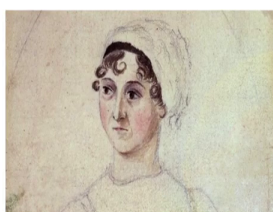


**Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey**  
**Professor Dr. Divya A. Dohss**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Lecture 16**  
**Gothic Parody**

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**Week 4:**

Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*  
Lecture 4A: Gothic Parody

Image source: <https://www.bl.uk/people/jane-austen>



Hello and welcome to week four novel, which is Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. In this session we are going to talk about the Gothic Parody, which is what *Northanger Abbey* is. *Northanger Abbey* is a Gothic Parody. Jane Austen satirizes this in a huge obsession with Gothic novels in the late 18th century and early 19th century.

So before we move on to the idea of the Gothic Parody and the variations of it, in terms of how the critics approach the concept of Gothic Parody that is seen in *Northanger Abbey*, let us first look at Jane Austen and her context and the kind of works that she wrote.

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## Jane Austen

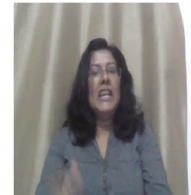


"Austen lived in turbulent times. She was born on 17 December 1775, the year in which the American War of Independence commenced. Moreover, England was threatened with revolution and was at war with France for a large part of Austen's adult life (Myer 3)."

Source: (Haasnoot, 2014, 2)

<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/28573/Ma%20Thesis%20Austen.pdf?sequence=1>

Image source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_Revolutionary\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolutionary_War)



Jane Austen lived in turbulent times. She was born on 17th December 1775, the year in which the American War of Independence commenced. Moreover, England was threatened with revolution and was at war with France for a large part of Austen's adult life. You can see the various wars listed against the timeline of Jane Austen. When she was born, the American War of Independence began. So America was trying to become independent from the mother country, Great Britain. And there was this war going on, the long war with France was going on during her lifetime.

And we can see minor references to the war. For example, in *Persuasion*, we have the naval men being used as significant characters in that fiction. So, even though Jane Austen does not do a lot of political fiction, there are minor references to the militia, to the naval folks. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, there is a reference to the militia, and Elizabeth Bennet's sister falls in love with one of the military men and the consequences are not very ideal.

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## Jane Austen

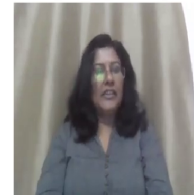


"Although none of these historical events can be linked directly with Austen and her novels, the anxiety instigated by the French Revolution is said to have caused "the Gothic explosion" in English literature of the late eighteenth century (Miles, "The 1790s" 42)."

Source: (Haasnoot, 2014, 2)

<https://openaccess.libraries.uiowa.edu/bitstream/handle/10837/26073/7/Ms%20Theses%20Austen.pdf?sequence=1>

Image source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_Revolution#/media/File:Anonymous\\_-\\_Prise\\_de\\_la\\_Bastille.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution#/media/File:Anonymous_-_Prise_de_la_Bastille.jpg)



“Although none of these historical events can be linked directly with Austen and her novels, the anxiety instigated by the French revolution is said to have caused the Gothic exposition in English literature of the late 18th century.”

If you remember the previous slide, there was a reference to the fear of revolution in Great Britain as well. And that fear was caused by the revolution that took place in France. So you can see how the fear that the societal structure is going to be radically changes there. And the direct threat of war and the direct threat of revolution was also brought forth because of the French revolution. And we also saw in the previous lectures, how the Gothic sub-genre itself was seen as an outcome, the literary outcome of a political shift, a radical political shift. So the terror and the horror of the French revolution was somehow kind of channeled, through words in this kind of narrative, which is the Gothic.

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## Austen and the Gothic genre

"As many of Austen's letters to family and friends and the tales in the *Juvenilia* exemplify, Austen "took a keen pleasure in gossip and the sensational" (Myer 3).

Moreover, her parody of the Gothic novel, *Northanger Abbey*, shows that she enjoyed reading the literature of terror and had a thorough understanding of the genre and its conventions".

Source: (Haasnoot, 2014, 2)  
<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/28573/Ma%20Thesis%20Austen.pdf?sequence=1>



“As many of Austen’s letters to family and friends and the tales in the *Juvenilia* exemplify, Austen took a keen pleasure in gossip and the sensational. Moreover, her parody of the Gothic novel, *Northanger Abbey*, shows that she enjoyed reading the literature of terror and had a thorough understanding of the genre and its conventions.”

So there are two kind of points in this comment here, on this line one is that Austen was interested in the sensational. And that idea is kind of indicated to us through her letters and through the *Juvenilia*, the fiction that she wrote when she was very young.

So you can also see how very closely the idea of gossip and the sensational and Gothic, is related. And all these things seem to be associated topics. And they also have a kind of a feminine framework, women are usually found to be indulging in gossip, women do read a lot of sensational fiction, as well as Gothic fiction and Austen had a keen interest apparently in the Gothic novel, which is why she was a very capable, she does a brilliant job of satirizing parodying the Gothic novel because she knew the convention of the genre.

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## Jane Austen

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"*Sense and Sensibility* (1811),

[\*Pride and Prejudice\*](#) (1813), which she called 'my own darling child'.

In his journal, Sir Walter Scott contrasted her 'exquisite touch' with his own 'Big Bow-Wow' approach, praising the way she made 'commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment.'

Source: <https://www.bl.uk/people/jane-austen>



Now let us have a quick look at the kind of fiction that Jane Austen published, wrote and published. *Sense and Sensibility* was published in 1811. *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813, which she referred to as my own darling child, so *Pride and Prejudice* is a spectacular success. It continues to be successful to this date and there are plenty of adaptations of that novel. And you can see how different generations relate to these works of Jane Austen.

“In his journal, Sir Walter Scott contrasted her exquisite touch with his own Big Bow-Wow approach, praising the way she made commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment.” So there are two points here with relation to Scott’s comment on the kind of writing Austen produced. He kind of describes his own way of writing which he calls the Big Bow-Wow approach. There is a huge scale, I mean, things are captured in a larger scale in Scott’s fiction.

He writes historical fiction, narratives that are about succession about heirs, kingdoms. However, if you look at Austen, her domain is smaller, domesticity becomes the central subject of her fiction. So, that is one point that Scott tries to bring out, the comparison between her miniature way of capturing the society and his own larger historical focus.

And the other is, he points out that Austen is trying to give a lot of truth to her fiction through the sentiment, through the way she kind of captures the description, through the way she captures

characters in her work. So there is also another related point that you can see, which is the subtext to this kind of description, which is how ordinary things become extraordinary, how there is truth in the ordinary and this kind of subject matter. The importance given to the commonplace is also a major, major trajectory of the romantic moment. And you can see how there is a connection between romantic philosophy and Gothic as well, which we kind of discussed in the previous lectures.

So, there is a lot of truth in her description, in her sentiments and the people and the places in her words, commonplace ordinary regular have folks that you would meet on an every day.

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## Jane Austen

"*Mansfield Park* was published in 1814 and *Emma*, with its heroine whom Austen half-jokingly predicted 'no one but myself will much like', in 1815.

Austen died, aged only 41, on 18 July 1817, leaving the subtle *Persuasion* and her Gothic satire *Northanger Abbey* to be published later that year".

Source: <https://www.bl.uk/people/jane-austen>

Image source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma\\_\(1996\\_theatrical\\_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma_(1996_theatrical_film))



*Mansfield Park*, a novel by Austen was published in 1814 and *Emma* was also published in 1815. *Emma* is very interesting, because it is supposed to be a very, it is supposed to be a favorite with the author herself and Austen have jokingly predicted that no one but myself will much like the central character *Emma*.

*Emma* discusses the egotism of the central character and the plans she kind of comes up with to manage the society in which she is a part of. So it is a very, very interesting novel in that regard. It is a very mature novel. And it is, as I said, it is a favorite with the author.

Austen died only aged 41, on 18 July 1817, leaving the subtle *Persuasion* and her Gothic satire *Northanger Abbey* to be published later that year. So *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* were published together after her death, so they were posthumous publications.

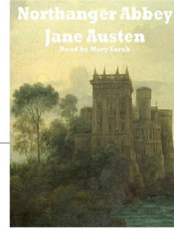
If you look at Jane Austen's work, you can see how very strong her female characters are. You can go back to *Sense and Sensibility*, you will find Elena and Marianne as central characters. And with regard to *Mansfield Park*, we have Fanny Price, the really modest and reserved, Fanny Price kind of emerging as a very powerful character as the novel progresses. And then in *Persuasion*, we have Anne Elliot again. She begins as a very marginal character in the novel and as the novel progresses, she comes to kind of capture the attention of everybody around her and Catherine Morland is a central female character in *Northanger Abbey*.

And you can see how all these novels and *Emma* of course is based on the central character as well, it is a novel which kind of captures the growth and maturity of the central character. So it is about a kind of a female's growth trajectory. And it is a kind of a Feminine Bildungsroman in some respect. So there is a parallel with this kind of fiction with, with Gothic fiction, and usually we have several female characters, trying to kind of manoeuvre their way around all the minefields.

So you can see how there is a close parallel between domestic realism on the one hand and Gothic fiction.

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# Northanger Abbey



'Northanger Abbey...published posthumously in 1817. Northanger

Abbey, which was published with [Persuasion](#) in four volumes, was written

about 1798 or 1799, probably under the title *Susan*. In 1803 the manuscript of *Susan* was sold to the publisher Richard Crosby, who advertised for it, but, unaccountably, it was not published at that time.'

Source: [https://www.infopedia.com/?doc/Northanger\\_Abbey](https://www.infopedia.com/?doc/Northanger_Abbey)

Image source: [https://www.audible.in/?pf\\_rd\\_p=Northanger\\_Abbey\\_audiobook/251731MM17](https://www.audible.in/?pf_rd_p=Northanger_Abbey_audiobook/251731MM17)

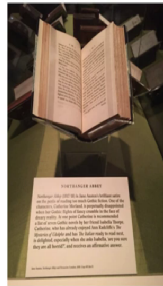


Northanger Abbey was published posthumously in 1817. Northanger Abbey was published with Persuasion in four volumes and was probably written about 1798 or 1799. So it is kind of a late 18th century work, but it remain unpublished until after the death of Jane Austen. In 1803, the manuscript of Susan was sold to the publisher, Richard Crosby, who advertised for it, but unaccountably, it was not published at that time. Susan is the title given to Northanger Abbey in its first version, and Jane Austen goes back toward and revises the novel and retitles it as Northanger Abbey. So you can see how that revisions are crucial to the way narratives are structured, especially with regard to Jane Austen.

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## Northanger Abbey



'Radcliffe's fiction was the natural target for Jane Austen's satire in *Northanger Abbey*. The book's novel-loving heroine, Catherine Morland, imposes on reality the Gothic plots with which she is familiar.'

(John Mullan 2014)

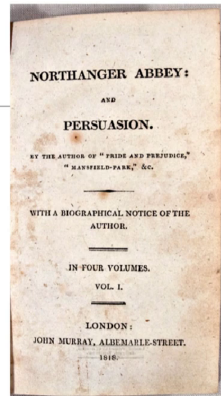


Now, Radcliffe's fiction was the natural target for Jane Austen's satire in *Northanger Abbey*. The book's novel-loving heroine, Catherine Morland, imposes on reality the Gothic plots with which she is familiar. So if you read the novel, you will know that Catherine Morland is a person who is hooked by the Gothic fiction that she reads, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *Castle of Otranto*, *The Monk*, so all these novels are consumed by Catherine Morland and Isabella Thorpe her friend.

So, and she tries this heroine of Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey* tries to impose on reality, the Gothic structure, the Gothic characters, the Gothic plots, that she has read, that has fed on. So she tries to kind of see reality through the lens of Gothic fiction and she is considered, Austen is considered to satirize the Gothic narratives in *Northanger Abbey*, but is she really satirizing? That is another question, which we will kind of address as this lecture progresses.

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## Title page



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northanger\\_Abbey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northanger_Abbey)



Here we have the title page of Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, they were published together. And you can see the reference to the author there. It says by the author of Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park, et cetera, with a biographical sketch notice of the author in four volumes and it was published in 1818. This is the title page of the work, which was published in 1818.

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## Jane Austen

"Northanger Abbey is far more complex than it might seem.

...particularly so for this one, since a surprising number

of readers and critics seem to consider the text simply in terms of its "layers of

parody," treating it as nothing more than a light-hearted spoof" (Alex Skopic)

<http://jasa.org/publications/essaycontest/winning-entries/2019-essay-contest/skopic/>  
Image source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northanger\\_Abbey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northanger_Abbey)



"Northanger Abbey is far more complex than it might seem particularly so. Since a surprising number of readers and critics seem to consider the text simply in terms of its layers of parody,

treating it as nothing more than a light hearted spoof.” Jane Austen’s novels are complex, all the novels are complex, but this novel Northanger Abbey is more complex, because everybody, at least a large number of critics seem to consider the novel as just a parody. It just seems to be a kind of a light-hearted spoof, a mockery of something that was very popular, which is the Gothic. So what exactly is the novel doing using this parody is something which is very significant.

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## Northanger Abbey

“While Austen is engaged in pointing out the absurdity of many Gothic conventions throughout the novel, this is far from her *only* concern with the form. Rather, her work is simultaneously a critique and a defense of books like *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Monk*.”

(Alex Skopic)

<http://jasna.org/publications/essay-contest-winning-entries/2019-essay-contest/skopic/>



While Austen is engaged in pointing out the absurdity of many Gothic conventions throughout the novel this is far from her only concern with the form. Rather her work is simultaneously a critique and a defence of books like *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Monk*. So this is a very key point, which has been brought out by this critic Alex Skopic, who argues that while Austen is mocking the Gothic conventions in *Northanger Abbey*, she is also simultaneously defending books such as *Mysteries of Udolpho*, so there is a critique as well as a defence of the genre. So this is a very contradictory point, but it is also a valid one if you read the novel very, very carefully.

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## Gothic and Societal Horror



"For her characters, the Gothic's haunted castles and spectres are nothing compared to the very real societal horrors of the Regency, its gendered power structure and ideology.

This motif is exemplified not only in *Northanger Abbey*, with General Tilney as the arch-Gothic villain and exploiter, but in *Sense and Sensibility*, where the logic of coercion and dehumanization this society relies on is thrown into sharp relief by Eliza Williams' tragic end."

Source: (Alex Skopje)

<http://psia.org/publications/essay-contest-winning-entries/2015-essay-contest/skopic/>



So how do, how does she defend it? So that is the question that begs to be asked, and let us try to kind of answer that. For her characters, the Gothic's haunted castles and spectres are nothing compared to the very real societal horrors of the Regency, its gendered power structure and ideology.

So on the one hand, we have the haunted castles and the spectres, the supernatural elements which are used in Gothic fiction, but on the other hand, in the Regency, the period in which, Austen lived, there was a different kind of horror, that horror was produced by the reality of society and that horror gets captured in this parody, in this parody. So while she is parodying, mocking, satirizing the Gothic convention, she is also kind of capturing the terrors in society and using those terrors to scare the "Gothic heroine" which is Catherine Morland.

"This motif is exemplified not only in *Northanger Abbey*, with General Tilney as the arch-Gothic villain and exploiter, but in *Sense and Sensibility*, where the logic of coercion and dehumanization this society relies on is thrown into sharp relief by Eliza Williams' tragic end."

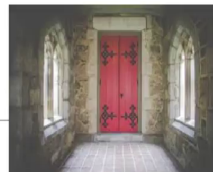
The Gothic motif of arch villain is clearly exemplified in the figure of General Tilney and that is really done in a clear cut manner. But there are other villains who kind of embody the societal horror and one such example is Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility*, Willoughby who seduces

Eliza Williams. So you can see how Jane Austen uses some of the horrors in society and kind of packages it neatly through this Gothic parody.

And it is a kind of a double edged tool. It is a parody, it can make the readers laugh at it, at the same time, by laughing at it, we also realize that it is perhaps not a parody, that there is a kind of a larger significance, a more subtle and more potent significance when we realized that, the castles may not be very oppressive in a literal manner, but there is a lot of oppression subtly going on inside the walls of Northanger Abbey, the mansion of General Tilney.

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## Harmless parody?

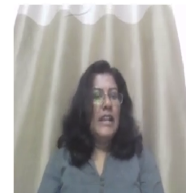


"Far from a harmless parody, then, *Northanger Abbey* marks a turning point, where Jane Austen injected the Gothic with a new level of social, political, and economic critique—a tradition that endures to this day."

Source: (Alex Skypic)

<https://www.nptel.org/publications/yearly-conflict-without-entire-2018-essay-conflict-skypic/>

Image source: <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2018/05/27/northanger-abbey-how-to-read-a-gothic-novel/>



Now, far from a harmless parody, then, *Northanger Abbey* marks a turning point, where Jane Austen injected the Gothic with a new level of social, political, economic critique a tradition that endures to this day.

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## Catherine Morland's Learning



'The novel combines a [satire](#) on conventional novels of polite society with one on [Gothic tales of terror](#). [Catherine Morland](#), the daughter of a country parson, is the innocent abroad who gains worldly wisdom: first in the fashionable society of [Bath](#) and then at Northanger Abbey itself, where she learns not to interpret the world through her reading of Gothic thrillers.'

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Northanger-Abbey>



Catherine Morland, the daughter of a country parson is the innocent abroad who gains worldly wisdom: first in the fashionable society of Bath and then at Northanger Abbey itself, where she learns not to interpret the world through her reading of Gothic thrillers.

Northanger Abbey criticizes both polite society and also satirizes Gothic Tales of Terror. We have Catherine Morland, who is just the daughter of a country parson, but she is very, very innocent. And when she travels, there is a lot that she needs to learn about society, especially the fashionable society of Bath. And, again, she undergoes a steep learning curve at Northanger Abbey, the Gothic structure at the heart of the novel and she kind of learns that she should not read the world as she would read a Gothic thriller.

And you can see how this novel is structured as the growing up story of a heroine. So it can also be categorized as a female Gothic in some respects, it becomes a female Gothic, because we have at the heart of it a character who is undergoing the process of learning something with regard to a Gothic plot and she imagines that she is traversing the Gothic plot in a literal manner, but there is a psychological Gothic plot as well. And she realizes that, while General Tilney may not be a Gothic villain in a very formulaic sense, but he is very oppressive and he is against the wishes of his children. So you can see that there is a very strong case that can be made to define this novel as an example of female Gothic.

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## Gothic Machinery



"Austen does not ridicule the Gothic romance. Instead, Austen heightens the common anxiety present in the Gothic novel by interposing the Gothic machinery into the "given machine of Northanger Abbey's common life" (126). Wilt argues that Austen is "not quite a parodist, [but] almost an imitator" of the works of Radcliffe (131). In other words, she "is in fact an heiress of Radcliffe" (Wilt 131)"

(Source: Hasznoot 29)

(Wilt, Judith. *Ghosts of the Gothic: Austen, Eliot & Lawrence*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980.)



Now, Austen is not ridiculing the Gothic romance in this novel, *Northanger Abbey*. Instead, Austen heightens the common anxiety present in the Gothic novel by interposing the Gothic machinery into the given machine of *Northanger Abbey's* common life. Wilt argues that Austen is not quite a parodist, but almost an imitator of the works of Radcliffe. In other words, she is, in fact an heiress of Radcliffe.

To kind of continue my earlier point about female Gothic, here the critic argues that what is happening in *Northanger Abbey* is not a ridicule, not a mockery of it, instead, the anxiety that is prevalent in Gothic fiction is present in this fiction as well in *Northanger Abbey* and Austen is instead of parodying is imitating the works of Radcliffe, so one can argue that she is, in fact an heiress to Ann Radcliffe, the one who started the Gothic school.

So, as we talked about the nature of the Gothic in the previous lectures and arrived at the conclusion that there is a prevalent sense of fear, there is also a prevalent sense of anxiety especially on the part of the female character, the central female character, and that anxiety is also very much present in Catherine Morland here in this novel. There is an anxiety for her to belong to the society in which she is present, there is an anxiety for her to kind of understand the workings of *Northanger Abbey*. There is an anxiety on her part to kind of make sure that Henry Tilney the son falls in love with her.

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## Northanger Abbey Plot

'the coming-of-age story of the naïve, highly impressionable protagonist, Catherine Morland. The book is divided into two sections-in part one, Catherine visits Bath with her family's friends, the Allens. While there, Catherine is introduced to the duplicitous Isabella Thorpe, but also to the kind-hearted, sensible Tilney siblings, Eleanor and Henry. Catherine is immediately attracted to Henry, who engages her in conversation, and gently mocks her, about her (Gothic) reading habits'.



Now you let us look at the nature of the plot of Northanger Abbey. As we kind of realized this is the coming-of-age story of this naive, highly impressionable protagonist, Catherine Morland. She is very young, she is very innocent and she is highly impressionable, and she is traveling in this story. The book is divided into two sections. In part one, we have Catherine visiting Bath with her family friends, the Allens. While there, Catherine is introduced to the duplicitous Isabella Thorpe, a very, very remarkable young woman, but, one who is very duplicitous, as well.

She is someone who cannot be trusted. And she also has a brother, and we will come to that. So she is introduced to Isabella Thorpe, but also to the kind-hearted and sensible Tilney siblings, Eleanor and Henry. Eleanor and Henry are the children of General Tilney. So Isabella is a foil to Catherine Morland.

Catherine is immediately attracted to Henry, who engages her in conversation and gently mocks her about her Gothic reading habits. So we can see the kind of the parody beginning in this kind of conversation that takes place between Henry Tilney and Catherine Morland. Isabella Thorpe also reads a lot of Gothic fiction, her brother John Thorpe also pretends to read a lot of Gothic fiction. So you can see a lot of talk about fiction reading goes on in this fiction.



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## Northanger Abbey Plot



"After some time, Catherine learns of Isabella's manipulation of her brother, James Morland (Isabella has courted James, accepted his engagement, and then jilted him for Captain Frederick Tilney), and she decides to leave Isabella, and Bath, and accompany Eleanor and Henry to their home, Northanger Abbey."

Source: (Miller, 2010)



After some time, Catherine learns of Isabella's manipulation for brother James Moreland, Isabella has quoted James accepted his engagement, and then jilted him for Captain Frederick Tilney, and she decides to leave Isabella and Bath and accompany Eleanor and Henry to their home, Northanger Abbey.

So Isabella's character is further established as fraudulent when we realize how she breaks up her engagement with James Morland, who is the brother of Catherine Morland, so she jilts him in order to get engaged with Captain Frederick Tilney, the elder son of General Tilney and Catherine decides to leave Bath and travel with Eleanor and Henry to their home Northanger Abbey.

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## Northanger Abbey Plot

"In a series of comic episodes, Catherine imagines Northanger Abbey and its inhabitants as enacting her beloved Gothic scripts.

Eventually, Henry learns of her Gothic imaginings and chastises her for them. Shortly after, Catherine is dismissed from the Abbey, by Henry's father, General Tilney, because he learns that Catherine does not have a family fortune and so she would be a "poor" match for his son. Ultimately, Catherine and Henry reconcile and, despite General Tilney's disapproval of their union, marry."

Source: (Miller, 2010)

Image Source: <https://www.janeausten.co.uk/catherine-morland-a-failed-gothic-novel-heroine/>



So when Catherine Morland finds herself in Northanger Abbey, she imagines herself to be Gothic heroine and she imagines this place to be a place of oppression, literal oppression and she tries to figure out more information about the place that she is in.

So in a series of comic episodes, Catherine imagines Northanger Abbey and its inhabitants as enacting her beloved Gothic scripts. Eventually, Henry learns of her Gothic imaginings and chastises her for them. Shortly after Catherine is dismissed from the Abbey by Henry's father, General Tilney, because he learns that Catherine does not have a family fortune and so she would be a poor match for his son. Ultimately Catherine and Henry reconcile and despite General Tilney's, disapproval of their union, marry.

So you can see how Catherine Morland tries to kind of work through the labyrinth pathways of Northanger Abbey trying to find out a hidden plot and in her wandering, she comes across Henry Tilney and he chastises her, takes her to task for imagining things about this structure, this mansion and she is very embarrassed and ashamed of what she has done and begs his forgiveness. And later, General Tilney dismisses her from the Abbey, because he realizes that she is very poor, she does not have a fortune and therefore, she would not be an ideal match for his son.

Catherine Morland leaves the Abbey in tears. But later, Henry follows her and they are reconciled, and despite the disapproval of General Tilney, they are married. So you can see how this romantic plot survives this Gothic machinery and it survives the lack of money and fortune and it ends happily for the central couple.

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## Spending Life Reading Gothic Novel



'In the first half of the book, set in fashionable Bath, Catherine meets with a new friend, Isabella Thorpe, a flighty young woman. When Catherine opines that she wishes she could spend her whole life in reading Ann Radcliffe's hugely popular and influential Gothic novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Isabella replies that she has "made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you... *Castle of Wolfenbach*, *Clermont*, *Mysterious Warnings*, *Necromancer of the Black Forest*, *Midnight Bell*, *Orphan of the Rhine*, and *Horrid Mysteries*.'

<https://blogs.bl.uk/english-and-drama/2014/12/jane-austen-and-the-very-horrid-northanger-abbey.html>



Now let us see how the Gothic novel is referenced in *Northanger Abbey*. So in the first half of the book, which is set in fashionable Bath, we see Catherine meeting, Isabella Thorpe, who is a flighty young woman. She looks like she is a flighty young woman, but she is very calculating and strategic. You can see how she easily discards the brother of Catherine Morland, once she realizes that he does not have a lot of money and goes for the eldest son of General Tilney. So you can see in some regards that she is also kind of mirroring General Tilney, in the kind of choices that she makes about marriage partners.

When Catherine opines that she wishes she could spend her whole life in reading, in reading Ann Radcliffe's, hugely popular and influential, influential Gothic novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Isabella replies that she has made out a list of 10 or 12 more of the same kind for you... *Castle of Wolfenbach*, *Clermont*, *Mysterious Warnings*, *Necromancer of the Black Forest*, *Midnight Bell*, *Orphan of the Rhine*, *Horrid Mysteries*.

So these are all titles of Gothic fiction and she kind of offers this list to her friend, her new best friend, Catherine Morland. And you can see how friendships are formed through this kind of exchange. And these are actual titles of real books that they came out in that period.

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## Terror and Wonder



'For some time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was generally believed that Austen may have made up these titles, so preposterous did they sound to later, non-Gothic readers. However, later scholarship revealed that the novels did all exist, and they are on display together for the first time in Terror and Wonder' (Exhibition in British Library, 2015)

Source: <https://blogs.bl.uk/english-and-drama/2014/12/jane-austen-and-the-very-horrid-northanger-abbey.html>

b



So “for some time in the 19th century, it was generally believed that Austen may have made up these titles, so preposterous did they sound to later, non-Gothic readers. However, later scholarship revealed that the novels did all exist, and they are on display together for the first time in Terror and Wonder,” which is in exhibition in the British Library.

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## Northanger Abbey



"The second half of Northanger Abbey features Catherine's visit to the Abbey itself, the home of her friend Eleanor Tilney and her brother Henry. On the journey Henry teases Catherine about what she expects the house to be like (as it is called an Abbey, Catherine has of course imagined a full-on Radcliffian dark, brooding, mazelike building stuffed with secrets): "And are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as 'what one reads about' may produce? Have you a stout heart? Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry?"

Source: <https://blogs.bl.uk/english-and-drama/2014/12/jane-austen-and-the-very-horrid-northanger-abbey.html>

b



So you can see how these titles the titles, referred to in the slide, are all not made up titles by Austen. They were actual texts that were circulating in that period, and they are all on display in the exhibition that was run by the British Library in 2015.

In the second half of the novel, especially during the travel to Northanger Abbey, we can see Catherine being teased by Henry about the novels that she had read. And he kind of teases Catherine about what she expects the house Northanger Abbey to be like, and of course, Catherine had imagined a full on Radcliffean dark, brooding, maze like building stuffed with secrets. And Henry asks, “are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as what one reads about may produce? Have you stout heart? Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry?”

So his references here are some of the attributes of Gothic fiction, the sliding panels, the tapestry hiding horror things and all the maze like building and the darkness and the brooding ambience of Gothic castles are actual part and parcel of fiction that Catherine had read, just as Isabella Thorpe had.

So when Henry is kind of teasing her, he is also setting up Northanger Abbey as a place with a lot of potential for Gothic terror and horror and it is these elements which kind of create a particular mood in Catherine Morland about the structure, Northanger Abbey and she tries to kind of bring back her reading and see the world through the pages of the work that she had read.

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## Summarizing the Gothic plots

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'Henry then proceeds to distil various key plotlines from the complete work of Ann Radcliffe into a single, very entertaining narrative at what is to happen at the Abbey during Catherine's visit. His intention is to entertain, but Catherine is both frightened and immediately expects the worst - or, the most exciting - to happen.'

Source: <https://blogs.illinois.edu/english-and-drama/2014/12/jane-austen-and-the-very-herald-northington-abbey.html>

b



Henry also proceeds to distill various key plot lines from the complete works of Ann Radcliffe into a single, very entertaining narrative at what is to happen at the Abbey during Catherine's visit. His intention is to entertain, but Catherine is both frightened and immediately expects the worst or, the most exciting to happen.

So while Henry is teasing, he also kind of condenses some of the key plot lines of Ann Radcliffe's works into a single entertaining plot and Catherine is really frightened at what he had been sketching out for her benefit. But she is simultaneously frightened as well as excited by the prospect.

So this is what is underlining some of the Gothic philosophy, is to be frightened is also to be excited and we did see in the previous lectures how there is a kind of a sexual, subtext to this kind of excitement when the Gothic heroine is moving through the labyrinth and passageways, she is somehow kind of exploring the forbidden, the forbidden could be the sexual as well.

Thank you for watching. I will continue in the next session.