



Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture (Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture)

By Patrick R. O'Malley



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It has long been recognised that the Gothic genre sensationalised beliefs and practices associated with Catholicism. Often, the rhetorical tropes and narrative structures of the Gothic, with its lurid and supernatural plots, were used to argue that both Catholicism and sexual difference were fundamentally alien and threatening to British Protestant culture. Ultimately, however, the Gothic also provided an imaginative space in which unconventional writers from John Henry Newman to Oscar Wilde could articulate an alternative vision of British culture. Patrick O'Malley charts these developments from the origins of the Gothic novel in the mid-eighteenth century, through the mid-nineteenth-century sensation novel, toward the end of the Victorian Gothic in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. O'Malley foregrounds the continuing importance of Victorian Gothic as a genre through which British authors defined their culture and what was outside it.



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Editorial Review

Review

'O'Malley's impeccably researched Catholicism, Sexual Deviance and the Gothic serves as a valuable reminder of the centrality nonetheless of issues of religious belief to Victorian public and private life. ... O'Malley elegantly traces the history of the anti-Catholic anxiety, ranging fluently across responses to Ritualism and the Oxford Movement as well as to European Catholicism in sources such as Punch, polemic pamphlets and periodical writing. His account of how Ruskin appropriates and naturalises Gothic as the normative English identity, and of how Protestantism is appropriated as the original Christian church - and Catholicism a heretical deviation - is excellent. ... The accounts of the novels are at their strongest in the attention paid to crucial details, where close reading teases elaborate meanings from Stoker's use of physiognomy, or from figurative language in novels of Walter Pater. ... readers will find their sense of all of the texts he discusses enlarged.' Advance Access

'This is a study 'dedicated to the task of tracing the metaphorical gargoyles and arches that produced nineteenth-century British concepts of sexual and religious difference' and it does so with wit, theoretical dexterity and scholarly depth.' Andrew Tate, University of Lancaster

About the Author

Patrick R. O'Malley is Assistant Professor of English at Georgetown University.

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