres. They joined Defoe to Milton, with ‘mixed’ results, but they also developed an allusive, euphemistic, and, at best, highly suggestive style which was peculiarly their own” (Kiely 11). The result, he claims, is a subversive undercutting of the original discourse; as terms and tropes changed meanings and functions, the very binaries upon which authority founded itself shifted.

The redefinition of authoritative discursive terms and modes in fact was seen as a radical political practice in the 1790’s. In the generation after Johnson’s *Dictionary*, society sought solid and established terminology and, indeed, many thought they had attained it. However, when these terms failed or proved malleable, semantic disputes became political confusion and debate. The act of defining, in and of itself an authoritative and political act, came into direct disputation in public discussion. Meanings of gender, education, religion, and freedom (all constructed divisions) could be likewise malleable and reversible, twisted according to the rhetor’s will. In *Language, Custom and Nation in the 1790s*, Susan Manly outlines how semantic shift impacted politics. With the Gagging Acts of 1795, resistance turned down new avenues. Similar to Gilbert and Gubar’s argument, Manly notes that inappropriate and treasonous commentary was
relegated to a subtler, more innocuous form. One radical politician, John Horne Tooke, delighted in attacking authoritative terms through tracing etymologies. Unlike Johnson, Tooke did not seek to create new definitions but rather to return to old ones, throwing into jeopardy the very foundations of ideological nomination: “Tooke’s idea of definition involves uncovering the development of words, so as to reveal their hidden, but powerfully influential, associations” (Manly 15). In tracing back to original roots of words, Tooke claimed to arrive at the unadulterated truth of meaning.

A young Coleridge, employing Tooke’s etymological tactics, calls into question the very word “majesty” in his essay “The Plot Discovered.” Formerly referring to the king, the term “majesty” is traced back its roots to once more mean “the unity of the people” (qtd. in Manly 6). Coleridge then proceeds, arguing that John Thelwall, a minister charged of treason, cannot be put to death for he, “the voice of tens of thousands,” is His Majesty. The king, the former embodiment of majesty, has lost his title, for he only speaks with the voice of one (6). According to this logic, the king is only “His Majesty” so long as he embodies the will of the people. Thus if the king seeks this source of empowerment, he must meet its demands. Coleridge reclaims the king’s tyrannical authority for his aims: the defense of the people. Through expanding and modifying the meanings of ideologically-laden terms, rhetoricians are capable of redirecting the very sources of power. As ideologically charged words lost their conclusiveness and finality, politicians, could only use the words in their lexicon with uncertainty. For all intents and purposes, radicals such as Tooke and Coleridge were still
working within the frameworks of terministic screens\textsuperscript{11} provided by the patriarchy. Nevertheless, they, as Romantic and Gothic novelists, were making from it something completely their own, especially by providing new and intelligible definitions.

By the same method of changing the significance of authoritative names, Owenson and Glorvina set forth a bold strategy, endeavoring to educate both Horatio and the English readership. Like Tooke and Coleridge, they rely primarily upon etymology, hearkening back to definitions that existed prior to English meddling. As Horatio engages in one of many discussions on Irish history, the priest claims that “Albion,” the well-known name for England, is an Irish term not for England but for Scotland. Horatio responds with laughter, unable to believe that such a fundamental term as his own nation’s name might justifiably be called into question. “‘I know,’ said the priest, returning my smile, ‘the fallacies in general of all etymologists, but the only part of your island, anciently called by any name that bore the least affinity to Albion was Scotland, then called Albin, a word of Irish etymology, Albin signifying mountainous, from Alb a mountain’” (Owenson 174). With this evidence, Horatio must resituate himself within this new meaning, considering whether or not he will identify with it, trust the priest’s etymology, or will take offense to it. Unlike Henry in Henry V, who, as Tracy points out, “masters his wife by means of ‘Englishing’ her—that is, imposing his language on his

\textsuperscript{11} I have borrowed this useful term from rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke; it refers to “a set of symbols that becomes a kind of screen or grid of intelligibility through which the world makes sense to us. Here Burke offers rhetorical theorists and critics a way of understanding the relationship between language and ideology. Language, Burke thought, doesn't simply "reflect" reality; it also helps select reality as well as deflect reality” (45).
victim of conquest” (Tracy 95), Horatio elects to become the pupil and profit by an expanded understanding of the terms he uses. Kirkpatrick argues: “Surrendering his preconceptions about the Irish at last, Horatio decides to do what Owenson clearly encouraged for her English readers—learn the Irish language and history, and judge Ireland and the Irish fairly” (xviii). Once more engaged in semantic debate, Horatio reaffirms what he knows “Irish” to mean: barbarous. To this, the prince, Glorvina’s father, argues, “on the barren surface which covers the wreck of Irish greatness, the hand of prejudice and illiberality has sown the seeds of calumny and defamation” (Owenson 178). In order to rid Horatio of fallacious terminology and stereotypes, his Irish companions instruct him extensively on Irish origins and perceptions before the English conquest and Protestant Ascendancy. Owenson also assists in this effort, providing the reader with lengthy footnotes proving her extensive research and personal observations. These educators trace Irish origins back to the Israelites, the Greeks, and the Romans. Their Davidic harps descend from Hebrew tradition (70-1) as does their costume (93); their customs of mourning issue from the Carthaginians and Greeks (182), as does their poetry (91). In tracing their cultural traditions—previously derided by the English—with the credible and respected traditions of antiquity, the Irish are able to gain access to a new reverence due to their lofty origins. They are able to redefine what “Irish” means, aligning it with refinement and greatness.

This education, while leading to Horatio’s consideration and eventual adoption of their lessons, values development and tolerance over capitulation and conquest. As they seek a union of principles and ideas, Owenson and her Irish characters encourage debate
and mutual understanding. Horatio comes to recognize the unjust restrictions of authoritative naming and retracts his former views, stating, “I made the palinode of my prejudices, and concluded by saying, ‘I perceive that on this ground I am always destined to be vanquished, yet always to win by the loss, and gain by the defeat; and therefore I ought not in common policy to cease to oppose, until nothing further can be obtained by opposition’” (178). Interestingly, far from resembling a battle that must end in the defeat, exile, or capitulation of one side, discussion and conflict enriches the discourse, allowing for communion and intersection of ideas. Rather than a mere reversal of linguistic and perceptual conquest, Horatio and the residents of Inismore, unlike the educators of *The Female Quixote*, value not the product but the process of an education which encourages debate, expansion, and free exchange of ideas. This education, similar to Wollstonecraft’s ideal, manages to improve his worldview, reasoning, and sentiment. Through this education, which exercises his intellectual abilities, Horatio is forced to contemplate new possibilities hitherto unconsidered. Horatio’s acquiescence to the Irish’s views, far from subduing and conquering him, manages to lift him higher. Horatio himself acknowledges an improvement in his intellect: “possibly my perceptions have become as sophisticated as the objects to whom they have hitherto been directed; and want refinement and subtilty [sic] to enter into all the delicate minutiae of her superior and original character, which is at once both natural and national” (120). As Horatio regards Glorvina and the Irish culture as a whole, he is able to see beyond reductive stereotypes and binaries and instead explores and considers the intricacies of a previously unintelligible.
What follows from Horatio’s renunciation of English prejudice is, Tracy notes, a “complete reversal of normative hierarchies” (94) as delineated in works such as the Henriad or, I would add, the bildungsroman or Gothic. Rather than reaffirm hierarchical structures and normative gender roles, linguistic education in The Wild Irish Girl transforms and reinscribes them. Indeed, in this model, Glorvina is the tutor. While Horatio tutors her in only one subject, drawing, she is an indifferent pupil, studying the art only when it pleases her. She is not an entity to be changed or cast out, but merely to be understood differently. While initially she signified negative stereotypes—Irish, woman, blue-stock ing intellectual—as Glorvina is permitted to use her own terms and definitions for herself, she is able to change Horatio’s negative perception into a favorable one. Interestingly, it is her incomprehensibility that initially serves as an educative tool. Writing to his friend to complain about Glorvina’s inappropriate conduct, Horatio writes, “The conduct of the girl is inexplicable” (116). What follows, however, is a reversal of his prior view. As Horatio recounts the conflict between them in order to prove her unintelligibility and thus disregard her, he transcribes her words and her logical defense of her views. Horatio then remarks: “Is she not an extraordinary creature? I meant to have given you an unfavourable opinion of her prejudices; and in transcribing my documents of accusation, I have actually confirmed myself in a better opinion of her heart and understanding than I ever before indulged in” (119). It is in the act of repeating Glorvina’s discourse, even in transcription, that Horatio familiarizes himself with her language and thus her views. He then is able to see as Glorvina sees, allowing for tolerance. However, Horatio’s understanding comes to extend beyond mere tolerance.
This is, primarily, because Glorvina’s techniques of education go beyond mere affectation and deception. She wishes Horatio to be fully captivated by her world, fully devoted, so that he might, through marriage, become fully integrated into it. Horatio does not merely come to understand and appreciate her views; he comes to accept them as his own.

Glorvina’s education appears, on one level, one of seduction. Like Arabella, she appears to gain her power through her suitor’s interest in her as a sexual being. While a softer version of Arabella’s imperious commands, Glorvina’s education of her male lover relies upon the same principle: male fascination. Tracy notes that the seduction is totalizing (86). Assuming her at first to be in need of a proper, domestic education, being spoiled with too much masculine learning, Horatio repents his stance as he comes to see in her also the desirable traits of femininity. She has the docility of nature, the sweetness in form, and the elegance in manner that are desired of a woman. Indeed, Glorvina takes efforts to appeal to Horatio. Not only does she translate her thoughts into his native language, but she also shows an air of deference, blushing, looking away from his direct gaze, and weakly protesting that her knowledge is insignificant—any maid might know as much. Her deference paradoxically raises her above him. Writing once more to his friend, Horatio explains that while Glorvina has an elevated knowledge of languages, her accent is distinguishable:

A simple question from her lip seems rather tenderly to solicit, than abruptly to demand. Her every request is a soft supplication; and when she stops to entreat, there is in her voice and manner such an energy of
supplication, that while she places your power to grant in the most
ostensible light to yourself, you are insensibly vanquished by that soft
persuasion whose melting meekness bestows you a fancied exaltation.
(132)

Horatio here describes Glorvina’s art as pleasing deception. In diverting his gaze, she
reveals an awareness of it. In entreating, she recognizes the need to ask rather than
demand. She, he acknowledges, is in power, yet she maintains that it is not so in order to
appear within the frameworks of proper gender hierarchies.

Likewise, Owenson writes in the tender and feminine language of sensibility,
writing not of political reform, but reform within a male-female relationship. It is a
lover’s story. She likewise defers her opinions to those of the men. She closes her novel
not with the voice of Horatio, who is the pupil, but the more authoritative decree of the
father who, as an English landholder and nobleman, stands as the ultimate patriarch of the
novel. His approval is paramount and Owenson’s admission of this is a recognition of
and deference to this authority. However, as with Glorvina’s linguistic reform wrought
within Horatio, it is clear that rather than Owenson voicing the opinion of patriarchy,
Owenson has patriarchy repeat her sentiments. The earl’s decree is, surprisingly, one of
inclusion, one of both/and. The lesson to be learned is not what to cast out, as in the case
of Zofloya or The Female Quixote, but what to admit: “In this dearest, most sacred, most
lasting of all human ties, let the names of Inismore and M— be inseparably blended, and
the distinctions of English and Irish, of protestant and catholic, for ever buried” (250).
Within the proper framework of authoritative decree, Owenson’s novel works to expand
what might be considered appropriate feminine conduct, seeking the approval of the very men who are educated by women. In doing so, Owenson expands what it means to be a proper woman. Both Glorvina and herself demonstrate great learning. However, they have not compromised their feminine delicacy and virtue to do so.

Neither does the gender reversal result in a reverse tyranny. Though Glorvina certainly has romantic power over Horatio, which she uses for the purpose of instruction, she brings him to her level, allowing him to share her existence with him. When first encountering Glorvina, Horatio stands atop a craggy precipice, listening to her play and sing and gazing in voyeuristically. However, after this fall, he is reduced to a weakened state and must be nursed and educated by Glorvina before he can join her in the upper rooms of the castle of Inismore. Glorvina does not prolong his weakened state but encourages a swift recovery so that they may interact as equals. Through a seducing education of language, Horatio is able to express himself to Glorvina and she to him:

The Prince, who is as unsuspicious as an infant, would have use repeat [the verb “to love”] together, that I might catch the pronunciation from her lip!

“I love,” faintly articulated Glorvina.

“I love,” I more faintly repeated.

This was not enough—the Prince would have us repeat the plural twice over; and again and again we murmured together—“we love”! (161)

Through sharing a language, Glorvina and Horatio are able to share their sentiments with one another and are able to join together in mutual declaration. His education, as Horatio
describes it, is one con amore (88). Eventually, their love transcends language and boundaries altogether. Horatio asks, “And is expression then necessary for the conveyance of such profound, such exquisite feeling? May not a similarity of refined organization exist between souls, and produce that mutual intelligence which sets the necessity of cold verbal expressing at defiance?” (150). Horatio’s and Glorvina’s mutual intelligence differs significantly from prior models of education. Whereas the educator has shared messages to ensure subservience but kept lessons that might empower, Glorvina has shared the entirety of her knowledge. This mutual education resembles Wollstonecraft’s ideal of equal intellectual development: “If marriage be the cement of society, mankind should all be educated after the same model, or the intercourse of the sexes will never deserve the name of fellowship” (174). The communion of spirits relies upon a mutual, not domineering education. And the resulting feeling, a new language, is one which both learn together through exercises of language and education. Through their mutual experiences and affections, they set the path for the intercourse of minds.

Because ideology is perpetuated by the terms that it creates, a careful and precise reinscription of terms, if accepted, results in new, expanded definitions and conceptions of society. In writing both an enjoyable and educational novel, Owenson is able to both appeal to and instruct readers. As they come to a mutual understanding of what it might be to be Irish, considering their own prejudices in light of her extensive footnotes, they are able to incorporate both their views and Owenson’s evidence. Further, the approbation of patriarchy, which is accessed through the Earl of M—‘s closing letter, increases Owenson’s ethos. Likewise, Glorvina’s mode of educating through linguistic
expansion and repetition allows Horatio to understand, then repeat, then incorporate her view. Owenson’s and Glorvina’s methods of both/and, then, tend to convert the male authorities to their view, securing their ideology’s perpetuation. What is more, I add, the conversion takes place not because Glorvina appears exactly what an Anglican male wants, but rather what he didn’t think he wanted. Expectations, not women, have been re-defined, made possible only through Glorvina’s education of Horatio. Horatio’s expectations are exceeded as he encounters and comes to know the other. Had he forced her to capitulate to his reductive view, he might never have known or enjoyed her complexity. Horatio remarks, “never, never till I beheld thee, did I know the pure rapture which the intercourse of a kindred soul awakens—of that sacred communion with a superior intelligence, which, while it raises me in my own estimation, tempts me to emulate that excellence I adore” (159). Education in The Wild Irish Girl heightens awareness and pleasure, allowing its pupils to be expanded and fortified with each new experience. It is for this reason that Horatio quote Charles V: “So many languages a man knows, so many times is he a man” (21). In learning a new language Horatio—and the implied English reader—not only maintains his own identity and views but can incorporate others’ without “losing any thing of its own intrinsic nature by the amalgamation” (70). He is able to expand himself anew with each new encounter.
CHAPTER III

“Every one has his Faults”: Polyvocality in More Ghosts!

When young Mary Morney, one of the protagonists of Fleenor C. Patrick’s More Ghosts!, travels to London in order to experience society, she is exposed to a world beyond the secluded life she has led at Morney Abbey. In the company of boisterous caricatures, she attends the play Every one has his Faults (3: 5) that, while intensely fashionable, is not much noted by the members of Mary’s company; they are all too engaged in vying for Mary’s attention. Rakish suitors attempt to seduce her; her female relatives, “philosophers” and bluestockings, rationalize seduction as a necessary experience. On the other side, a kindly priest tries to engage her in philosophical contemplation, and her father attempts to sternly reprimand those who would corrupt his naïve daughter. In comic juxtaposition, each caricatured school of thought—romance, reason, religion, and patriarchal control—attempts to reform and control Mary, even as a parade and presentation of social failure, which mirrors their own, unfolds on stage. During the course of her young adulthood, Mary alternatively falls victim to each school of thought’s pernicious influence. Like the other ingénues educated during the course of the three-volume parody—including her cousin Tom Grey and (earlier) his mother, Isabella Morney/Wellers/De Burgh—Mary is not resistant to adapting to the varying strictures of society. She is not defiant. She accepts the lessons she is taught—perhaps overmuch. As the play’s title indicates, no one in the social narrative is fully blameless, and it appears as Mary undergoes a series of failed attempts at acculturation that it may be the very educations that are to blame for Mary’s failures. While Sydney Owenson’s
The Wild Irish Girl portrays an inclusive education that expands the reductive binaries of patriarchy, the prevailing education in F.C. Patrick’s Gothic parody, More Ghosts!, is flawed, aporetic, and confined. Patrick argues that authoritative either/or binaries, far from inculcating normative behavior, in fact breed degeneracy and deviance. Patrick, like Owenson, demonstrates the limitations of reductive either/or binaries. Yet this is accomplished not through creating a new, idyllic ideology, but rather a series of failed and hypocritical ones. The resulting binary cannot help but undermine itself completely, becoming a neither/nor structure. In this chapter, I claim that More Ghosts! through parody shows fallacies inherent in patriarchal ideology. I propose that Patrick’s ridiculous gender reversals and hypocritical plot turns not only create a source of entertainment but also serve as crucial illustrations of a fragmented and conflicting education. In parodying patriarchy’s either/or methods of education, Patrick renders instructive binaries comically improper and unintelligible.

Though writing in 1798, the year of the United Irishmen uprising, Patrick refrains from making any explicit political statements, instead presenting More Ghosts! as a humble, innocuous work meant to please: “If my ideas of a novel are just, this may pass; or, if it amuses, and is not immoral, irreligious, or seditious, every end is answered that Readers expect from the perusal of such publications, and the Editor’s ambition amply gratified” (1: xiii). Making no pretensions to social change, reform, or even critique, Patrick emphasizes the diverting nature of her work. In amusing, satire allows readers a sense of pleasure and superiority. Patrick herself borrows from Hobbes’ philosophy of ridicule that she cites in a passage of her novel. As two sons mock their father, Patrick’s
narrator asserts, “This, in some degree, tends to prove Hobbes’s hypothesis, that laughter proceeds from a sudden sense of our own superiority to whatever is at the time done or related. Thus these young men thought themselves wiser than their father” (3: 123). As her readers are able to laugh at a parody of contemporary society, fashion, philosophy, and literature, they exult in their superior understanding. Patrick appears to reaffirm hierarchy even as she criticizes her readers. In parodying the very tenets of modern society, Patrick causes readers to laugh at themselves. Patrick universally mocks both sides of the binary: male/female, Enlightenment/Gothic, reason/sensibility. The resulting comedic distance allows readers to view their own discourse as ridiculous and implausible. Patrick is thus able to show to readers their faults without them feeling the smart of condescension.

Patrick had compelling reason to scrutinize society’s restrictions. The widow of an Anglo-Irish officer, Patrick, like Owenson, attempted to improve her powerless position in a tumultuous world. Her husband having died in debt, Patrick was, she claims, destitute by 1798, when she wrote More Ghosts!. Her bitterness towards her situation is apparent. In the Preface, what appears to be the only genuine section of the novel and what is, in the frame narrative, the only portion to be acknowledged as her own work,

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12 There is no existing account of F.C. Patrick’s life save this preface. Her birth and death date are likewise unknown. Any definitive conclusions from the preface, presented in a parody, are tentative at best. While Kiely makes a passing reference to More Ghosts!, there has been no critical examination of her works.

13 Patrick’s More Ghosts! is a parody of the Gothic convention of fragmented and discovered manuscripts. Patrick claims to have acquired a set of papers from a country milkmaid. The manuscript, written in the hand of a male domestic of the Morney household, recounts what is the body of More Ghosts!. This frame narrative is both
Patrick endeavors to cast her scathing critique of society in an innocuous, subtle form in order to avoid the censure of her readership. Patrick exercises the same caution as many other female authors; she guards herself against criticism through appeals to patriarchal conventions. In her humble preface, she places herself in the readers’ power. Her preemptive defense demonstrates awareness of her audience’s expectations. Thus appearing as a modest and discreet member of the private sphere, Patrick renounces any pretensions of grandeur, affirming herself disinclined to enter into public discourse: “All I ask for myself is, that the Critics will spare the work now submitted to the Public; it having been suggested more by the necessities of my family than a desire for being known to the World as a writer” (1: xii). Calling herself “unfortunately, the most defenceless [sic] of beings” (1: vi), Patrick’s excuse of financial necessity not only confirms her dedication to providing for her family but also subtly begins the critique of an unjust patriarchal system. Despite her claims that she will “throw the veil of silence” over her complaints “lest the World should think [she] write an accusation” (1; xii), what follows is a lengthy detail of her difficult situation. Like her protagonists, Patrick’s family suffers not because of insufficiency or incompetence but because patriarchal restrictions and binaries prepare individuals for failure. Despite living virtuously in the service of his country, her husband died in debtor’s prison. Doomed without the necessary privilege of birth or education, he could not improve his situation through either purchasing a commission or entering trade. Likewise, Patrick, despite being a dutiful mother devoted to her children and content in the private sphere, is left destitute parodied and functions in and of itself as a distancing technique to further protect herself, the mere editor, from scrutiny.
and must, if she wishes to support her family, transgress against traditional strictures and limitations placed upon women; she must write for a living. The unjust limitations of society require her actions—which may be considered by some as ill-suiting a woman. Patrick ingeniously guards herself: she is breaking the restrictions of society because the restrictions of society have forced her to.

Mary’s aunt and Tom Grey’s mother, Isabella Morney/Wellers/de Burgh, likewise pleads innocent to her transgressions which, through patriarchy’s tyrannies, have prevented her from improving her situation. She has been taught the very deviant behavior she has acquired: “Indeed I had recourse to one of those vises [sic] my father termed religious – namely, hypocrisy” (2: 191). Both Isabella and Patrick, through irony, blame society’s educators, not its pupils, for shortcomings. While her father tells her that “Girls are not to take their male relations as patterns; their moral and relative duties are far different” (1: 233), she finds she has no other example to draw from. Isabella is provided with no other, feasible alternative, finding her mother’s sanctimonious lifestyle led to a very early, very submissive death. “And then follow my mother’s example!!—What, to meet her reward! ! ! !—No, not to save mankind from perdition” (1: 234).

Patrick begins to hit upon a distressing truth: neither male nor female conduct can serve as an appropriate model for Isabella. Writing to her brother, Isabella despairs: “Now, pray, Mr. Morney, how was I to learn any of those things you tell me are so excellent? – Your religion, your morals, and so many other fine things, that, in your judgment, your sister should be eminent in—As how ! ! !—Where were my instructors? My opportunities?” (5). In repeating her brother’s frequent counsel with bitter irony, she
emphasizes the disparity: it is his religion, his morals, and, most notably, his judgment which allow him to succeed in the world. As a woman, she cannot adopt his discourse exactly without becoming a mockery, an object of parodic ridicule herself. She cannot find the reason, education, and judgment within herself; she is only able to put on ill-fitting views of others.

Isabella’s true problem is that she is a character of a satire, not a *bildungsroman*. In *Satire, History, Novel*, Frank Palmeri notes the significant difference between the two genres. The *bildungsroman* encourages the youth to develop intellectually so that he may judge society for himself and act according to his own, internal monitor. Interestingly, Ellis argues that, commonly, this is a right only provided to male protagonists of *bildungsromane*. Women are not required to exercise judgment; there is no “growing up” for women of the female *bildungsroman*, only a “growing down” (17). Women must learn to compromise and adapt their view and comportment to fit more concordantly with patriarchal society. The result is more moderate, conservative conduct (19). This is diametrically at odds with Palmeri’s definition of satire. Palmeri notes that unlike a *bildungsroman* that allows the youth to navigate between extremes in order to become a normative, well-rounded member of society, satire refuses to make “progress toward reconciling opposed cultural or historical claims” (14). Satire’s emphasized extremes produce not intelligible, normalized beings of society but rather liminal, outside figures. Contradictorily, they are extreme because of their over-the-top adherence to *normative* values.
Patrick, as a female author, must struggle against authoritative and reductive definitions of “woman” that would form her into a misshapen being. Likewise, society restricted her husband according to his status and role in life: officer, Anglo-Irish. DeLamotte notes that these restrictive categories, particularly those of gender, are categorical fictions that perpetuate power. These “unitary fictions” are a method of “hierarchical domination” (7). Palmeri notes that Rousseau’s “tutor must be more than a man, who will tolerate no competition for authority” (163). DeLamotte claims that authors like Lennox, who subscribed to the authoritative binaries, “were sure to replicate the oppressive structures of Western metaphysics” (8). However, even feminists, she further argues, who reproduce such classifications harm their cause. Because either/or binaries reassert themselves in order to stabilize their source of power, DeLamotte argues that only “polyvocality, contradiction, and undecidability” can controvert the systemic fiction: “Resistance, deconstruction, and critique become favored strategies because they oppose unifying fictions, while generalization is increasingly viewed as a suspect practice” (7). Parody literally replicates authoritative discourse and produces polyvocality, creating a doubled discourse. Bakhtin explains that through the appropriation of others’ discourses into her own, a parodist not only introduces the original discourse but a new, facetious meaning. The result, a double-voiced speech, is what Bakhtin calls *heteroglossia*, which can simultaneously mean the original meaning and the refracted meaning of the parodist (“Discourse in the Novel” 301). According to Bakhtin, while parodists can choose to imitate the style of the original discourse, they might also delve deeper to parody its “logical manner of seeing, thinking, and speaking”
(Problems 194). What proceeds is a critique of “the very deepest principles governing another’s discourse” (194). As discourse is doubled, it is placed in a new, often jarring context. In Rabelais and His World, Bakhtin explains that as previously authoritative discourses are burlesqued and mimicked, they are handled unceremoniously and critiqued directly. Comparing this literary mode, the carnivalesque, to the Festival of Fools, Bakhtin relates this series of crowning and uncrowning. Those who were in power are made common and ridiculous. Those who were previously disempowered are able to confront authority.

Patrick’s parody of the Gothic brings the Gothic up for close inspection. In enacting a series of narrativistic reversals, Patrick makes Gothic modes appear ridiculous. Gothic conventions as a whole are mocked as an unsuitable educative model for men as well as women; it is, through subversive parody, uncrowned.\textsuperscript{14} The Gothic by convention separated itself from the everyday, yet, due to the popularity of the Gothic novel at the time, its modes in literature were rather ubiquitous. What follows is a reversal of the uncanny; the characters of More Ghosts! come to expect exceptional occurrences. The unintelligible Gothic is, at Morney Abbey, a wholly intelligible discourse. Even the butler and housekeeper are able to inform Parson Seymour that he could not perform an exorcism, for “now-a-days were no more in the sight of a ghost than other men. ‘Nor, no wonder,’ added he, ‘for only see how they dress and speak—not a word of Latin ever comes out of their mouths.’ ‘Ah!’ continued the housekeeper, ‘Latin is the tongue that masters all evil spirits!’” (3: 169). The domestics’ knowledge of Latin and medieval

\textsuperscript{14} I will also argue in the next chapter that in Northanger Abbey, the Gothic is proven to be an unsuitable tool, promoting unrealistic expectations
culture is humorous because it is uncharacteristic. The Gothic is, in the setting of *More Ghosts!* wholly expected by the servants and more naïve members of society. Tom, as a good student, believes faithfully the examples his education has provided him with, expecting to see ghosts “for though as yet no spirits had discovered themselves to him, yet he could not doubt the well-attested stories, in the report of which there was a general concurrence of opinion throughout the house” (1: 32). Thus Mary and Tom, who previously had been open and shameless in their flirtations, learn from their Gothic readings that there must be an obstacle to their romance and so become secretive (1: 143). Tom adapts his conduct to prevailing ideology carefully. As he visits a fortune-teller, her vague words provide enough material to, paradoxically, “justify a sort of belief in things, which, though we cannot possibly comprehend, are not only possible but certain” (2: 202). Consequently, Tom makes sure to interpret the symbols surrounding him.

According to Betsy’s contrived dream, he states, “I have great reason to believe she is my sister” (2: 149). Even though by volume two, Betsy’s deception is made apparent, Tom remains credulous, even going so far as to suspect his guardian, Mr. Morney, of being his father and his mother’s murderer. The previously elevated tone and affectations of the Gothic here become laughable; there is no cause for such airs in eighteenth-century England. This critique is anticipated and rather innocuous; Patrick mocks an already ridiculed women’s genre that has very little authoritative credibility.

However, Patrick’s uncrowning *heteroglossia* extends beyond the Gothic conventions; indeed, in demonstrating the risibility of Tom’s education, Patrick questions the practicality of gender distinctions and rational education, rendering the divisions that
were once viewed intelligible and absolute as illogical and corrupt. *More Ghosts!*, far from revising gender roles and relationships as in *The Wild Irish Girl*, dethrones and wholly reverses gender order. It is the hero, Tom Grey, not his cousin Mary Morney, who is an ardent reader of Gothic novels. His delusions make him susceptible to flights of fancy and fainting. Having undergone the education of seclusion in the countryside common to Gothic heroines, Tom’s credulity and fancy are inevitable results: “Tom had been educated so entirely at home, that no wonder need be excited from his being credulous to excess, particularly inclined to the miraculous, and easily imposed upon by the artful and designing” (1: 31-2). The calculating daughter of his tutor, Betsy, is able to seize upon this vulnerability in recounting a fabricated dream to prove the incestuous nature of his attachment to his intended, Mary Morney. The news elevates him to such a state of excitement and terror that she is easily able to overcome him. Tom’s seduction, usually a woman’s plight, is comical, especially as he professes to have the vulnerability of a Gothic heroine. He accuses Betsy: “Yes, Madam, *you* were the seducer, and I, nevertheless, am the greatest sufferer” (3: 156). Having placed Tom in the position of a sentimental heroine, which *The Female Quixote* illustrates is an inferior and precarious one, it is no wonder that he behaves like one. Tom is illogical, effeminate, and weak-willed. There is nothing inherently *masculine* in his conduct. Sensibility, Patrick acknowledges, “sometimes strongly predominates even in the breast of a man,” but insists, “young Grey might in a more particular manner have felt its influence, from the

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15 Time and time again, Tom must consciously conform his behavior to match the expected comportment of men: “he dreaded to learn what he could not bear to think of; but supposing that it would look *unmanly*, . . . he kept his eyes fixed upon her countenance” (1: 37, emphasis added).
circumstance of his having been educated with girls, and mostly in the habit of associating in female company” (1: 42). While Tom’s effeminate and weak displays of sensibility are comical and an easy object of derision, in the gender reversal, Patrick refutes the essentialist concept of inherent gender traits: education alone fashions individuals. Tom, who should appear by patriarchy’s conventions to be logical, assertive, and manly—in short, who ought to fit within the clear bounds of ideological naming—defies meaning. The standard of feminine conduct, when applied to Tom, challenges the original meaning. While Tom might be exonerated from these flaws with the excuse of a faulty education, by making a man laughable, Patrick problematizes the either/or binary and questions the hypocrisy that would condemn one pupil but excuse another. Similarly, as Parson Bolton, Betsy’s father, protests that Betsy could not have seduced Tom, the double-standard of education is likewise apparent: “Her education was so strict, and her mother’s watchfulness, as well as mine, so great, that if she had any evil propensities, we could not but discover them” (1: 78). Tom’s father notes that as Parson Bolton was Tom’s tutor as well, he received the same, secluded education. Parson Bolton’s logic here is exposed, dethroned, and made comical; for all his reasoning, the result does not fit within the closely confined logic he would attribute to it; he has produced an ironic double perspective that rather works against his purposes. Palmeri asserts that tutors such as Rousseau deny the doubleness of the irony in their own system (165); Patrick’s heteroglossia, however, allows the tutor no such refuge. She forces authority to apply its standards more broadly, to both sides of the binary, in order to expose its logical fallacy. If Tom is a fool or if he is guilty as the result of his education, women are as well. Like
Wollstonecraft, *More Ghosts!* argues that excuses of natural propensity are inexcusable and illogical; education, not gender, is to blame for the deviant behavior.

While Tom’s views are peculiar, they are not singular. Citing the popularity of celebrated fortune teller Mrs. William’s astrological predictions,16 Patrick extends the ridicule to her readership, stating, “Nor may it be out-stretching probability to suppose that some of our fair Readers have before now anticipated future events through the astrological calculation of Mrs. Williams; for even some doughty heroes, who have avowed their disbelief in the Gospel, have been found full ready to credit the predictions of this science” (2: 161). Here Patrick’s parody once more crosses uncomfortably into a more universal critique. Rather than mocking women’s reading material and techniques, Patrick lays blame upon her credulous audience who would believe the certainties of

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16 Indeed, a review of Mrs. William’s work, which appeals heavily to the royalist cause, in the *Analytical Review* notes that Mrs. Williams was widely read, commenting that “Mrs. Williams, of New Store-street, Bedford-Square, must deserve a handsome pension, and the honourable title of fortune-teller to the royal family, for her *aristocratic* confutation of Brothers, dedicated—whether by permission or not, does not appear—to the queen. Mrs. W., who professes to have had opportunities of knowing the piety and goodness of heart of her august dedicatee, declares her design in writing to be, to remove from her majesty and family, as well as the public at large, any momentary impressions from late publications may have made on the mind” (203). Using her “arts” and Biblical passages to “verify” her account, Mrs. Williams prophesied against Mr. Brothers, a radical fortune-teller and insurrectionist, warning the queen that he would attempt an uprising. She likewise promised that the French monarchy and the stadtholderate to Holland would be restored, and that the English throne would flourish. While not wholly credited by the population at large, her opinions were, it may be expected, popular and read with a great level of entertainment. “Art. XLVI. *Most humbly dedicated to the Queen. The Prophecies of Brothers confuted from divine Authority.* By Mrs. Williams of New Store-Street, Bedford-square.” *The Analytical Review* Vol. 22 (August 1795.) London: J. Johnson.

See also Simon During’s work on stage magic in popular culture, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic*, for more on the prevalence of Mrs. Williams and the cultural mysticism in the eighteenth-century.
magic over religion or other belief-systems. Like Tom’s companions at university who laugh at the ridiculousness of Gothic novels yet still need bedfellows to relieve themselves of the fright of the night, the Gothic likewise draws in Patrick’s snickering readers even as they attempt to renounce it. They do not observe the strict either/or separation between Gothic and reality, sentiment and logic that they profess to and thus are hypocritical. Indeed, Patrick does “shew that [Tom] was not singular in his views, however weak they may be thought” (2: 163). Even the patriarchal figure, Mr. Morney, who firmly forbids superstition, eventually gives credence to Gothic probability. While previously chiding Tom for his foolish belief in ghosts, quipping that superstitious stories “are never seen but by weak and ignorant people” (1: 126), his own words return, mocking him as he also encounters the resident ghost of the Abbey: “Certainly he had seen his sister’s apparition, and as certainly she had asserted Grey to be wronged; and every one knows that a dead man is always believed in preference to a living one; so, first, the dead man must know best; and secondly, what interest can the dead have in deceiving the living?” (3: 108-9). While his internal dialogue appears to demonstrate rational deduction, moving sequentially through postulates (“first,” “second”), the conclusion is preposterous. If Mr. Morney’s words are to stand as an authoritative decree that ghosts are only believed by the weak-minded, he condemns himself. His self-contradiction, demonstrated through satiric uncrowning, proves faulty his own “logical manner of seeing, thinking, and speaking” (Problems 194).

In an either/or system, as present in The Female Quixote or Rousseau’s Emile, a tightly regulated, rational education would remedy a supernatural and deviant one. Tom’s
secluded and Gothic education results in credulity, which Mr. Morney calls his “great fault” (2: 123). Thus Mr. Morney encourages both Tom and his daughter enter society in order to gain exposure to “information and experience” in order to expel “by degrees, the timid credulity, that can only lead to bigotry and superstition, and which my too indulgent education may have occasioned” (2: 121). Both Tom and Mary’s empirical educations certainly do cast out their credulity; however, instead of enlightened beings capable of critical processes, Tom and Mary are jaded and world-weary figures, hardened unlikely to accept any ideology. Mary Morney, like her cousin Tom Grey, experiences little and thus learns little in her secluded home at Morney Abbey. Her education of seclusion leaves her wholly credulous and unprepared for London. Staying with superficial female relatives, Lady Trevor and Lady Newet, Mary is far from guided by sage counsel. Both ladies, having read extensively from Voltaire, Rousseau, Hume, and Gibbon, utilize Enlightenment philosophy arbitrarily, even comically using patriarchal philosophy in order to reason their way out of domestic and maternal duties (3: 28). Like Zofloya’s Victoria, Lady Trevor and Newet present themselves in the discourse of patriarchy but clearly use it only to further their own causes. Patrick’s parody is comfortable in poking fun at blue-stockings who, in learning to speak the male discourse, become unsexed beings, self-serving and viciously petty. This is hardly a critique at odds with cultural norms; Patrick here mocks a group already popularly regarded as equivocal. However, as with the Gothic, the implications of the reversal and dethroning of reason proves the very mode of thought of not only pretentious female intellectuals, but rational Enlightenment. The doubling of Enlightenment philosophy jeopardizes its authoritative stability. Similar
to Tooke’s technique of adding a second definition, Patrick uses patriarchal discourse to undercut patriarchy itself. As a result, the viability of the discourse itself is questioned. If the power of reason and argumentation can corrupt as well as reform, it is not in and of itself universally suitable. In the face of such intellectualism, even poorly employed, Mary is defenseless: “Lady Newet would reason with such a volubility of words, deduce such a variety of arguments, and relate so many facts, to disprove what she called the prejudices of Miss Morney’s education, as, in a short time, but too successfully to poison the principles of our heroine” (3: 41). Mary, like Lady Newet, becomes “a female philosopher; that is, she was not of any religion; she called herself a citizen of all religions” (3: 40). The arbitrariness of intellectualism is a poor guide and monitor for Mary. Reason leads quickly to rationalizing. Like the Gothic, reason proves to be unstable and potentially corrupting, rather than a purifying force.

Even the final intervention of *The Female Quixote*, that of religion, fails to combat Lady Newet and Trevor’s reason. Mr. Morney, hoping to redeem her daughter, seeks the assistance of the young parson, Seymour. Hoping to force her to break company with her female relatives, Mr. Morney suggests he attend Mary to a party they are throwing. The righteous priest exclaims, “I should either be an unhappy and unheeded censor . . . or what is as probably, be gradually drawn into the vortex of those follies, which I know, by experience, are fascinating.” (3: 21-2). Even clergymen are unable to stave off the enticing practice of “unnatural” conduct save by avoidance and seclusion. However, Seymour suggests she be guided by her “innate sense of propriety” which he previously had noted she lacked. “Beside,” he continues, “you must witness those scenes,
ere you can know whether they ought to be courted or shunned” (3: 22). Parson Seymour’s contradiction here is comical; his prescription for her improvement likewise effects her fall. Miss Morney, in distress proclaims, “You frighten me . . . surely your picture is a caricature!” (3: 22). Patrick’s caricature of religious instruction and rationalization both provide the cure and induce the illness. Virtue and religion, far from being constant become malleable and contradictory in context.17

Though Parson Seymour and Mr. Morney both wish for an internal monitor or sense of judgment in Tom and Mary, when they return to Morney Abbey, Mary likewise falls victim to Gothic notions as she is visited by what appears to be a ghost. Mr. Morney laments, “Here. . . you run from one bad extreme to another. In London, you would not for a while believe any thing, now every thing obtains your credit” (3: 91). However, once Mr. Morney subscribes to the same superstitions, he excuses her: “Mr. Morney could not blame his daughter and servants, yet still he felt a repugnance at believing the intervention of spirits in worldly concerns” (3: 96-7). Mr. Morney does not, however, desire an internal monitor for his daughter. Rather, he would prefer to be the external monitor, ensuring that she believes what he wants her to believe and doubts what might be detrimental to his cause. The resemblance to Emile’s tutor is striking. Palmeri notes that “[t]he paradox is constitutive for Emile: Rousseau conceives of the transference of moral choice from the pupil to the absolute authority of the tutor as the successful

17 Thus Tom Grey’s mother, Isabella Morney/Wellers/de Burgh can lament, “Was you the acknowledged heir of your parents, a trivial or venial transgression would find an excuse!” (3: 253). Position decides all. In being born lowly and outside of proper wedlock, Grey is vulnerable to derision and scrutiny which would not be placed upon him were he in a position of authority.
achievement of his pedagogical enterprise. In the concluding words of the work, Emile asks the tutor not to leave him and his wife, but to remain with them, to ‘guide and govern’ them always” (65). Similarly, Mr. Morney demands Mary’s complete obedience to an arranged marriage he had devoted two volume’s time dissuading her from. Like Montoni, he accuses her of changing her resolve and being wholly unreadable and rebellious. Mary protests, “is no allowance to be made for my want of experience, my extreme youth, at the time you intended Mr. Grey for my husband? I had always found your commands so pleasant, so judicious, that to object would have appeared to them an impossibility” (3: 149). Mary, now that she has experience, attempts to use her judgment to interpret the situation; her father, however, impedes her intellectual development. He appeals to her fear of ghosts to secure it: “Don’t you think, that while we hesitate about what is only justice to Grey, we may be likely to see that vision again?” (3: 150). The appeal works. Mary lisps out an obedient, “Well, then be it so—I must comply” (3:150). Upon this, Mr. Morney embraces her and calls her a “good girl” (3: 151). Credulity, the response to obedience, is the desired result only inasmuch as it is obedience to patriarchy’s demands.

Mr. Morney, like Rousseau’s tutor, denies the ironic duality of his conduct, affirming, “those who despise the monitor within, and trample upon the sacred laws of religion, will soon evade those of human institution, and by degrees violate them all; of which my sister is an unhappy proof” (2: 84). Isabella’s trouble is not one of internal monitors, however. As is the case with Mary Morney, her education has not touched upon intellectual development. She has no internal monitor; she only knows external
obedience or disobedience and attempts to advantageously conform herself to her present situation. Isabella begins much like her namesake, Arabella—secluded at Morney Abbey with no proper tutor but her books. Unlike Arabella, however, Isabella chooses the books of her father over those of her mother and from the rational discourse, she gains a sense of empowerment. She becomes, like Newet, a Wollstonecraftian bluestocking. However, as seen from Mary’s encounter with female intellectualism, however empowering, it is also a parodic display of buffoonery. In London, she sheds her independent thoughts in order to become a seductress: “My way was always to encourage their first advances, until the silly creatures, intoxicated with my condescentions [sic], would make absolute proposals to me” (2: 9). Like Victoria, she manipulates forms, betraying herself “accidentally on purpose” in order to win men’s affection (1: 30). She marries secretly to Mr. Wellers, but later regrets the choice, preferring the wealthy de Burgh and also marrying him. As she attempts to reason through the situation, she hypocritically uses both the discourse of Gothic female victimization and rational empowerment. In order to vindicate herself, she fashions Wellers as the antagonist keeping her from happiness: “Wellers!!! [. . ] I cannot live with Wellers; yet he would haunt me, and ruin my peace forever” (2: 77) She emphasizes her powerlessness in the situation, appearing sincerely to believe it: “Oh! De Burgh, I would often exclaim, why are we thus separated?” (2: 69). However, Isabella does not espouse one ideology conclusively but arbitrarily and frantically utilizes all discourses she can in order to manipulate and gain an advantage. While moments before claiming to be a Gothic victim, she likewise attempts to rationalize her second marriage, appealing to reason: “In the eye of reason, who is my
husband, but De Burgh – the choice of my maturer years, the father of my child, the possessor of my heart? (2: 77). Isabella is both a Gothic victim and a rational stoic, an intellectual and a seductress—*anything* she might be in order to get her way.

Undergoing as many transformations as surnames, Isabella appears ridiculous and inexplicable in her extremities. Her narrative is frenetic: fleeing to Italy and deserting her son to avoid the scandal of a second marriage, Isabella fakes her death in Italy before moving to France. There, she seduces a priest, converts to Catholicism, and becomes a nun. At the height of the French Revolution, she is deported to America with other members of her convent. Years later, she returns to England to hide in the Abbey, dressed in her white habit, from which derive the myths of a ghost roaming the Abbey. From this, Mr. Morney attempts to derive a clear, monologic moral that will reaffirm his message in contrast to the *heteroglossic* irony apparent in the situation. He concludes Isabella’s unfinished account for her, silencing her voice and pronouncing a meaning upon her; she is deviant and rebellious. However, contrary to Mr. Morney’s narrative, Isabella has obsessively fashioned herself into everything her instructors might desire. She has become an item to be adored, a reformed individual; she even confines herself completely to the house and the private sphere as a religious hermit. In *Radical Sensibility*, Chris Jones notes that men expected that “[the] household should be a place of spiritual redemption, not a haven of secular domestic affection. The process of moral reform as to be led by women, and it therefore required a new seriousness on the part of women” (122). Never is this more the case than with the converted Christian nun Isabella. Isabella stands not was a person who has evaded every human institution, but *adopted* it.
Unlike *bildungsromane* and texts intended to inculcate normative behavior, such as Jane Austen’s novels of manners, *More Ghosts!*’s focus on deviance and narratability does not expose the reader to “the narratable in order to avoid it” (Miller 111). Indeed, this is the very faulty presupposition that Mr. Morney and Parson Seymour make in sending Mary into London society. Rather, the narratable in *More Ghosts!* is inevitable and interminable, for the normative methods of reason, religion, seclusion, and experience all result in disastrous transgressions. Miller notes Mary Crawford’s irony in *Mansfield Park*, stating that it defers true knowledge and decision. With irony, a reader cannot be certain what the true meaning of the discourse is, only what it *isn’t* (44): “One must hesitate to identify Mary’s apparent meaning with her ‘real’ one; and although one can say what her meaning is *not* (or not quite), it is difficult to put into a positive or definite form” (Miller 31). Patrick’s *More Ghosts!* casts a similar cloud upon intelligibility. As the novel approaches a close, the male domestic narrator attempts to intervene and imbue the frenetic text with some good, stable morals. His daughter, however, bursts in with her opinions on proper novelistic function: “what are you about? [. . .] Sure you will not write down all the speeches that were made about the Bible; it will suffice to say, that Mr. Seymour defended it to the conviction of his auditors: or indeed I don’t see why it may not be entirely left out; what has the Bible to do with ‘More Ghosts’ excepting on the Witch of Endor raising up Samuel? People don’t like to have serious subjects obtruded upon them in a novel, because they know that there is a season for everything” (3: 159). Here, the illogical convention of novelistic narratability becomes the governing principle, thwarting patriarchal attempts at monologic, reductive dialogism.
The male servant publishes the message separately as a sermon, thereby retaining the supposed integrity of the novel. In the absence of effective instruction or productive morals, the reader is left to make his own meaning, or as the daughter insists, be merely entertained. This, however, makes society’s education wholly unintelligible and unprofitable. The marriages are unsatisfactory; Tom, a foundling, ends up bastardized and loses Mary Morney’s hand. Further, Patrick does not allow the readers to fully understand how the novel concludes: “Reader, you must, if possible, guess at what followed, for neither Grey nor Miss Morney would give me more than the outlines of a conversation that was, perhaps more interesting than any other in the book” (3: 260). Isabella inherits the manor despite patriarchal lineage and all order is overturned, particularly breaks from all probable lines of transmission when she Isabella entrusts the estate to a receptacle of Catholic nuns. Any indignation at this profits little; authority, frail as it is, has been toppled: “She has, nevertheless disposed of her estate in the trust for the society, which she does not know is contrary to the law, nor is it any matter whether she does or not” (3: 263). Inevitably, Isabella’s knowledge of societal conventions—in short, her ideological education—makes little difference in the outcome of events. Ideology’s essentialist and excessive binaries set themselves up for ironic duality and hypocrisy that, in turn, require transgression in one way or another. Failure appears inevitable, then. In her preface, Patrick states,

> Whether the story is true or false, the Reader will determine for himself. In my mind, it bears stronger marks of authenticity than any novel I have yet met with. The Hero and Heroine commit innumerable blunders, if not
unpardonable faults; nay, such as would be improbably for imaginary ones to fall into; and I cannot, in any part of their conduct, while young, trace that strength of mind and prudence, so common in the Amelias, Prudentias, and Eloisas, yet something of that which, in real life, is the usual result of prudence. (1: iv-v)

Satire and parody, indeed, is a state of reality, the necessary condition of eighteenth-century Britain. Unlike the exalted and improbably ideal and virtuous heroines of sentimental, didactic novels, Tom, Mary, and Isabella, far from being left to their own devices and an internal monitor, are governed by varying, but equally flawed expectations. Isabella Morney’s criticisms of authority’s culpability, like Patrick’s, ring particularly true: “If, therefore, guilt attaches to me, I owe it to the example of my father. Different ideas direct us through the journey of life, and those who act up to the best of their reason and belief, cannot, in strict justice, be accountable for the incidental errors of their conduct” (1: 193-4). Indeed, everyone has her or his faults. In producing transgressive individuals, patriarchal education cannot point to their transgressions in order to reinforce the binary; they are as aberrant, as illogical, as the products they produce.
CHAPTER IV

“Leave it to be Settled”: Composite Authority in Northanger Abbey

As though from a sense of generic obligation, Jane Austen’s Gothic parody Northanger Abbey (composed 1798-9, published 1817) concludes as any Gothic novel must: all good characters do impossibly well for themselves. As Miller claims, domestic and social felicity—the emblems of closure—testify to the practical viability of the novel’s ideology. All, in Northanger Abbey, seems to be brought to a felicitous close. Gothic conventions subvert General Tilney’s parental tyranny: his three children marry for love rather than riches. However, the narrator acknowledges that the General’s “unjust interference, so far from being really injurious to their felicity, was perhaps rather conducive to it” (198). At the finale of her blissful denouement, Austen closes her tale with jarring, if not aporetic, parting words: “I leave it to be settled by whomsoever it may concern, whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny, or reward filial disobedience” (198). According to Miller, the conclusion is typically a moment of authoritative intervention and control; the author establishes which virtues are to be kept and cast out, and rewards and punishes characters accordingly. It is, in short, the moment of binary naming. However, the narrator’s brusque Manichaeism presents a problematic binary. Neither “parental tyranny” nor “filial disobedience” seems desirable; the fallacious either/or binary mocks the very process of drawing neat and tidy conclusions. By introducing a rupture in textual interpretation immediately after generically mandated plot reconciliation, Austen denies readers the complacent comfort of clear definitions and rather invites readers to explore the moral and cultural effects of
interpretation. Few have considered Austen’s concluding binary to function like the rest of the work, as a lesson in and parody of contrived formulas and conventions. *Northanger Abbey* tends towards both subversive questioning and authoritative reprimand but neither “absolutely” (Austen 198)—and with good cause. While Jan Fergus’s *Jane Austen and the Didactic Novel* portrays Austen’s ending as a narrativistic fault, I argue that Austen’s parody is the most convincing avenue to power yet. Fergus insists that Austen fails to reconcile the binary due to a lack of maturity as an artist and "is not yet interested in harnessing conventions to a higher use or to more complex designs" (37). While acknowledging that Austen’s satire does draw attention to the reading process, Fergus believes this method risks becoming “intrusive and tedious in tactless, pompous or careless hands” (38). I claim, however, that Austen’s failure to reconcile and harness the binary is more than happenstance; it is calculated to serve both higher use and design. As a cautionary tale on the dangers of careless compliance to ideological interpretations, *Northanger Abbey* teaches that passive, submissive readers jeopardize their social and intellectual development. Austen’s deferral allows the reader, pompously or no, to take her education into her own hands. Austen is thus able to grant to her readers a privilege denied to Arabella or even Catherine.

Austen’s binary, by its parodic dethroning, discredits extant authority and instead creates an absence of definitive meaning. As with Mary Crawford’s irony, we cannot know what it means; we can only know what does not. In *More Ghosts!*, this lack tends towards nihilism; it matters little whether any meaning can be derived. Meaning itself is
contrived and hypocritical. As with Patrick’s *More Ghosts!*, *Northanger Abbey* provides readers with countervailing educations, none of which are wholly constructive. However, the absence of definitive meaning at the conclusion of *Northanger Abbey* presents opportunities *More Ghosts!* does not. Without imposed authority and strict didacticism, readers can employ their own “internal monitors” to consider and choose their own interpretations, to fill the emptiness with meaning. They can, in short, play the role of authority, pronouncing and giving meaning. In “Reading Characters: Self, Society, and Text in *Emma*,” Joseph Litvak insists that the absence of authoritative meanings—what I consider binaries—can serve constructive purposes. In focusing on difference rather than opposites, Emma “[construes] the conflict” between Knightley’s patriarchal ideals “dialectically” (764). Knightley’s explanation of patriarchal discourse—typifying what I call authoritative either/or binaries—hinges upon “right” and “wrong,” “reason” and “sensibility,” “man” and “woman,” “Emma,” and “Knightley.” A discourse of difference rather than opposites, like both/and binaries, allows readers to consider both views simultaneously; one does not nullify the other. Litvak explains that the absence of meaning empowers females particularly. In acting as ciphers, empty vessel signifying nothing, the unintelligible or meaningless woman can “escape the stratagems of meaning” (767). I have already argued that female unintelligibility, while subversive, runs the risk of authoritative intervention and interpretation. However, the vacuous forms present in *Northanger Abbey* create a necessary break from ideological construction. Binaries must be hollowed out and emptied of their power in order for women to have a
place in patriarchy’s power. Litvak proceeds to read *Emma* as “a contest between two equally compelling interpretations of the self—especially the female self—and society” (764). The conflict between Knightley and Emma is primarily interpretive. Knightley views the conflict as one in which “‘right’ seeks to appropriate ‘wrong’ and to recast it (her) in its (his) own image” (764). Emma, however, finds a sense of self in overlapping interpretations; “she is always ‘making a figure’ in one message or another, because she is always being reinvented, or reread, both by herself and by others” (770). Interpretation in *Emma* and, I would argue, *Northanger Abbey*, is cyclical. Emma creates deeply superficial riddles, which Knightley interprets. Emma then responds to the interpretation, creating a new riddle. Emma must not only be interpreted, she must also interpret Knightley. As interpretation is the authoritative act, both are able to partake in ideological creation. With this conception of dialogic interpretation in mind, I look towards methods of interpretation in *Northanger Abbey*, ultimately arguing that parody must contest authoritative form, but readers must adopt authoritative methods of interpretation in order to create viable meanings.

In “Interpretive Communities,” Stanley Fish explains that by adopting interpretive strategies, readers shape the object or text being read. Meaning is not inherent in the text; rather, the ideological lenses employed in the process of reading contain and provide meaning. Readers make “interpretive decisions” as they judge according to forms and conventions they are familiar with (217). A text can therefore mean only what readers...
make it mean; it becomes a receptacle of the reader’s ideology. For this reason, the unintelligible text must be resolved and defined until it can be understood within an ideological framework. Thus the cipher becomes a receptacle: the woman—Arabella, Victoria, Emma, Mary or Catherine—is a text that must be interpreted by authority, be it her tutor, suitor, or author. She must be made to mean something congruous with the readers’ desires. Only when she is filled with ideology, once she is no longer a vacuous cipher, can she be deciphered and interpreted intelligibly. As seen in Arabella’s instruction, education, which is always ideological, perpetuates interpretive, ideological communities through teaching interpretive strategies and ideological values. A text’s meaning will always follow the ideology of the interpreter.

In order to consider power structures within interpretive disputes, I return now to the conversation on unintelligibility between Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney. Henry, like Mr. Knightley, fashions his lover in his own image, seeking to correct wrongs and inculcate rights. For this reason critics, most notably Paul Morrison, argue that Henry regards Catherine with a Foucauldian scrutiny: Catherine is constantly surveilled; her behavior is exposed and laid bare. Henry, like Knightley, seeks to “‘read every body’s character,’ to be ‘so placed as to see them all’” (Austen qtd on Litvak 765). While Henry “understands [Catherine] perfectly well,” Catherine, like an inmate in the Panopticon, cannot “see,” or comprehend, her suitor and is therefore placed at a disadvantage. Paradoxically, the very information Catherine does not understand is Henry’s interpretation of her own interpretive abilities. To put it another way, Catherine is unable to interpret how Henry interprets how she interprets. Catherine inaccurately surmises that
Captain Tilney, who claims to detest dancing, must be dancing with Isabella out of mere
courtesy, as she was without a partner. Henry marvels: “How very little trouble it can
give you to understand the motive of other people’s actions [. . .] With you, it is not, How
is such a one likely to be influenced? What is the inducement most likely to act upon
such a person’s feelings, age, situation, and probable habits of life considered?—but, how
should I be influenced, what would be my inducement in acting so and so?” (Austen 105).
Catherine’s vulnerability is twofold: first, as Henry dryly remarks, her own interpretive
community entraps her; like Arabella, she cannot comprehend motives other than her
own. She is ignorant. Second, she is “on unequal terms,” for Henry has the advantage of
scrutiny and comprehension. He can guess how others are influenced and from this, come
to understand their manner of thinking. Henry imposes his own meaning upon others
(primarily Catherine). This is not to say that Catherine does not also scrutinize and, in her
way, force things to become intelligible. Catherine’s reading of Captain Tilney proves
that she imposes meanings upon others, interpreting their actions in order to decide and
define their intent and character. She interprets Captain Tilney’s incomprehensible
behavior as she might her own; he becomes a proxy for Catherine. She, too, creates
people in her own image, judging from her ideology. In turn, she is like a cipher, filled
with others’ meanings and, by the end of the novel, seems perfectly within Henry’s
control. The same cannot be said of Henry; he does not seem to be taken over and
violently made to signify in quite the same way. Why, then, the disparity between
Henry’s dominance and Catherine’s capitulation? An easy answer might be that Henry is
a member of patriarchy, in a position of power and thus free from scrutiny. We must
consider, though, that Henry is not an entity in and of himself nor is he totally autonomous. Henry is also a son, a subject of Britain, and a member of society. He is, like all others, a prisoner in the Panopticon. What, then, makes his interpretive technique so resilient? And is this technique accessible to women? I reconsider the question of this paper: How could women in eighteenth-century Britain gain access to the privileges of autonomy enjoyed by men?

Thus far, I have argued that power lies in intelligibility. Those who are intelligible to authority maintain a semblance of self-autonomy: they are not made intelligible by an external force. Because interpretive communities impose meaning upon a text, it is advantageous for a subject to take part in the process of her own interpretation. I have proposed that women could access patriarchal power through adopting authoritative discourse. The authors of *The Female Quixote* and *Zofloya*, in acceding to patriarchal discourse, recognize that capitulation, relinquishing personal views and echoing patriarchal discourse, allows women to join the patriarchal interpretive community. Yet this does little to improve women’s status; it merely grants them the ability to chastise themselves with Foucauldian severity. Thus *The Wild Irish Girl, More Ghosts!*, and *Northanger Abbey* scrutinize not the intelligibility of the woman but the intelligibility and integrity of society’s interpretive strategies. In attempting to change patriarchy’s interpretive strategy, Owenson endeavors to modify the meaning of ideological terms. Likewise, in scrutinizing authoritative interpretive communities, Patrick undercuts authority and argues that there may be no meaning. *Northanger Abbey* stresses the benefit of both being intelligible to other interpretive communities—namely patriarchy—and the
absolute necessity of making interpretive communities intelligible.

In this chapter, I will argue that resolving the wrongs of woman is a matter of exercising the rights of woman: to interpret, even as she is interpreted; to take part in defining not only herself but the world around her. Education in this model should not resemble the Arabella’s, in which patriarchy monologically interprets the woman, as a text, and translates her from unintelligible to intelligible in order to fit within the confines of patriarchal ideology. Rather, a pupil, as a reader, should come to understand the confines of patriarchal ideology and choose for herself the ideology she will subscribe to, conscious of the consequences of her decision. This can only be accomplished through coming to understand varying discourses, a feat accomplished through instructive parody. While, as Morrison and Gilbert and Gubar note, Henry’s parody serves as a poor method for instruction, it stands as a convincing model for learning. Catherine concerns herself only with being interpreted, never interpreting, and so succumbs to Henry’s carceral, Foucauldian parody. Through parodying uniformly, Austen illustrates the dangers of credulity, the shortcomings of patriarchy, and even the interpretive process. Unlike Catherine, through parody Henry is able to understand and scrutinize discursive communities and incorporating them into his interpretations. In short, he is able to scrutinize the interpretive communities that scrutinize him and thus participate in a dialogic, cyclical interpretive relationship. As a composite being, Henry demonstrates self-consciousness as well as willingness to explore others’ discursive communities.

Catherine, like other ingénues I have examined, struggles to interpret the world, for she has been educated according to an unsuitable educative model. Like Tom Grey,
Catherine’s love of the Gothic keeps her from conversing in or acknowledging the existence of other communities beyond her own. Catherine happily cloisters herself from the world; in thrall to Ann Radcliffe’s famous *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, she exclaims to Isabella Thorpe: “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). Voluntarily entrapped within her own Gothic world, Catherine is unprepared for enculturation into Bath’s high society. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar explain that Gothic discourse hinders her intellectual growth, preparing her for victimization: "Again and again we see the kind of miseducation novels confer on Catherine . . . training her to expect impossibly villainous or virtuous behavior from people whose motives are more complex than she suspects, blinding her to the mundane selfishness of her contemporaries" (Austen 132). Shauna Lynch likewise notes that the Gothic, by convention, deprives characters and readers of agency (61). As the Gothic excites physical responses in the reader (quickened pulses, tremors, etc.), “Gothic fiction can remind us of what is spookily mechanical, volitionless, about readers’ responsiveness” (58). As a member of the Gothic interpretive community, Catherine relies heavily upon the Gothic binaries of good and evil and reads situations absolutely. For this reason, Catherine cannot understand contradictions when they present themselves; her education has not allowed for such a possibility. The limits of Catherine’s interpretive strategies are apparent as John Thorpe boasts that his horse is fast and restless and yet also the steadiest of creatures: “Catherine listened with astonishment; she knew not how to reconcile two such very different accounts of the same thing; for she
had not been brought up to understand . . . how many idle assertions and imprudent falsehoods the excess of vanity will lead” (54). Catherine’s way of reading people, to anticipate either one behavioral extreme or the other, leaves her ill-equipped to read hypocrisy and severely vitiates her social navigability. As demonstrated from her discussion of unintelligibility with Henry, her self-centered method of reading others results in misreading and blinds her, leaving her on unequal terms. Catherine must revise her interpretive strategies if she is to comprehend and thus guard herself from the duplicitous world around her.

Catherine, though trapped within an insufficient interpretive community, can be taught to see beyond her limited beliefs. Ideological interpretations, as More Ghosts! testifies, are not concrete. While Fish explains that “[t]he ability to interpret is not acquired,” “ways of interpreting” are and can be “forgotten or supplanted, or complicated or dropped from favor” (220). In order to comprehend other interpretations and ideologies, Catherine must break free of her restrictive ideology. For many critics, Henry’s parodic and rational education cures Catherine’s misguided myopia. In theory, parody remedies self-centered interpretive communities by introducing a second voice and creating ironic, critical distance. The result of parody, heteroglossia, is a complex interaction of various perspectives, narratives, and voices. Fish acknowledges that discursive and interpretive disagreement is inevitable, but Bakhtin’s parody creates it deliberately: “The second voice, once having made its home in the other’s discourse, clashes hostilely with its primordial host and forces him to serve directly opposing aims.” The result is an “arena of battle between two voices” as the double-voiced discourse not
only incorporates the utterances of others but also inserts a new meaning alongside the original (Problems 193-4). Reconciling disagreeing meanings of the same text is, according to Fish, an ideological battle. When two or more interpretive communities read a text, they create contrary meanings and will struggle for dominance. Thus parody, as any interpretive act, presents multiple authorities. In such a struggle, the original discourse and voice can become supplanted, complicated, or dropped from favor.

Henry’s parodic censure of Catherine’s Gothic mindset does seem to release her from its monologic hold, enabling her to consider other views. With the intent to open her mind from an imprisoning Gothic mindset, Henry parodies her “manner of seeing, thinking, and speaking” (Problems 194), causing Catherine to consider her own interpretive community from a position of ironic distance. As they travel to his home, a renovated abbey, Henry spins a Gothic tale of horror: Using the commonplace tropes of the Gothic, Henry narrates an adventure taking place during a “probable” “violent storm” in which Catherine travels through “a secret subterraneous communication” and discovers an “incomprehensibly” striking portrait “of some a handsome warrior” and “a dagger, a few drops of blood, and some instrument of torture; but there being nothing in all this out of the common way” (126-7). Henry’s use of “common” Gothic conventions is meant to mark the absurdity of Gothic ambience. However, Catherine, for whom the Gothic is in fact “the common way” is wholly credulous and engrossed. Like Arabella in The Female Quixote or Tom Morney in More Ghosts!, Catherine expects the unexpected; in an uncanny reversal, Catherine is fully familiar with the foreign and exotic subject of the Gothic but cannot comprehend the quotidian. What Catherine does not anticipate is
Henry’s response. Catherine finds her literal, literary interpretation of the story a source of amusement for Henry: “Henry was too much amused by the interest he had raised, to be able to carry it farther; he could no longer command solemnity either of subject or voice, and was obliged to entreat her to use her own fancy in the perusal of Matilda’s woes. Catherine, recollecting herself, grew ashamed of her eagerness” (126). Facetiously encouraging her to employ her interpretive methods, Henry demonstrates the impracticality of her interpretive acts. Here, Henry’s appeal to Catherine mirrors the narrator’s request to her readers that they likewise “settle” the account as they wish. The effect is the same: in both instances, the listeners and readers of the tale realize that the very interpretive strategy they are asked to employ is fallacious. In Henry’s laughter, Catherine encounters a response different from her own and senses the clash of an opposing view. In listening to Henry’s Gothic tale, Catherine experiences her own discourse as a listener, not a speaker, and discovers an antagonistic interpretation. She reconsiders whether she ought to employ her Gothic interpretations in every situation.

Bakhtin explains that when a reigning ideology is mocked, the authority is made fallible. As parody dethrones authority, it leaves an empty throne: “One ridicules in order to forget. This is the zone of maximally familiar and crude contact; laughter means abuse, and abuse could lead to blows. Basically it is uncrowning, that is, the removal of an object . . .” (The Dialogic Imagination 23). The unseated discourse can be touched, mocked, and made fallible. As with Austen’s aporetic conclusion, the dethroning of authority results in an empty throne, which may leave room for new, more diverse interpretations.
Catherine’s newly acquired ability to question her ideology is promising. However, rather than exploring interpretive multiplicity or, like Emma, utilizing the emptiness created through parodic dethroning, Catherine fills the empty throne with Henry’s rational, patriarchal ideology. After Henry’s laughter, Catherine quickly changes her manner of speaking and thinking to one of reason and therefore assures him that though she listened, she knew *logically* that such things could not happen (126). Catherine is quick to adopt rational discourse in assuring Henry she is a sensible being; she likewise attempts to prove it through modifying her speech to suit Henry’s standards. As Henry continually mocks and imitates Catherine’s usage of misused words such as “amazingly,” “nicest,” and “neat,” Henry’s sister finally interjects:

    Henry, you are very impertinent. Miss Morland, he is treating you exactly as he does his sister. He is forever finding fault with me, for some incorrectness of language, and now he is taking the same liberty with you. The word ‘nicest,’ as you used it, did not suit him; and you had better change it as soon as you can, or we shall be overpowered with Johnson and Blair all the rest of the way. (87)

Though Eleanor Tilney teasingly acknowledges the viciousness of Henry’s parody, she does not once question Henry’s methods. Rather, she inspects her own discourse and encourages Catherine to do likewise. In “From Northanger to Woodston,” Walter Anderson, typifying the critical view of patriarchal justification argues that while perhaps domineering, Tilney’s parody is benevolent: it creates a member of society wholly concordant with ruling ideology. Henry’s methods of instructing the individual are startlingly monologic; his parody adds not a voice of dissent but instills the voice of
authority. Nevertheless, Catherine, like Anderson, elevates Henry to the status of sole interpreter: “It was no effort to Catherine to believe that Henry Tilney could never be wrong” (93). Anderson asserts that “[i]n this novel, being a clergyman, as well as cleverer and seven years older than Catherine, authorizes Henry to set the standard of rationality” (499). Catherine willingly upholds this view and does indeed attempt to “change [her grammar] as soon as [she] can” in order to meet Henry’s decrees (Austen 87). Anderson’s essay equates Tilney’s instruction to Austen’s own and establishes a common reading of *Northanger Abbey*, namely that “Austen intends her work, through its superiority in reality and substance, to compete with and ultimately outstrip Gothic romances” (495). He argues that rationality triumphs as Catherine is able to adopt Henry’s—and presumably Austen’s—worldview, finally learning to read life and fiction harmoniously. As Henry serves as “the standard” to which Catherine is to (and eventually does) conform, Catherine, like a proper student, learns to discipline herself. Only when she becomes self-governed does she become a model citizen and, according to Walter, receive the reward of matrimony. Catherine’s capitulation might be prompted by this reward, by the fear of authority, or even by the fear of inconclusiveness and unintelligibility. As Walter notes, the disparity in Henry’s and Catherine’s education elevates Henry. Catherine admires Henry’s use of authoritative texts such as Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language* and Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Catherine disregards the possibility of challenging interpretive communities, preferring instead the “impossible ideal” of perfect agreement and seeking

19 That Henry might derive his authority from being a male goes unsaid by Anderson, though it is said by Henry himself in the previous passage.
to avoid interpretive anarchy (Fish 220). Ironically, in wholly adopting a new binary system, Catherine perpetuates the same interpretive imbalance as before. She has allowed herself to be scrutinized but she herself does not scrutinize Henry’s methods. Without this reciprocal interpretation, Catherine will find herself on “unequal terms,” indeed (Austen 105).

Like the young pupils of More Ghosts!, Catherine’s credulity is nearly irrational as she regurgitates the views of her educators. In his essay “Enclosed in Openness: Northanger Abbey and the Domestic Carceral,” Morrison notes that, “Catherine has learned little more than to ape the opinions of Henry, who is something of a self-appointed arbiter of literary good taste within Northanger Abbey, but hardly an adequate spokesperson for Austen herself” (8). Catherine’s echoed Henry-ness is nothing short of imbecile, reduced to a laughable primitiveness. In the key scene of education, Henry reprimands Catherine for yet another misreading:

Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you—Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? . . . Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting? (166)

Catherine’s education in the Gothic has prepared her for such atrocities; like Tom Grey, nothing could be more probable to Catherine than incest, rape, murder, and scandal.
Henry once more scrutinizes her relapse into Gothic interpretation and Catherine does indeed consider the dreadful nature, viewing her conclusions in light of “their” (read: Henry’s) interpretive community. Catherine, desperate to be equal to Henry, embraces his “our” and “we” and renounces her solitary aberrations in order to align “her own sense of the probable” to Henry’s (166). Once more, Henry’s words become the standard and are very much taken to heart. As Catherine abruptly applies Henry’s reasoning literally, exactly, and absolutely, Austen’s satire is palpable: “Charming as were all Mrs. Radcliffe’s works [. . .] it was not in them perhaps that human nature, at least in the midland countries of England, was to be looked for. Of the Alps and Pyrenees, with their pine forests and their vices, they might give a faithful delineation [. . .] Catherine dared not doubt beyond her own country, and even of that, if hard pressed, would have yielded the northern and western extremities. But in the central part of England there was surely some security” (158). There is illogicality in Catherine’s new, logical reading. After being criticized for overhasty and brash conclusions, Catherine brashly and hastily attempts to remedy her misreading by reaffirming Henry’s conclusions. Morrison asserts, “Indeed the critique may be directed not against Radcliffe but against Catherine’s new acceptance of Henry’s reading of Radcliffe, the paradoxical critical enterprise that seeks to discredit the gothic by adopting an ethics of the positional (here, not there; now, not then) that is itself an ideological staple of the gothic” (9).

Henry’s reading is as flawed as Catherine’s; Catherine’s capitulation simply prevents her from perceiving it. When faced with two readings of Radcliffe’s Gothic, Catherine, as usual, flees from the fight and instead adopts Henry’s view. Catherine’s
reformation is merely a deformation; her understanding of Henry’s interpretive strategies is limited and superficial, literally confined to a geographic space: central England. Catherine cannot comprehend Henry’s way of seeing or speaking; she has no way of anticipating what Henry might say. She merely knows what Henry has said and so can only speak Henry’s words. Henry tells her that in England such things do not happen and, thus, Catherine can only speak of England. Though shortly afterwards Catherine perceives Isabella Thorpe’s artifice, she still needs Henry to explain to her Captain Tilney’s: “I do not understand what Captain Tilney has been about all this time. Why should he pay her such attentions as to make her quarrel with my brother, and then fly off himself?” (172). Henry explains that she still suffers from the same interpretive deficiencies she had in Volume I: “Your mind is warped by an innate principle of general integrity, and therefore not accessible to the cool reasonings of family partiality, or a desire of revenge” (173). Despite Catherine’s shift to a new interpretive community, her inability to consider multiple interpretations and communities still prevents her from understanding those outside her community. Catherine’s esteem for Henry and her willingness to mindlessly capitulate prevents her from interpreting; as such, she is acted upon.

Austen does not demonstrate the same regard for authority but rather interprets and scrutinizes everything; after parodying the Gothic and Catherine’s gullibility, Austen likewise mocks and undermines Henry. In “Northanger Abbey and the Limits of Parody,” Tara Wallace argues that while Austen initially allows the reader to believe that Henry epitomizes her own views, she “refus[es] to stand behind her hero’s parody” (18). Unlike
Henry’s parody, Austen’s does not perpetuate a particular ideology but rather controverts universally; nothing is sacred. Austen’s parody reveals Henry to be as flawed as Catherine herself. In refuting Gothic excess and female imprecision, Henry is as fallible as the very discourses he has controverted and, in fact, bases itself upon the same tenets. Morrison adds to Wallace’s claim, stating, “Henry can release Catherine from her gothic illusions, however, only by invoking the ideological standards that are themselves the staple of the gothic” (5). His “Manichean world of stable oppositions,” (2) in fact strongly resembles the xenophobic Gothic binaries that Catherine understands so well. Even in contrasting himself with the characters of Gothic novels, Henry appears Gothic in creating binaries: they are Protestant, not Catholic. British, not Italian. Rational, not frenzied. Principled, not mysterious. Open, not closed. Light, not dark. Henry’s reductive and exclusive ideology puts him at a disadvantage. Like many other critics, in Reading Gothic Fiction, Jacqueline Howard observes that Henry’s adamant insistence that women could not be murdered by their husbands in an enlightened, Christian, England keep him in self-conscious ignorance of a reality prevalent in his England: political and social unrest. Michael Kramp observes that "[t]he hero's empiricist mindset demands that he designate anything fantastic as irrational and ultimately insignificant; his commitment to reason also forces him to establish limits and categories for acceptable 'true' experience" (45). As Henry attempts to provide a degree of conclusiveness, he must subjugate contrary interpretations. To Morrison, Howard, and Gilbert and Gubar, Henry appears more the parental tyrant in his parody. For Henry, parody becomes a Foucauldian tool to expose and discipline Catherine and those who express themselves outside of Henry’s
rational ideology. Miller explains that “if one perspective . . . includes a consciousness of others, it may need to subvert or parody them, in order to maintain its difference by an effect of transcendence.” For all this, however, Henry’s parody returns to parody him: “Yet if despite its difference it shares a common structure with its rivals, it may be running the risk of self-subversion or self-parody in the very attempt to undercut them” (Miller 110). Through domination, Henry attempts to limit meanings to one, intelligible and rational whole. This Henry accomplishes, bringing Catherine under his control. However, Henry’s totalizing binaries are as limiting and myopic as Catherine’s. He corners himself into an interpretive community, limiting the meanings of the texts he encounters.

Austen, however, refuses to let her narrator take this step, but instead allows the discursive combatants to clash noisily and, as seen in the conclusion, incomprehensibly. "Where in all this are we to locate the narratives' dominant voice or perspective?" Howard asks in confusion as she navigates through the dissonant narrative (177). The question is valid; Gilbert and Gubar note that “Austen was indisputably fascinated by double-talk, by conventions that imply the opposite of what they intend, narrative statements that can only confuse, and descriptions that are linguistically sound, but indecipherable or tautological” (127). Unlike Henry’s parody, Austen’s does not constitute in and of itself a particular ideology; it does not succumb to a fear of interpretive anarchy. It, like Bakhtinian parody, welcomes it. The narrator’s manner of speaking, interpreting, and educating weaves, circles, and turns back on itself, permitting discrepancy.
We see this not only at the conclusion of the novel but in the narrator’s appeal to readers in defense of the sentimental and Gothic novel. Claiming to break convention by refusing to “adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel writers, of degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances, to the number of which they are themselves adding—joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works” (29). The narrator then adopts the language and persona of a novel heroine herself, caught in the act of reading a novel. “‘And what are you reading, Miss--?’ ‘Oh, it is only a novel!’ replies the young lady” (30). The narrator’s parody becomes heightened as she launches into extravagant praise which, in all likelihood, ought not to be taken any more seriously: “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 rough 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” (30). Fish proposes that a text can vindicate nearly any interpretation. This much-disputed passage is no exception. Howard and Gilbert and Gubar find the narratorial defense to be a genuine. To them, the passage satirizes "the overly moralizing and chauvinistic interpretive framework brought to bear on women's novels by those male critics who regarded themselves as guardians of middle-class taste" (Howard 160). Austen’s comparison of an accomplished novel writer to “the man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope, and Prior, with a paper from the Spectator, and a chapter from Sterne . . . eulogized by a thousand pens” does seem to point to an unjust comparison (Austen 30). However, the parody itself is
cyclical and mocks itself. The defense of the novel—an appeal the narrator so ardently assured her readers she was breaking convention for—is, in fact, a convention of the Gothic novel. Consequently, the narrator’s doubled-voice utterance is intended for comedic effect: she mimics the authors who claim to be breaking convention; in so doing, they become more conventional than ever. In the trailing lines of praise, Austen is likewise parodying those who ardently and floridly defend the genre to which they contribute.

Fergus argues strongly that Austen, far from merely mocking the absurdities of these generic conventions, "delights in her power to debunk these conventions and then make them work" (37). As Austen allows every social convention to be uprooted and parodied, readers’ anticipation of conventions are cleverly turned upon themselves. For Fergus, Austen’s “intention” is to delight, confuse, and conflict the reader: “What it does yield, what it insists upon, is an awareness of the reader’s participation in narrative strategies” (29). Howard and Wallace agree: Austen not only ridicules interpretive strategies, she challenges the reader to interpret her jumbled, cyclical, and unintelligible meaning. To Austen, conflicting interpretive strategies or ideologies do not vitiate discourse; rather, they contribute to a larger, faceted and fragmented whole.

In refusing to subscribe to a binary system, Austen espouses herself to a heteroglossic, contradictory, and sometimes cyclical discourse that makes herself unintelligible. Gilbert and Gubar propose that Austen obfuscates her text in order to shield herself from the panoptic gaze and chastisement: “because this apparently amusing and inoffensive novel finally expresses an indictment of patriarchy that could hardly be
considered proper or even permissible in Austen's day” (Gilbert and Gubar 128). While certainly Austen’s inconclusiveness tends towards unintelligibility, Austen’s requests for her readers to interpret and settle her text are too pointed. If Austen truly wished to evade scrutiny, she would not have “left it to the reader” to be settled. There is no escaping interpretation for “[w]hat utterers do is give hearers and readers the opportunity to make meanings (and texts) by inviting them to put into execution a set of strategies” (Fish 220). Through the dismal and implausible “absolute” binary Austen proposes in her conclusion, she mocks the stony and authoritative binaries that educative novels often force upon their readers. However, by “[leaving] it to be settled by the reader,” Austen relinquishes all power the reader might have bestowed upon her. In recommending readers choose their own method of education, Austen, unlike Henry, allows readers to regain power and as authorities, create their own meaning with their own interpretive skills.

In this, Austen employs what Barney calls “invisible pedagogy.” Rather than displaying the strong arm of authority, Austen subtly presents the text, refraining from authoritative pronouncements (16). Barney argues that education is an ideological and ontological process in which the pupil is defined within the context of society. By the early eighteenth century, she argues, educational writers and novelists endeavored to instruct on social mores; pupils could then “improvise,” or adopt ideological discourses as their particular situation required. They might “resist, alter, or perhaps even transform the status quo” (20).

While acting in the capacity of tutor, Henry’s definitive adherence to an interpretive strategy violates the principle of “invisible pedagogy.” However, when
regarded as a pupil, Henry exemplifies improvisation. In *Disciplining Love*, Kramp contends that Henry, like Catherine, is also a subject of society’s strictures. He must perform masculinity within the confines of eighteenth-century expectations just as Catherine must perform her femininity. Henry’s adherence to restrictive ideology is necessary but his confinement within an ideological community does not, necessarily, leave him powerless. Rejecting the traditional reading of Austen’s work “which casts each woman’s idealized man as a secure and independent figure” (5), Kramp proposes that “Austen’s men respond to a variety of cultural directives for proper masculinity, and they acclimate themselves to the needs of a changing society” (1). Similar to Barney’s “improvisation,” Henry’s “composite masculinity” allows him to select and adapt the discourses he has learned in order to position himself in the greatest advantage. Kramp argues that of all Austen’s male protagonists, Henry in particular is able to incorporate other discourses: “Henry depends upon reason to order his perception of the world and his composite aesthetic of existence, but his devotion to intellectual powers does not prevent him from rehearsing the sentimental mode of masculinity—even if such performances are artificial” (48). Throughout *Northanger Abbey*, Henry displays proudly his awareness and comprehension of forms and conventions. Indeed, every instance of parody is a display of dual awareness.

When Catherine first meets him at a ball in the Upper Rooms of Bath, Henry facetiously proves his proficiency in hackneyed and trite customs of society, adopting the language of a gentleman:
I have hitherto been very remiss, madam, in the proper attentions of a partner here; I have not yet asked you how long you have been in Bath; whether you were ever here before; whether you have been at the Upper Rooms, the theatre, and the concert; and how you like the place altogether. I have been very negligent—but are you now at leisure to satisfy me in these particulars? If you are I will begin directly. (20)

Upon answering each question, Catherine is met by an “affected astonishment” which Henry explains “in his natural tone” he has adopted for it is an emotion “more easily assumed, and not less reasonable than any other” for “some emotion must appear to be raised by your reply . . .—Now let us go on” (20). Kramp explains that while fawningly aware of societal conventions, Henry “is not sincerely invested in the chivalric model of masculinity like his father or gallant literary figures. . .” (47). In fact, he is relieved to quit such obligations at the conclusion of the conversation favoring instead a more “rational” manner: “Now I must give one smirk, and then we may be rational again” (Austen 20). Henry simultaneously rehearses two interpretive responses to her provided answers: the superficial emotion society mandates and genuine rationality. In this instance, Henry’s speech appears to be a case of “filial disobedience” as he mocks the society he is in, but it is also reaffirms that he functions within that society’s mores. Henry’s rebellion, however, is not absolute, for he mocks the patriarchal expectation of chivalry only to adopt the likewise patriarchal, Enlightenment ideology.

Similarly, while standing as a paragon of disciplined rationality, Henry does not wholly renounce Gothic novels or sensibility, discourses thought to be directly at odds
with reason. Once more, Henry’s ability to scrutinize conventions betrays his intimacy with its methods. Henry’s Gothic tale and his monologue on Radcliffean Gothic in England still subscribe to the form of the Gothic. He is adamant in professing to “have read all Mrs. Radcliffe’s works, and most of them with great pleasure” (Austen 86). In fact, he furthers, “The person, be it gentleman or lady who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid” (86). This admission does not extend so far as Catherine’s rhapsodic adoption of Gothic discourse; nevertheless, Henry connects Gothic discourse to his most esteemed virtue: intellect. According to Henry, it is stupid to neglect the Gothic. It is likewise stupid to neglect reason. It follows, then, that if individuals wish to be intelligent, they must incorporate both. When Eleanor misinterprets Catherine’s comment on circulating libraries, Henry proclaims her “stupid” for not interpreting “as any rational creature would have done” (92). Real stupidity, Henry believes, is manifest in those who limit themselves to one discourse. Eleanor’s and Catherine’s mutual misunderstanding demonstrates their inability to interpret with a critical distance, employing and considering multiple possibilities. Caught in their limited discourse, they are as unable to express themselves intelligibly as they are to make each other intelligible. Morrison notes that Henry, in claiming to prove himself a man, authoritatively makes them understand each other (91). Unlike his female companions, Henry is able to translate and comprehend their separate discourses. This, in turn, gives him the ability to pronounce and make meaning. Henry’s composite masculinity and improvisation gives him the advantage. His sister requests, “And now, Henry . . . that you have made us understand each other, you may as well make Miss Morland understand
yourself—unless you mean to have her think you intolerably rude to your sister, and a
great brute in your opinion of women in general. Miss Morland is not used to your odd
ways” (92). With customary satire, Henry responds, “no one can think more highly of the
understanding of woman than I do. In my opinion, nature has given them so much, that
they never find it necessary to use more than half” (93). Henry’s critique of women’s
interpretive abilities closely resembles his observations of Catherine’s: having found
some understanding within her own interpretive community, Catherine does not bother to
learn any other. Catherine’s understanding is, quite literally, half, as she fails to consider
the other side. Henry, on the other hand, is able to understand and parody several
simultaneously. Thus Henry is able to make other understand themselves, assigning
meaning, while Catherine remains unable to comprehend him. Were Catherine to do as
Henry does, not as he says, Catherine, too, might reconcile disparate meanings.

Of course Henry does not tolerate the multiple voices of interpretation to continue
clashing indefinitely; through parody, Henry evaluates the weaknesses and limitations of
each side of the matter and chosen. As More Ghosts! proves, there is no perfect
resolution just as there is no perfect discourse. However, Henry must retain intelligibility;
conscious of discursive limitations and shortcomings, Henry attempts to carve out a place
for himself within society and perform a composite identity in order to demonstrate a
both/and awareness. As competing discourses, interpretations, and communities clash in
an interpretive arena, they are brought together. More Ghosts! and the majority of
Northanger Abbey focuses on bringing together, though not reconciling, disparities.
Austen’s narrator tells her readers: “I have united for [the readers’] ease what they must
divide for mine” (194). The narrator wishes her readers to encounter combatant discourses between and within ideological, interpretive communities, but ultimately wishes them, like Henry, to divide, pronounce, and draw their own conclusions.
CONCLUSION

Vindication: The Right of Woman

For women born into a patriarchal society, drawing *appropriate* conclusions is never an easy process. Catherine insightfully expresses the frustration of women in her time to her brother: “If I am wrong, I am doing what I believe to be right” (Austen 80). As a member of patriarchal society, Catherine was born disempowered; she is an equivocal being. In expressing any view different from ruling ideology, Catherine will always be “wrong.” Her place in society is a tight one; she is governed and supervised by a governing force that largely excludes her. It must, if it is to secure its authority.

Catherine’s Britain was one of upheaval. The overthrow of the *ancien regime* in France introduced alternative power structures. For this reason, as Stafford notes, Britain’s rulers rigorously enforced their values and organizing principles, accepting only absolute compliance and rejecting deviance altogether. This authoritative absolutism, Foucault explains, encloses subjects within easily classifiable binaries: “man”/“woman,” “rational”/“irrational”, “right”/”wrong.” Mary Wollstonecraft paints a terrifying picture of patriarchy’s conceptual “woman”:

> The woman whom I allude to was handsome, reckoned very handsome, by those who do not miss the mind when the face is plump and fair; but her understanding had not been led from female duties by literature, nor her innocence debauched by knowledge. No, she was quite feminine, according to the masculine acceptation of the word. (182)

The patriarchal “woman” is a beautiful but mindless being. This particular woman,
Wollstonecraft continues, was largely incoherent, lisping only smatterings of English and French. Patriarchy expected women to conform to this identity; those who did, like Lennox, were tolerated, even praised for their obedience. However, I have demonstrated that Lennox’s espousal of patriarchal ideology is not much better than Arabella’s withering acceptance. Both are utterly confined within patriarchy’s discourse. In fitting within men’s “acceptations,” in becoming intelligible, women are deprived the right to be intelligent. “Masculine acceptation” reduces women to subservient, dull beings incapable of independent thought. For this reason, women expressed their anxieties in the Gothic novel, one of the most popular genres of this time. The Gothic image of the incarcerated woman was a valuable emblem, signifying patriarchal oppression in their own day. Additionally, the Gothic’s formalistic resistance to form, conclusion, and absolutes—in short, its unintelligibility—allowed Gothic authors to speak deviously.

Previously, I have made the case that existing outside of this authoritative discourse, to be unintelligible or to break free of an oppressive system is, to many, tempting. Markley argues that when oppressed by tyrants, the clearest choice is to escape. In his reading of Eliza Fenwick’s *Secresy; or, The Ruin on the Rock* (1795), Markley praises Miss Fluart, a woman who, “packs up her bags and leaves [her oppressor’s] home” (82). To Markley, the departure is triumphant; no one stands in her way (82). Indeed, no one would stand in her way; she is banishing herself. Deviant women who cannot be reformed are cast out and excluded from society. Miller notes that, in narrative, authority—primarily authors—act conclusively and reinforce authoritative binaries. Narrativistic closure ends deviance, pronounces meaning, and punishes disobedience.
Those on the “wrong” side of the binary must be made to fit or must be cast out. They are defined. Markley does acknowledge that while Miss Fluart’s rebellion and self-liberation is empowering, “[a]s a blueprint for rebellion, however, such a mode of action was not likely to be practicable for many women” (82). Women could, of course, flee their fathers’ houses, but where would they go to?

I have thus focused on authors who, though writing in the Gothic genre, attempt to stay within the confines of patriarchal society while yet asserting themselves. Stafford posits that most female authors “were reluctant to mount a head-on challenge to the gender binary, but they hollowed it out, undermined it, diminished its discursive power” (215). Like Stafford, I claim that “women writers of the 1790s were not entirely imprisoned in a subjectivity created for them by male-authored discourses” (215). Rather, they have utilized the discourses available to them in order to assert themselves and draw their own conclusions. They are strong even in their subjectivity.

Women like Catherine, who felt “wrong” even as they attempted to do right by themselves, faced a dilemma. To act rightly in their own view would be to act wrongly in authority’s. To act rightly in authority’s view would, conversely, be wrong in theirs. Those who did not wish to yield their own opinions or ideologies needed, then, to be “right” in both discourses. In short, women needed to vindicate themselves, to defend against patriarchy’s attacks, to prove themselves to be right. I have proposed that women can navigate their discourses through composite selfhood and fluency in various interpretive strategies. Arguably, it is the only way to truly vindicate themselves to and
against patriarchy. As Locke asserts, agreement is the result of common language usage, but dispute often comes from “giving a wrong name to my conceptions; and so using words in a different sense from other people: I am not understood, but am thought to have wrong ideas of them, when I give wrong names to them” (827). A woman speaking in her own language will never be comprehensible to others; she will always be wrong. To be wholly intelligible to her audience, then, a writer must speak in their language and discourse, anticipating beforehand her reception and guarding herself against scrutiny. Vindication can only happen within the confines of authoritative speech.

Defense and vindication, then, requires a composite linguistic and interpretive awareness: women needed to not only know what was “right” to themselves but “right” to others. For this reason, women needed to be composite beings, to find the space between escape and entrapment. They can be neither Arabella nor Miss Fluart, and yet they must be both.

For this reason, composite identity is particularly helpful, if not necessary. Stafford states that women writers of the time were composite beings: “from their writings we may extract a composite picture of womanly subjectivity of considerable power” (185). Henry performs this when he combines both rationality and sensibility, explaining his pleasures—Gothic fiction, picturesque painting, etc.—in a very rational manner. Thus his

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20 “Vindication against,” a legal phrase, refers to the process of justifying one’s actions as being against another’s. Women in this time found themselves in the particular situation of needing to justify themselves to the very party who had done them wrong. Thus they justified themselves to and against patriarchy.

21 The key is language, here, because Locke also notes that even if people hold the same beliefs, if they do not express themselves clearly or in the same terms as the other party, they will believe themselves in disagreement.
effeminate interests become wholly masculine. When following the narrator’s request to “settle” the matter and choose a way in which to view the world, Henry employs the dominant discourse of the time, reason, but does not altogether reject the other options. He incorporates them into his views, making himself a composite being: “Henry offers rational explanations for seemingly irrational phenomena such as the picturesque and sublime. He is convinced that he can order the world in a clear and logical fashion, and while he can mimic the traditional behavior and discourse of a man of feeling, his sensitive performances are always regulated by reason” (49). Henry has the right to choose, as he himself states when dancing with Catherine: “man has the advantage of choice, woman only the power of refusal” (62). Indeed, those critics who believe that unintelligibility, silence, or flight are the only recourses available to women would agree with Henry’s troubling assessment of female subjectivity. The writers I have studied do not agree.

Catherine and other women will devote their time to making their “right” translatable into proper, patriarchal “right.” Vindication is the only method of validation; some authors are more successful at it than others. Some, like Dacre, claim to be the ideal “woman,” masquerading as subservient beings while in actuality encoding their own, subversive messages within the strict forms of patriarchy. Feigning authoritarian either/or binaries, Dacre, like her protagonist Victoria, enjoys a momentary victory over patriarchy but, ultimately, patriarchy finds her dissimulation unconvincing. Owenson, on the other hand, devotes her time to convincing the patriarchy not of her compliance to the title of “woman” but in fact justifies a new acceptation of the word. By rationally modifying
patriarchy’s idiolect—not altering themselves—Owenson and her protagonist are able to be both themselves and “woman.”

Patrick, on the other hand, vindicates herself and her ingénues by condemning patriarchy, showing their culpability. It is because of patriarchy’s inability to properly provide for its subjects, she claims, that women must deviate from the impossible standards placed upon them. In her defensive preface, Patrick portrays herself as a victim of unfortunate circumstances. Through humor and parody, she veils her rhetoric and demonstrates that the faults of women are the result of corrupt and unintelligible ideology. Consequently, like Isabella, she can proclaim: “But I seek not to write an apology. I am not accountable for my actions; and I acknowledge that those you must strenuously disapprove sprung immediately from my own free-will and full intention” (2:5). Patrick faithfully utilizes patriarchal and dominant discourse, following the conventions of both the Gothic and the bildungsroman and in so doing, demonstrates their failure. The whole of More Ghosts! suggests that overadherence to ideology and convention leads to ultimate failure. Obedience causes, of necessity, deviance for without an “internal monitor,” one is bound to offend time and time again.

Austen utilizes conventions to, like Patrick, show their impracticability; in this way, Austen’s work stands as a critique. However, she does not defend or protect herself from scrutiny but rather invites interpretation. She risks misreadings so that her reader might be empowered and might have the ability to interpret, rather than accept passively. This enables composite identity. Ostensibly, Austen’s readers have witnessed a variety of discourses and ideologies, considered their strengths and weaknesses, and by the end are
asked to choose. Yet it is troubling that the novel’s male protagonist, Henry, stands as the most convincing example of composite identity and not Catherine. One might be inclined to consider Austen in agreement with Henry’s assessment that men can choose, women can only refuse. Catherine might stand as an example of passivity, refusing the Gothic and her false suitor, John Thorpe. Rationality and Tilney are admitted only because there are no other choices available.

However, Catherine provides a compelling example of composite identity and vindication in the first volume of Northanger Abbey. Immediately following Catherine’s lament that she is bound to be wrong just as she attempts to act rightly, Catherine manages to flee oppression, choose to stay within the bounds of society and thus, indeed, makes all right. Catherine experiences, for the first time, direct opposition from her brother and resists it through vindication. When John Thorpe cancels for the second time Catherine’s prior engagement with the Tilneys without her consent, Catherine manages to both resist and, through discursive awareness, vindicate herself. Thorpe, like many members of patriarchy, acts authoritatively, “sett[l]ing the matter for himself” (80) by telling Miss Tilney that Catherine cannot go. Like Miller’s notion of a forceful closure, Thorpe’s controlling command is meant to silence Catherine and produce a “happy ending.” Indeed, Isabella rejoices in the forced happy ending, exclaiming, “A most heavenly thought indeed! Now, my sweet Catherine, all our distresses are over; you are honourably acquitted, and we shall have a most delightful party” (81). Far from leaving it to be settled, Catherine’s companions act, like The Female Quixote’s Doctor and Glanville, as authorities upon her narrative and bring it to a close. To Catherine, this
happy ending is mercilessly reductive and has cut her out of the process altogether.

Catherine has already once fallen victim to her brother’s and the Thorpe’s controlling measures once and refuses to do so again. Proclaiming, “I cannot submit to this,” she reasserts her primacy of her own opinion in the matter (81). Catherine maneuvers out of the situation through vindication: Her companions attempt to forcibly restrain her “and remonstrances poured in from all three” (81). They attempt to expose her discourse as illogical, unintelligible, therefore negligible: “it was quite ridiculous, quite absurd to make any further objection” (81).

Catherine does flee their oppression, but does it using their own accusation: they are not only being rude, they are being illogical. Catherine appeals to reason and decorum, affirming her belief to be “right,” protesting, “Mr. Thorpe had no business to invent any such message. If I had thought it right to put it off, I could have spoken to Miss Tilney myself. This is only doing it in a ruder way” (81). As she leaves them, Catherine boldly refuses to accept their discourse as her own: “If I could not be persuaded into doing what I thought wrong, I will never be tricked into it.” (81). Thus proving their protests to be “wrong” by their own standards, they cannot accuse her. John Thorpe begins to insult her, being “as obstinante [sic] as—“ but cannot carry out his condemnation, “for it could hardly have been a proper one” (81). Catherine governs herself by the same dictums as Thorpe; however, while Catherine is obliged to speak in order to preserve good manners, Thorpe must be silenced. Her vindication for “right” conduct saves her from censure and censors her accusers. Even in fleeing, Catherine acts within the confines of polite society. Her figurative progress towards the Tilneys takes on
the same form as her literal journey. As Catherine travels to the Tilneys, she moves “as fast as the crowd would permit her” (82). In her determined state, Catherine is, regardless, careful not to outstrip the crowd; rather, she joins them and moves with them.

Crucially, Catherine demonstrates a composite awareness of social constructs as she interprets the situation. In this way, Catherine deviates from her typical, self-absorbed and limited interpretive method and resembles Henry Tilney; Catherine is careful to not merely judge according to her own interpretive strategy but by other’s in order to prove the Thorpes wrong and herself right. In so doing, Catherine anticipates others’ reception of her discourse:

“Setting her own inclination apart, to have failed a second time in her engagement to Miss Tilney, to have retracted a promise voluntarily made only five minutes before, and on a false pretence too, must have been wrong. She had not been withstanding them on selfish principles alone, she had not consulted merely her own gratification; that might have been ensured in some degree by the excursion itself, by seeing Blaize Castle; no, she had attended to what was due to others, and to her own character in their opinion.” (82, emphasis added)

Catherine’s attention towards other’s perceptions and desires would seem to be a capitulation, particularly as she attempts to be faithful not to herself, but “her own character in *their* opinion” (82, emphasis added). Far from capitulating, Catherine gains strength from this. By working within a moral and ideological construct, Catherine is doubly “right.” She is able to not only accomplish her personal aims—to see the
Tilneys—but also to act as an obligated member of society, “attend[ing] to what was due to others” (82). As Catherine incorporates external ideologies into her own, she is able to serve both ends.

It is no wonder that Catherine’s actions in this scene are her most assertive in the entire novel. Catherine is her own guide through cacophonous social discourses. She does not need Henry to interpret and thus, is not “made to understand” (91). Rather, through composite interpretation, she uses discourse to make her opinions intelligible and acceptable. It may be argued that Catherine’s eagerness to be understood and accepted by the Tilneys is a form of submission and capitulation. Catherine stammers out an enthusiastic apology to appeases the Tilneys. “Whatever might have been felt before her arrival, her eager declarations immediately made every look and sentence as friendly as she could desire” (83). This repentant action in ways resembles Arabella’s contrition. However, Catherine in this instance demonstrates through her internal reasoning and action that she is not a passive reader to be directed and interpreted. Rather she, as an interpreting, composite being, is able to participate in a cyclical process of interpretation. In the presence of two interpretive communities, she has followed the injunction of the narrator and has settled the matter for herself.
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