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"The Celebrated, Reverend, and Wondrous Joshua Pentateuch": Anti-Methodist Parody in *The New Monk* (1798)

In the late 1790s, Gothic literature was nearing its peak of popularity. Of all the British fiction published between 1796 and 1806, it is estimated that more than one out of every three novels was "Gothic in character" (Napier viii), and Gothic literature was the single most popular form of British fiction at the time, with audiences in a variety of social classes (Norton, vii). While the Gothic genre as a whole enjoyed success during this era, a particular subgenre of the Gothic also proved popular: that of the Gothic parody. A considerable number of Gothic parodies were published between 1790 and 1820, during the era that was roughly the peak period for Gothic literature (Neill, iv). Gothic parodies included works that mock the readers of Gothic fiction, such as Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818) and Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance Writers* (1810), while other parodies took as their satiric target the heroes and heroines of the Gothic, in works such as F. C. Patrick's *More Ghosts!* (1798), Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine, or Adventures of Cherubina* (1813), and *Love and Horror* (1815), an exuberant parody by the pseudonymed author Ircastrensis. Gothic parodies were not limited to British publications either; American parodies included satiric versions of the popular escaped nun tale made famous by Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures* (1836), and included titles such as *Six Months in a House of Correction* and Mary Magdalen's *The Chronicles of Mount Benedict* (Griffin, 34). Some Gothic parodies, rather than parodying an element of the genre as a whole, took as their target a certain Gothic text or author. This is the case with *The New Monk* (1798)

by "R. S. Esq.," a direct parody of Matthew Lewis's extremely popular novel *The Monk*, which was first published in 1796 and in its fourth edition at the time of *The New Monk*'s publication. *The New Monk* offers a fascinating parody of the Gothic excesses in Lewis's *The Monk*, but *The New Monk* does not draw only on the Gothic tradition. Instead, the author of *The New Monk* uses common tropes of the anti-Methodist satire to adapt anti-Catholic elements of *The Monk* into an attack specifically targeted at the Methodist movement, which is personified in *The New Monk* in the character of Joshua Pentateuch, the Ambrosio figure of the text, as well as his congregation.[1]

With *The New Monk* and other Gothic parodies, it has been rare for literary scholars to discuss these parodies, other than Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, at any length (with L. C. May's *Parodies of the Gothic Novel* a notable exception). However, it is fairly common for scholars to at least acknowledge the presence of these Gothic parodies. Frederick S. Frank details several Gothic parodies in his bibliography *The First Gothics*, and Griffin, Howard, and Horner and Zlosnik, among others, incorporate select parodies into their larger discussions of the Gothic genre. The fact that the recently published anthology *The Gothic World* contains an article by Douglass H. Thomson specifically focusing on these early parodies of Gothic fiction suggests, however, that this may be a growing field for scholarly research.

The Gothic parody of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is a particularly fascinating genre, not only because it reveals certain attitudes regarding the Gothic as held by

[1] Throughout this essay, the theory of parody that I adopt is that proposed by Simon Dentith in *Parody*. Building on the work of earlier parody theorists, including Margaret A. Rose and Linda Hutcheon, Dentith offers a fairly broad definition of parody, stating that "Parody includes any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice" (9). Also key is Dentith's argument that "parody's direction of attack cannot be decided upon in abstraction from the particular social and historical circumstances in which the parodic act is performed, and therefore…no single social or political meaning can be attached to it" (27-28). In other words, this theory of parody does not classify all parodies as intrinsically subversive or conservative, but rather dependent upon contextual factors for the nature of the relationship between the parody, the original work, and the culture.

writers and readers of the time, but also because a number of literary scholars argue that many "true" Gothic works contain elements of self-parody. In *Gothic Readings: The First Wave, 1764-1840*, Rictor Norton suggests that "many Gothic novels contain an element of self-satire" (260), while Horner and Zlosnik in *Gothic and The Comic Turn* identify the "stylized theatricality of the Gothic" as a Gothic trait particularly open to "self-parody" (11). Even scholars who do not characterize Gothic works in general as tending to self-parody acknowledge the potentially parodic elements in certain specific Gothic works. Lewis's *The Monk* has been repeatedly identified as a potential Gothic parody, if not in whole, at least in part. Markman Ellis suggests that "*The Monk* might usefully be read as a satiric attack on the moral tendencies of Radcliffe's fiction" (83), whereas Jacqueline Howard discusses "Lewis's parodic manipulation of Sentimental conventions" (194). Even Emma McEvoy's introduction to the 1998 "Oxford World's Classics" edition of *The Monk* comments on the novel as a potential parody: "There is a good faith in Radcliffe…which is absent from Lewis. In many ways *The Monk* is a novel of bad faith – and parody. Compared to Radcliffe's *oeuvre*…Lewis's novel reeks of irreverence" (xxii). Given that prior to composing *The Monk*, Lewis attempted to write a parody of sentimental fiction entitled *The Effusions of Sensibility*, it is not surprising that portions of *The Monk* seem to hint at a satiric tone (Ellis 83).

However, one element of *The Monk*, as well as the Gothic genre as a whole, that does not seem to be satiric is the persistent presence of anti-Catholic sentiment. Characterized by Susan Griffin as "that narrative treasure-trove of anti-Catholic typology" (56), Gothic literature is filled with language, characters, and scenarios that emphasize the virtues of English Protestantism and nationalism over the social, intellectual, and sexual threats of Catholicism.[2] However, the anti-

[2] For further discussion of anti-Catholicism in Gothic fiction, see Ellis, 84; Norton, x; Howard, 229; Griffin, 155; and Hoeveler.

Catholic tendencies of Gothic literature are not always straightforward, and perhaps are as much a reflection of concerns within the British society as they are about defining the British identity against a Catholic Other.[3] In discussions of the anti-Catholicism present in Lewis's *The Monk*, scholars have linked the "libertine anti-clericalism" of Lewis's novel with the perceived threats of the French Revolution (Ellis 105), as well as posited the "sustained attack…on the hypocrisy, superstition, and moral corruption of the Catholic Church" as a potential condemnation of religious worldviews in general (Howard 8, 192).

Interestingly, however, Catholicism was not the only religion to come under attack in British literature of this time. Although Gothic fiction tends to focus its religious attacks on Catholicism, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, anti-Methodist literature appeared frequently as well. One 1902 study of anti-Methodist works identifies 609 anti-Methodist publications in the eighteenth century, many of which are satiric in nature (Green). These critiques of Methodism took a variety of forms, but common focuses of criticism included the "enthusiastic" nature of this religious movement, the many regulations regarding personal behavior, the perceived threat that Methodism presented to the Church of England and the nation, and the social, intellectual, and moral qualities of the Methodist preachers, converts, and congregations.

The concerns regarding Methodism felt by much of the British, particularly English, population in the eighteenth century commonly centered upon the "enthusiasm" engendered by Methodism and other Evangelical movements. Religious enthusiasm involved an emotional religious fervor, and in the case of the Methodists, "meant claiming…extraordinary powers from the Holy Spirit" (Lyles 33). Not only was religious fervor associated with superstition and an

[3] For a discussion of anti-Catholicism as related to British (and American) internal cultural concerns, see Canuel, 55-85; Griffin; and Hoeveler.

irrational willingness to attribute supernatural causes to events, but this emotionally-charged religious experience came to be viewed as a dangerous potential cause of social or political unrest, being linked with the sort of "fanaticism" that had characterized "Cromwellian Puritans" of the seventeenth century (McInelly 86). Although Methodism had, since its beginnings in the 1730s, provoked strong opposition from all the Protestant churches, concerns regarding the political implications of this movement increased in the 1790s with the events of the French Revolution and the Irish Rebellion of 1798 (Yates 8). The enthusiastic religion of Methodism seemed especially threatening during this decade because its membership was "particularly strong among artisan occupational groups from whom most was feared in times of political excitement and public disorder" (Hempton, *Methodism and Politics*, 12). These concerns about the political implications of Methodism were enflamed by the preaching of several Methodist radicals, such as Samuel Bradburn, who used their positions to preach messages of equality and support for the French Revolution.

The emotional fervor of Methodism, although a primary focus of concern and satire, was not the only aspect of this movement to draw critics. Methodists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries strongly opposed a variety of entertainment and recreation activities, including the theatre, opera, dances, and races, and held strict rules regarding keeping the Sabbath (Yates 82). Certain Methodists, such as George Whitefield, went even further in regulating their lifestyles, with Whitefield fasting twice a week, deliberately wearing humble clothing, and choosing only to eat the poorest of diets (Lyles 132). Whitfield's "exaggerated abstemiousness," as well as his profound public presence, led to him being often characterized in anti-Methodist satires as a hypocrite or simply ridiculous (132). As with the enthusiastic nature of the religion, this austerity and "stern discipline," drew further comparisons to the "fanaticism"

of puritanism, as well as comparisons to the Catholic Church (Hempton, *Methodism and Politics*, 20; Lyles 158). Hempton explains: "[Protestant critics]…argued that Wesley was virtually Catholic in the role he gave to good works in his doctrines of justification and sanctification…The strand of mysticism in Wesley's religion…also brought forth accusations of popery" (31).

In the anti-Methodist literature of the eighteenth century, not only were explicit comparisons drawn between Methodism and Catholicism, in works such as *Methodism and Popery Dissected and Compared* (1779) and *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared* (1748-52), but the manner in which these religions were criticized could be surprisingly similar. For example, in an anonymous, eight-volume work from 1791 entitled *A Review of the Policy, Doctrines, and Morals of the Methodists*, the author lays charges against Methodism that, if found in a Gothic text, could be easily be read as a typical anti-Catholic tirade, without any change whatsoever in the language. This work states:

> The striking marks of Policy and Art, so evident in the planning and support of this Religion, are very unlike the simplicity of the Gospel, and afford occasion for suspecting the honesty and integrity of their Leaders. Craft and cunning appear here but too plainly, seizing on the prejudices and credulity of the ignorant and the weak, in order to raise a monument to their ambition, or to create a fund for their interest. (qtd in Green, 145)

The fear that "Methodists were Papists and Jacobites…in disguise" appeared frequently in the anti-Methodist satires of the eighteenth century, and it is not uncommon for a Methodist character in these satires to be directly in the employ either of the Catholic Church or the devil (or both) in an attempt to destroy the Church of England from within and "subvert…all of

Christianity" (Lyles 26, 44). This fear of internal attack from these Methodist "Sons of Loyola" and "Bedlam-Popes" stems from the fact that it was not until the 1790s that Methodism began to truly break with the Church of England (88).[4] In approximately 1795, the Methodist church made its complete break with the Church of England, but until that time, Methodist members typically still attended Anglican services and partook of the Eucharist only when administered by an Anglican priest.

This attendance and participation in Anglican services during the first sixty years of the Methodist movement illustrates how relatively little doctrinal difference truly existed between Methodism and the Church of England (44). In fact, given that one estimate suggests that there were only 77,000 Methodists in England in 1796, the nature of the threat to the Church of England was far less severe than anti-Methodist texts suggest (Yates 91). But as David Hempton argues, the threat of Methodism for the Anglican Church was not necessarily about theology or the loss of significant portions of the congregation. Rather, "To many clergymen, Methodism, enthusiasm, atheism, and Jacobinism were fruit of the same tree. They were all eroding the ecclesiastical control mechanisms of eighteenth-century English society" (*Methodism and Politics* 78).

One of the primary ways in which anti-Methodist literature, particularly anti-Methodist satires, attacked Methodism, was to mock the people who made up this movement. With congregations and lay preachers drawn from the lower classes, anti-Methodist literature frequently portrays Methodists as uneducated, ignorant, superstitious, and gullible (Lyles 66-67). Methodist preachers were often accused of deliberately taking advantage of their congregation's ignorance to increase their personal wealth and indulge in sexual immorality; the fact that the

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[4] For a further discussion of the complex relationship between Methodism and the Church of England in the eighteenth century, see Griffin, 63; Gregory, 147-178; Hempton, *The Religion of the People*, 7-9, 141; and Ward, 5, 12, 28-40, 50-53.

Methodists celebrated an evening service called a "love feast" often played into these claims of sexual immorality in satiric works. Perhaps the most commonly satirized aspect of a Methodist preacher, however, was his theatrical method of preaching. Unlike the sermons in most eighteenth century Protestant churches, which were "read rather than preached and…delivered generally with little show of emotion," Methodist preachers offered their listeners "a dramatic performance with the drama heightened by highly emotional language and direct appeals to the audience" (73). Satirists often connected the depiction of the preacher as an actor with a portrayal of an emotional and irrational Methodist congregation. Methodist congregations were particularly satirized for the very physical nature of the conversion experiences that attendees supposedly had, in which their religious enthusiasm prompted fainting, physical agitation, and shrieking (107). Methodist religious services are repeatedly depicted as noisy scenes of the upmost "confusion" in which "the traditional boundary lines of….restraint were blown away" (Hempton, *The Religion of the People*, 13).

The satires of Methodist congregations and preachers certainly played into R.S. Esq.'s portrayal of Joshua Pentateuch and his congregation in *The New Monk*. Although the plot of *The New Monk* follows very closely that of *The Monk*, R.S. embellishes the descriptions of Joshua and the congregation in a manner that clearly draws on the anti-Methodist satirical tradition, which changes this novel from being a simple parody of *The Monk* into a work that has its own ideological intentions.

The New Monk is a three-volume, "almost paragraph-by-paragraph burlesque" of *The Monk*, published by the Minerva Press in 1798 (Frank 331). Although the identity of "R.S. Esq." is unknown, it has been suggested that Gothic novelist Richard Sickelmore created this parody (Frank 331). As a whole, the novel does not limit itself to an anti-Methodist message. In fact,

other than during the sequences in which Joshua Pentateuch plays a role, this novel seems to be more invested in comically parodying the Gothic elements of *The Monk* than in sustaining a religious discussion. Part of this comic reworking of *The Monk* is to transfer the events to a modern British setting. The primary events of the novel take place in London, England, the travels of Henry Mountfardington – which match those of *The Monk*'s Don Raymond in Germany – are set in Ireland, and for added national flavor, the author makes a point of repeatedly identifying Betsey (*The New Monk*'s incarnation of Lewis's Matilda) as Welsh, and Willy (Lewis's Theodore) assumes a much-commented-upon disguise of a Scottish highlander to infiltrate Mrs. Rod's boarding school in search of Alice (Agnes).

The New Monk's plotline follows that of *The Monk* extremely closely, so much so that the narrator of *The New Monk* occasionally comments on it. For example, when Joshua discovers that Betsey is a woman, the narrator remarks, "I don't think an incident of such a nature ever happened in England before, or could I have imagined anywhere else; but I find I am mistaken; for at the very same instant, day, and year, a synonymous circumstance happened in the capital of Spain, which is…handed down to us in a celebrated work now existing, where reflections…may be seen at large, page 116" (R.S., I:80). Elsewhere, Henry reads aloud *The Monk* to Lady Welford, and is prompted by the novel to imitate Don Raymond in revealing his love for her niece, and Ann Maria Augusta (the Antonia character) reads a censored version not of the Bible, but of *The Monk*.

The parody of *The Monk* is so close throughout the novel that a May 25, 1798 review of *The New Monk* in *The Oracle and Public Advertiser* simply states, "it is the same story as Mr. Lewis's *Monk*, with this difference, that the Hero is a Methodist Preacher." However, "this difference" is paramount for the ideological implications of *The New Monk*, in that, through

R.S.'s characterization of "the Hero" as a Methodist preacher, R.S. is not just parodying the anti-Catholic vitriol of *The Monk* but is deliberately incorporating anti-Methodist satiric tropes so as to create a fairly serious critique of Methodism. In his preface to *The New Monk*, R.S. makes it clear that his attack on Methodism is not in jest. R.S. comments:

> Aware that the absurdities of cant and superstition were the first foes of religion, that they were the parents of infidelity, I have made the hero of my story one of those Methodists, who, possessing neither goodness nor common sense, exalting themselves as the preachers of heaven, are the will-o'th-whisps of society, who conduct their followers, through the labyrinths of folly, to the darkest depths of fanatic terrors. (Preface, v-vi)

R.S. begins *The New Monk*, as did his source text, *The Monk*, with a scene in a church that reveals the impious nature of the congregation. The "rushing torrents of impatient auditors" who fill the Methodist church in *The New Monk* are not motivated by piety, but rather by the desire to be seen participating in the popular activity of the day (R.S. I:1). More so than in *The Monk*, however, R.S. takes care to emphasize the lower-class backgrounds of these "followers of Whitfield" (I:1). R.S. notes the rotten teeth of certain congregants, and describes the masses packed into the church in almost animalistic terms, stating that "Grunts, groans, screams, and cries of all tones, both from fat and lean, ascended and rattled, in loud and redoubled echoes, through the vaulted roof of this close pent medley of human creatures" (I:2). As Ann Maria and her aunt attempt to make their way through this crowd, they are sworn at from all sides: "Damn the woman, where the devil would she be?", "O Christ! This woman's elbow!", "Lord, Ma'am, how you squeeze!," and "Jasus God, my toe!" (I:3). This swearing in the church not only emphasizes the uncultured, unholy nature of these crowds, but also plays into a critique that

appeared frequently in anti-Methodist literature, that Methodists were too familiar with the names of God and Jesus, not in terms of swearing, as it appears in this parody, but in terms of the frequent use of these names during religious experiences and discussions (Lyles 78).

Ann Maria and her aunt fight their way through these crowds, and meeting with Lord Charles Clottleberry (the Don Lorenzo character) and his friend Pelhambourgh, the women inquire as to why the church is "stuffed almost to suffocation" (I:1). In reply, Pelhambourgh informs the women that "the celebrated, reverend, and wondrous Joshua Pentateuch" is the cause for the masses gathered there that day (I:9). Pelhambourgh goes on to describe the effects that Joshua's preaching has on these crowds, stating that Joshua "never preaches without suffocations innumerable, mutilations many, and losses without number; why he is actually known to make his discourse according as he thinks the people ought to be punished….when he is agitated, they are restless, grow faint, kick, squeeze, cry, rave, and tear, until he imagines they are done enough," and a typical service leaves "one miscarriage, four broken shins, and an old woman squeezed to death unintentionally" (I:9-10). As with other descriptions elsewhere in this novel, R.S. is not just comically increasing the already extreme elements in Lewis's *The Monk*, but is doing so in a manner that deliberately adopts and incorporates common anti-Methodist critiques of the hysterical masses, excessively physical conversion experiences, and the uneducated backgrounds of the Methodist congregation.

This congregation's desire for irrationally enthusiastic religious experiences renders them vulnerable to the imposition of the knowingly hypocritical Joshua Pentateuch. Unlike Lewis's Ambrosio, who is brought to a self-awareness of himself as a flawed man, R.S.'s Joshua is well aware of, and unconcerned by, the fact that he is nothing more than a "clever hypocrite" (I:42). Joshua is a "naturally cruel" man guilty of "a most extensive degree of covetousness," caused

partly by his education by a Methodist preacher to be "a cringer, an imposer, a coward, [and] superstitious in the extreme" (I:56, II:140). Joshua is known as "the Reverend of the West End," a title that perhaps alludes to the theatricality of his preaching style (I:11). Interestingly, Joshua becomes a popular figure "amongst the females of ton" not for his preaching abilities, but as a geography instructor (I:11). Joshua's role as a "preceptor in the use of the globe," though seemingly unconnected to his preaching, may possibly be an allusion to a famous claim by John Wesley that he viewed "all the world as my parish," a claim that was often attacked in anti-Methodist satires (I:11).

The characteristic of Joshua most emphasized in *The New Monk*, however, is his hypocrisy. While in public Joshua presents himself as "upright, perfect, composed, and [with] more than singular austerity," but when Joshua is alone, he "loosened all the feigned shackles from his mind, he thought on the deference paid him by all ranks; for what? for being a clever hypocrite. He rejoiced in his heart at the blind folly of the world" (I:12, I:42-43). While the austerity of Methodists was a common subject for anti-Methodist literature as a practice portrayed as either hypocritical or ridiculous, the extremity of the false austerity exhibited by Joshua suggests echoes of the anti-Methodist critiques specifically targeted at George Whitefield. In anti-Methodist satires, Whitefield indulges in "self-exhibition" of his austerity so as to draw the public's attention, but like Joshua, "his primary characteristic is hypocrisy," and his true interest is in obtaining personal wealth through manipulating "the unsuspecting and the ignorant" (Lyles 138).

This desire for wealth is the sin that ultimately brings about Joshua's downfall in *The New Monk*, though it is by no means his only fault. Joshua's first temptation orchestrated by Betsey is to indulge his gluttonous desires for rich food and drink, but as comic as Joshua's

obsessive meditations are on his "picture of the most exquisite collection of things that could excite the mouth to water" which includes "A leg of Welch mutton…divinely portrayed," this gluttony serves primarily to reveal the falseness of Joshua's dietary mortification of the flesh and his easy susceptibility to temptations (I:44-45). Joshua's greater sin is that of "avarice," and it is this greed that prompts Joshua to sneak into Ann Maria's bedroom at night, a decision that leads to his murder of both Ann Maria and her mother, Olivia (II:164). Even while imprisoned for his crimes and on the verge of being hanged, however, Joshua cannot conquer his love of money, and he hesitates to accept Betsey's offer of escape assistance when he learns her price will be all his carefully hoarded wealth.

In addition to Joshua's hypocrisy, particularly in regards to gluttony and avarice, Joshua has another character trait that is often associated with Methodists in anti-Methodist literature at this time: he is superstitious. As a religious movement, Methodists often accepted hauntings and supposed miracles as true evidences of the supernatural, which caused the movement significant mockery, particularly in cases such as that of the Cock Lane ghost, which had well-publicized support from Methodists before having an equally well-documented exposure as the work of a fraud (Clery 27). Even the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, was a well-known believer in ghosts, and had published in his *Arminian Magazine* an account of a haunting that had occurred in his childhood home (Clery 27). This superstitious belief in ghosts, as well as in magic and miracles, seemed to the critics of Methodism to be evidence that Methodism's "popular superstition was an inheritance from the Catholic past, which Methodism subsequently reinvigorated" (Davies 253).

When Joshua is on the verge of learning "Peter's" (or rather, Betsey's) secret about "his" identity, Joshua's superstitious nature reveals itself as his thoughts immediately rush to absurd

ideas, which he dismisses for almost equally absurd reasons. On learning that Peter has been disguising his true identity, Joshua immediately suspects that "he might be Mr. Wesley's ghost; then the Dauphin of France; then the devil; and then General Pichegru in disguise!" (I:71). But Joshua decides Peter can be none of these things, as, "first, he could be felt; second, he knew nothing of the French tongue; - next, he had neither horns nor cloven feet; and lastly, he could not be him, because he was not here, but there" (I:71). Joshua's belief in the supernatural, particularly in ghosts and magic, renders him vulnerable to certain tricks. In the cellars, Betsey and her unnamed co-conspirator are able to convince Joshua that they have magical powers, when in fact, as the reader later learns, the entire scene is a staged production solely intended to bring about Joshua's downfall. When Joshua sits in Olivia's room, watching for her ghost as requested by Ann Maria's landlady, he is so terrified that even small moths fluttering past are enough to render him almost senseless. On seeing a "ghost," Joshua, panicking, throws books at it from across the room, only to discover that the ghost's head is nothing more than "a scooped turnip" designed to frighten him (III:64). Although Joshua is vulnerable to these tricks that play on his superstitious nature, he is not above playing them on his own congregation as well. Joshua agrees to go along with Betsey's scheme to have Ann Maria drugged and declared dead both so that he can obtain her money, which has attracted his dangerous avarice, and so that, when the drugs wear off, Joshua "could have it in his power to act a miracle before his auditors and followers, by making them imagine he had raised her from the dead" (III:57).

Throughout *The New Monk*, R.S. takes every opportunity to portray Joshua, as well as other Methodist characters, as superstitious, hypocritical, and exploitative of others' faith and ignorance. For much of the novel, though, this attack on Methodism is couched in primarily comic scenarios, as, for that matter, are the other excesses of this Gothic parody. There is a

curious change, however, in the very end of the novel. After Joshua's imprisonment for the murders of both Ann Maria and Olivia, after the world learns that Joshua is "a fell murderer, a treacherous robber, and a beastly gormandizer," Betsey visits Joshua in his cell and offers to help him escape in exchange for his signature on an unknown document and all of his wealth (III:156-157). Once Joshua agrees to this deal, however, the comic elements of the novel fall largely to the wayside, and the ending of the novel is surprisingly dark and violent. As Frank notes in his bibliographic note on *The New Monk*, "at the climax…[this] parody nearly becomes a genuinely gruesome Gothic scene" (331). The shift into a darker tone begins with Betsey's plan of escape: Joshua must stab a drugged guard and steal his clothes so as to sneak out of Newgate Prison and meet with Betsey's confederate who will get him safely out of London. Although there have been plenty of deaths earlier in the novel, unlike this murder, they were always presented in a fairly comic manner. For example, when Henry kills the Irish bandit, he does so by pulling the bandit's legs out from under him 'with such force" that his head hit the wall and "was dashed into a thousand pieces" (I:140). Even when Joshua kills Ann Maria in the cellars, there is a certain dark humor to Betsey's command to "blow her brains out at once," as well as in the chase than ensues between Joshua and Ann Maria, in which "she ran, and he ran, and she ran; but he ran too fast for her" (III:121).

With the murder of the jailor, however, *The New Monk* suddenly enters introduces a new tone of serious drama, which lasts throughout the short remainder of the text. Joshua stabs the jailor at Betsey's behest, but finds, Lady Macbeth-like, that he cannot "wipe the blood from his hands" (III:181). When Betsey unwisely taunts his belated pangs of conscience, Joshua strikes out at her with the very knife he had just used on the jailor, saying, " 'Let thy guilty blood atone for all that…I have spilt.' So saying, he stabbed, and stabbed, and stabbed" (III:181). Joshua

flees the cell containing his two latest victims, and meeting Betsey's confederate outside the prison, rides with this man into the country. When they pause at dawn, Joshua finds himself in a flat, empty countryside in which "nothing, save the high erection of an oaken gibbet, stood proudly from this barren surface" (III:185). Suddenly, Joshua's traveling companion returns with several officers of the law, and he turns Joshua over to these men as the escaped criminal that they seek. With only the vaguest of explanations, this unnamed man reveals that he was behind Joshua's downfall and has now brought this group of men to hang Joshua on the nearby gibbet. The man explains that he and Betsey set out to entrap Joshua in his own "actions and passions" after having "long observed [Joshua's] growing pride and stifled disposition," and now having trapped him completely, this man warns Joshua to "Tremble, villain, for I long to view you pendant" (III:187-188). Joshua is seized, bound, and hung on the gibbet, where after two days of extreme pain, he finally dies in the midst of a tremendous storm.

This sudden shift to serious Gothic drama at the novel's end, complete with a mysterious, implacable stranger, is quite a change from the comic tone that has consistently marked the text up to this point. To a certain extent, this "Gothic contamination" of the parody may simply be an unintentional blending of the parodic and the true Gothic, a genre-blurring that occurs in many Gothic texts (Thomson, 285). However, this is not explanation enough for the sharp change in the novel's tone, a change that is likely partly connected to R.S.'s attempt to follow *The Monk*'s plot closely. In the last portion of *The New Monk*, this plot fidelity is complicated for R.S. by the fact that in order to demonstrate that Joshua's belief in the magical powers of the devil-like figure in the cellars is evidence of foolish Methodist superstition, R.S. has had to reveal to his readers that this being is nothing more than a man in a costume. Because the anti-Methodist ideology of *The New Monk* cannot allow for a real devil with demonic minions to effect Joshua's

escape after persuading him to sign his soul over to the devil, R.S. has to damn and destroy Joshua in a different manner: Joshua still signs a document, but the true climatic destruction of his character comes through his murder of the jailor and Betsey.

The complicated logistics of creating an ending to *The New Monk*'s plot that mirrors that of *The Monk* but omits all supernatural elements explains to a certain extent why this mysterious stranger suddenly appears and plays so key a role in the denouncement and death of Joshua, but it does not fully account for the shift in the narrative tone during the final fifteen or so pages of the novel. There is no narrative need for the novel to suddenly cease to employ the comic ridicule that has appeared, for the most part, throughout the rest of this parody. Until Joshua's prison murders, attempted escape, and horrible death, he has been a figure of mockery in the novel. Following in the tradition of many anti-Methodist satires, Joshua as a Methodist preacher is a comically villainous man, a "buffoon" and an "obvious charlatan" (Lyles 138). However, from the moment that Joshua murders the prison guard, he suddenly becomes a true Gothic villain. Joshua's crimes lose the humorous color that previously characterized his wrongdoing, and his punishment for these actions likewise becomes a moment of serious Gothic drama.

As the punishing stand-in for Lewis's devil, the mysterious stranger condemns Joshua to death, and in doing so seems to not only be pronouncing judgment on Joshua as a sinful individual but also providing a broader indictment of the Methodist movement as a whole. For this stranger, who is empowered with *deus ex machina* abilities, Joshua is a figure who can not only be mocked and exposed as a hypocritical sinner, but ultimately must be destroyed. Early in the novel, Joshua reveals that his greatest concern for himself is to preserve "his public name" (I:79). As Joshua tells Betsey, he has "established a name as the most detached man from the world; and were I to lose that name, my happiness would be gone forever" (I:82). But this

unnamed stranger is not satisfied with merely destroying Joshua's reputation and revealing his hypocritical nature to the world. Rather, this stranger employs Betsey so that they may "snare" him in the trap in which he is "now secure, past escape" (III:188). In his final and only speech to Joshua, the stranger makes it clear that he is not content just to expose Joshua to the scorn and mockery of the world, but rather he desires to utterly destroy this Methodist preacher as well as, perhaps, the religious movement that he represents. In the preface to *The New Monk*, R.S. states that his "hero" is "one of those Methodists, who, possessing neither goodness nor common sense…conduct their followers, through the labyrinths of folly, to the darkest depths of fanatic terrors" (Preface, v-vi). In the final pages of the novel, this undisguised critique of Methodism surfaces once again, no longer softened by the comedy that had marked the earlier portrayals of Joshua Pentateuch (I:9). In the final speech of the mysterious stranger, the stranger voices a passionate and, compared to the rest of the novel, disturbingly real, hatred for this representative figure of Methodism. The final words that Joshua hears before being dragged to the gibbet are those of the stranger, saying:

> Take him, hang him…How grateful…will this be to the world! Hell is too good by far for thee....Mortal! Meet your fate; that fate, whose punishment on earth is not half so torturous or terrific as it ought to be….Behold the gibbet on which you are to linger! Tremble, villain, for I long to view you pendant. (III:187-188)

This final scene is the dark culmination of the anti-Methodist message that appears throughout R.S.'s *The New Monk*. In this final portion of the novel, R.S. breaks with the comic satirical genres of Gothic parody and anti-Methodist satire that he has been writing in, and the anti-Methodist sentiment that R.S. has created throughout the novel through the use of satirical

stereotypes such as that of the superstitious, hypocritical, avaricious preacher is unleashed in all its force upon “the celebrated, reverend, and wondrous Joshua Pentateuch.”

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