

Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture by Patrick O'Malley. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. x, 279 pp. + 5 b/w illus. ISBN 0-521-86398-8. \$95.00; £50.00.

There are many ways of writing a history of religion and a history of sexuality. There is also a range of strategies for exploring difference in a particular cultural milieu. At this moment in the literary studies academy, we continue to believe in the power of narrative to illustrate the fears – as well as the hopes, dreams, and aspirations – of a certain time and place. Innovative work continues to push the boundaries of what we understand to be “literature.” The rhetoric of nationhood remains at the forefront of how we examine literary relics.

Patrick O'Malley's fine work, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture*, is not unique in its analytical strategy. It is a book about cultural anxiety. The brilliance and originality of what O'Malley accomplishes here lies in the breadth of his interrogation and the way in which he mates strange bedfellows in making an argument about British literary and cultural history. This is a study of English identity, but it is also a history of anti-Catholicism. The book provides an excellent education in the long history of the “Gothic” in both literature and culture. O'Malley argues for its survival and multiple transformations (perhaps “transubstantiations,” “conversions,” and “incarnations”) over time. *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture* contributes to the extensive body of historical work exploring queer sexualities. Although O'Malley hardly ever invokes that “queerness” in terms of contemporary theoretical labeling, the diversity of the non-normative sexualities he documents in this book and the array of places where they are found at the Gothic/Catholic crossroads offer the historian of sexuality much to consider.

This is also a book for readers of the novel. The arguments it makes assume both a fluency in nineteenth-century fiction as well as an acknowledgement of its power to chart history through the subtleties of narrative. However, O'Malley consistently bolsters the positions he puts forth through solid historical evidence beyond the twists and turns of sophisticated “readings.” His historicist authority depends on the fluency with which he talks about anti-Catholicism in the period. For every elegant critical reading, O'Malley provides ample proof of his familiarity with the players, debates, and texts. In a strongly Foucauldian trajectory, O'Malley shows how nineteenth-century Britain's fears came true: the Gothic monster, in its Catholic and sexual perversion, is not the foreign other; rather, it is right at home in England.

One of this book's advantages is the long history it details. It engages the scholar (and student) of late eighteenth-century British literature as much as the specialist in the fin de siècle. O'Malley's use of a “long” nineteenth century