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**Northanger “Horrid” Novels:
Early Female Gothic Literature and Its Influence upon Jane Austen’s Novel**

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma *Northanger "Horrid" Novels: Early Female Gothic Literature and Its Influence upon Jane Austen's Novel* vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne

.....

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Introduction

The novel *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen is commonly referred to as a parody of the Gothic novel. However, to be able to create this work, Austen had to be familiar with several books representing the contemporary Gothic literature. Therefore, the aim of this thesis *Northanger “Horrid” Novels: Early Female Gothic Literature and Its Influence upon Jane Austen’s Novel* is to show to which extent Austen was influenced by the novels she mentioned in *Northanger Abbey*. Consequently, the main question is whether this work can actually be described as a mere parody.

The first chapter focuses on the characterization of early Gothic literature. Historical and social context is provided for better understanding of the conditions under which this genre reached such an immense popularity at the end of the 18th century. Since the thesis deals with Female Gothic literature, it is indispensable to describe Ann Radcliffe’s contribution, for she developed the concepts of “terrible” and “horrible”. Furthermore, Minerva Press published the majority of analysed novels and one subchapter introduces this publishing house. A brief history of a debate concerning the authenticity of the *Northanger* novels is presented.

Consequently, these novels are analysed in chapter 2. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is regarded as a model example of contemporary Gothic literature. *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, *The Orphan of the Rhine*, *Clermont* and *The Mysterious Warning* are selected as writings representing Female Gothic, which are mentioned by Austen in her novel. There are various Gothic elements to be analysed: setting, description of nature, supernatural elements and suspense, Gothic architecture and stereotypical Gothic characters, especially a heroine, a hero and a villain.

Previously analysed novels are used in chapter 3 which focuses on *Northanger Abbey*. Austen’s novel is approached in several directions. Initially, the style of writing and overall conception are described to classify the novel within Austen’s work. Moreover, three subchapters deal with Gothic elements that are substantial in chapter 2 analysis. Nevertheless, the emphasis is placed on the manner in which Austen used these elements, specifically whether they are designed to mock Gothic literature or not. By examining these elements and by consequent analysis of similarities between *Northanger Abbey* and “horrid” novels, it is possible to determine how these novels actually influenced Austen.

1 English Female Gothic in the 18th Century

The initial chapter of this thesis is designed to provide an overview of early English Gothic literature. To understand this genre, it is necessary to know historical and social context. Furthermore, elements of Gothic literature, the concepts of “terrible” and “horrible” and Female literature are described. The last subchapters deal with Minerva Press and introduce Northanger “horrid” novels.

1.1 The Rise of Gothic Literature

Gothic literature in the 18th century can be perceived as a reaction to the contemporary society and its values. Botting calls it “a reconstruction of the past as the inverted, mirror image of the present, its darkness allows the reason and virtue of the present a brighter reflection.”¹

The term “Gothic” is nowadays understood in several meanings. Paperback historical romances, psychological American fiction represented by Hawkes or O’Connor and horror fiction itself all bare the attribute Gothic. Common features of these categories are the focus on consciousness and prohibited topics. The origin of the word, however, is connected with the barbarian tribe of the Goths. The 18th century writers used this term to depict the historical significance of the Goths who were involved in the collapse of the Roman Empire and subsequently connected the term with the medieval period referred to as the Dark Ages. Moreover, a contrast between “Gothic” which was perceived as chaotic and “classical” in a sense of well-ordered was created. And it was this opposition that encouraged the authors to become interested in Gothic qualities representing a new impulse, which was needed in the contemporary culture.² Frequently quoted is the view of the Marquis de Sade who sees Gothic literature as a direct result of the French revolution which affected the whole Europe and changed the established order of the society.³

Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* (1764) was the first piece of writing regarded as Gothic in the 18th century. In the second edition a year later, Walpole

1. Fred Botting, “In Gothic Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture,” in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 15. PDF e-book.

2. David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day: The Gothic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1–5.

3. Jerrold E. Hogle, “Introduction: the Gothic in Western Culture,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 12.

himself described this book as “a blend of the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern”⁴ and added the collocation “Gothic story” to its title. The blend can be understood as a mixture of supernatural features and romance expanded through the dialogue.⁵ Over the next two decades, this genre became immensely popular, culminating in the 1790s when Gothic literature reached the utmost popularity. Consequently, a factor that contributed to this expansion was a new way of distributing books and resulting growth of readership which is described later in chapter 1.

In order to demonstrate the growing popularity of Gothic literature, a few statistics can be useful. Between 1776 and 1779 an average of seventeen novels per year was published. The Gothic comprised around 30 percent of the market until 1807. Additionally, in 1800, the largest number of novels were published. The breaking point is the year 1808 signifying a substantial decline in Gothic literature production.⁶

After Walpole, another significant work was published in 1777 by Clare Reeve. *The Old English Baron* is based on similar features as *The Castle of Otranto*, however, Reeve managed to alternate the style to make the book more commercially successful.⁷ Nevertheless, the leading figure in the popularization of Gothic literature was Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) has been regarded as a typical example of 18th century Gothic. Consequently, Radcliffe’s work inspired other authors and the market was soon full of variations on the style established by her. This boost was sudden and non-predictable as to how long Gothic literature will be favored resulting in a wave of new authors and enormous growth of the books published each year. Although, the quality varied a lot. Some critics even argue that many of the works were created with more automation than originality and nearly anyone could produce several volumes and interest readers.⁸

Furthermore, there are two phases of the 1790s’ Gothic literature. Until 1794, the Radcliffe style was predominant. Post 1794 Gothic serves as a ground for more violent topics supported by the chaotic social order.⁹ To assess the attitude of contemporary literary critics towards Gothic literature, Wordsworth’s opinion is

4. E. J. Clery, “The Genesis of ‘Gothic’ Fiction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 24.

5. Ibid.

6. Robert Miles, “The 1790s: The Effulgence of Gothic,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 42.

7. Clery, “The Genesis of ‘Gothic’ Fiction,” 33.

8. E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 142.

9. Miles, “The 1790s: The Effulgence of Gothic,” 45–49.

presented as one of the leading figures of the next literary generation. For Wordsworth, “literature should be morally and spiritually uplifting . . . the writer has a vital social role to play in elevating the minds and morals of his audience . . . the Gothic writers give themselves no such task.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, the Gothic represents a pre-romantic age, which should be recognized because it is a period of transformation across various arts. Miles even talks about “Gothic aesthetic” as a part of the “general shift in taste around the mid to late eighteenth century.”¹¹

It is necessary to state that the Gothic literature of the 18th century is not a “homogeneous body of writing.”¹² Even though automation and copying are frequently criticized, it is precisely due to its immense popularity and diverse authorship that the elements of this type of literature vary a lot. The overview of the characteristic 18th century Gothic elements is depicted in the following chapter.

1.2 Elements of Gothic Literature, Concepts of “Terrible” and “Horrible”

As stated above, there are several elements which can be attached to Gothic literature of this period. In general, a list of basic elements describing the 18th century Gothic should contain these items: the castles and convents, the wild landscape and distant times. Regarding the themes which are considered to be a spine of Gothic literature, there is usually violence upon female, property disputes and supernatural elements. The typical form is prose fiction.¹³ One of the most significant features is the involvement of literary techniques which create and maintain suspense.¹⁴ The elements are described below and relevant examples are provided in chapter 2.

The space where Gothic literature takes place is predominantly characterized by antiquity, usually it is a castle, ruin, graveyard or old manor and these places show signs of supernatural presence, frequently in a form of ghosts or strange noises. The factor of darkness is especially underlined to accompany the feeling of medieval times. As the two most recurrent buildings, the castle and the convent symbolize opposition when the castle is a place connected with the tyrannical male, whereas the convent is supposed to

10. Punter, *Literature of Terror*, 8.

11. Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750–1820: A Genealogy*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 28.

12. Punter, *Literature of Terror*, 7.

13. Neil Cornwell, “European Gothic,” in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 64–68. PDF e-book.

14. Punter, *Literature of Terror*, 1.

be a shelter for the female.¹⁵ Punter also stresses another feature of the Gothic castle, namely its complicated architecture full of secret passages.¹⁶

Considering the geographical setting and portrayal of landscape, English authors would frequently set their works in the catholic southern Europe where civilization alternates with marvellous nature.¹⁷ Frequently, the Alps are involved in the story. With the geographical location, another attribute is connected. That is the names which often sound exotic and correspond to the setting in France, Italy or Germany. Additionally, Punter emphasizes that “men were never called Richard because names of Italian or German extraction were the rule.”¹⁸

Furthermore, violence upon female is a recurring theme. In the end, however, the villain does not succeed and he is condemned to suffer for his transgressions. Often he is placed in a monastery or dies. It is possible to mark these characters as stereotypical. Becker creates a model of three layers which reflect the contrast between the villain and the heroine: “On a syntactic level, the heroine. . . presents an object of value for the villain’s desire . . . on the semantical level, the heroine personifies the values that contrast the villain’s moral corruption. . . on the pragmatic level, the heroine is a perfect incorporation of the ideal feminine.”¹⁹ Moreover, a figure of a tyrannical father appears, as well as servants who usually represent a comic interlude.²⁰ When discussing the figure of a tyrannical male, it is necessary to depict that he usually introduces smugglers and bandits to the story, since he is surrounded by them, often as their leader.²¹ Finally, there are characters such as monks and priest accompanied by the absent “Mother” signifying an absence of the ideal.²²

As for the form of the Gothic novel, Lynch states that it can “seem as a parable of its age literary revivalism, as it encloses stories within stories . . . Gothic texts appear as scaled-down simulations of literary tradition that was itself being reconceptualised in terms of seriality, sequels, and resurrections.”²³ Clery connects boom of Gothic

15. Jerrold E. Hogle, foreword to *Gothic Literature: A Gale Critical Companion*, ed. Jessica Bomarito (Gale, 2006), xiii–xv. PDF e-book.

16. David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 261. PDF e-book.

17. Cornwell, “European Gothic,” 65–66.

18. Punter, *Literature of Terror*, 9.

19. Susanne Becker, *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 46.

20. Punter, *Literature of Terror*, 9.

21. Clery, *Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, 133.

22. Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750–1820*, 26.

23. Deidre Lynch, “Gothic Libraries and National Subjects,” *Studies in Romanticism* 40 (2001): 41.

literature and the number of works issued over a short period with another consequence, which is an evolution of a strange relationship between reader and the book that he describes as “addictive, irrational, masochistic, in sum, a posture of abjection.”²⁴

The dual approach to Gothic literature, the concepts of terror and horror were introduced by Ann Radcliffe in a dialogue *On the Supernatural in Poetry*²⁵ where she compared her style to Matthew Lewis and his novel *The Monk* (1796). According to Radcliffe, terror is based on the sublime, simultaneously mind and imagination play a crucial role, because the doubt whether something is really supernatural or not is crucial. Therefore, suggestion is a key element of terror. This corresponds to the style she used in her writings. A technique widely used by Radcliffe is called the “explained supernatural” and it is addressed in the following chapters. Lewis, on the other hand, represents the horror literature where the supernatural elements are more violent and bizarre, even shocking.²⁶ The elements of horror will not be discussed in detail, since the focus is on Female literature which is predominantly terror. Nevertheless, to illustrate the difference between these two concepts, *The Monk* depicts “explicit sexual intercourse, incestuous rape and murder, the brutal dismembering of a tyrannical nun by a mob and the physical appearance of Satan himself as homosexually seductive.”²⁷

One may argue that monsters, vampires and werewolves should be mentioned among the themes. However, these appear later in the development of Gothic literature, therefore will not be further addressed in the analysis of early Female Gothic.

1.3 Ann Radcliffe’s Contribution to Gothic, Female vs. Male Gothic

Throughout the 20th century, Ellen Moers was the first critic to be preoccupied with “Female Gothic”. In 1976, she used this term in *Literary Women* as a synonym for the Gothic writing produced by female authors in the 18th century and the theory was largely based on Ann Radcliffe’s work. It served to “explore the way in which the female line has been erased in history.”²⁸ However, a consensus on what precisely is a Female Gothic, whether a separate genre or not, has not been reached.

24. Clery, *Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, 154.

25. Hogle, foreword, xiv.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Diana Wallace, *Female Gothic Histories: Gender, History and the Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), 5.

Clery does not agree with Moers's definition and adds that many woman writers would not fit her criteria and would be left behind. Furthermore, he acknowledges that both sexes can produce Male and Female Gothic.²⁹ According to Wright, who advocated a similar principle, the proper way to address it is "feminine, rather than female"³⁰; since it was written and read by both sexes. Wright even makes this term wider and argues that its origin can be traced to the Northanger Novels, which were written by men and women authors and which bring new aspects to the original Radcliffe's concept.³¹ Anne Williams weights the Female and Male Gothic from different angles and her interpretation is basically similar to Moers's.³² The critics rather agree upon the characterization as "a subversive genre which expressed women's fears and fantasies, their protests against the conditions of patriarchy."³³

Female Gothic, which here is understood as the definition provided by Moers, was able to develop, for women considered themselves to be a greater part of the public life and saw a rising opportunity to engage in public affairs.³⁴ Subsequently, as they endeavoured to gain equal rights and preoccupied themselves with pecuniary issues, these topics were often taken into account. In contemporary women's fiction, the question of money was a frequent one since the yearly income was an important number for women writers and it projected into the writings. If we consider one of the Northanger novels, *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, the heroine obtains £400 a year which was considered a sum to ensure quite a happy life.³⁵ Otherwise, the heroines of Female Gothic must endure all kinds of property distribution problems in order to finally gain what is rightfully theirs.

Moers's concept of Female Gothic is principally based on Ann Radcliffe's work. She goes even further and describes Radcliffe as a person who "firmly set the Gothic in one of the ways it would go ever after."³⁶ Among innovations which were plentifully used by Radcliffe, we can name the explained supernatural, involvement of quotes or

29. Punter and Byron, *Gothic*, 281.

30. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith, introduction to *Female Gothic: New Directions*, ed. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 8.

31. *Ibid.*, 7.

32. Wallace, *Female Gothic Histories*, 17.

33. Punter and Byron, *Gothic*, 280.

34. Robert Miles, "'Mother Radcliff': Ann Radcliffe and the Female Gothic," in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, ed. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 43–44.

35. Edward Copeland, *Women Writing about Money: Women's Fiction in England, 1790–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 29.

36. Lauren Fitzgerald, "Female Gothic and The Institutionalisation of Gothic Studies," in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, ed. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 18.

poems by other authors, description of landscape, inclusion of sublime and picturesque and a contrast between the medieval and the modern.³⁷ The sublime is based on sharing only a limited information and relying on the point of view of the character. Various hints about supernatural presence are rationally explained towards the end of the book. This technique, however, is not without a complaint and the most repeated reproof is that the reader's expectations are not fulfilled and the explanation is unnecessarily pathetic.³⁸ Nevertheless, Radcliffe's style inspired many writers such as Eliza Parsons or Regina Maria Roche and became an "identifiable school of writing."³⁹ A survey of the Female Gothic inspired by Radcliffe's writing habits follows.

Considering the main characters, they are women who endure all sorts of misfortunes, but in the end they overcome all the obstacles which makes them stronger. The troubles are caused by stereotypical figure of a tyrannical male. As stated above, property disputes are frequent. An absent mother represents an ideal which the heroine should achieve.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the search for a mother and for lineage in general enables the heroine to become psychologically and socially resilient.⁴¹ Contrary to this, Male Gothic is focused on the male protagonist and his fight with society represented by the law, the church or the family and social taboos are often involved. It has been defined in "oedipal terms"⁴² signifying the conflict between the hero and authority. The mystery is unexplained and tragic ending is common. In Female Gothic, on the other hand, happy endings are predominant.⁴³

As for education, Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is accomplished and has excellent schooling for her time, however, Radcliffe makes her characters too naive and sensitive which disrupts the value of education. Nevertheless, as Punter remarks "the Gothic heroine is a survivor"⁴⁴ and therefore the adversities always result in a benefit for the heroine. Last point, concerning the heroine and her involvement in romantic relationship can be expressed by Miles's claim that Radcliffe's heroine should be

37. Miles, "Mother Radcliff," 50.

38. Robert Miles, "Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis," in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 101. PDF e-book.

39. Clery, *Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, 108.

40. Wallace and Smith, introduction, 3–4.

41. Becker, *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fiction*, 47.

42. Miles, "Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis," 96.

43. Punter and Byron, *Gothic*, 278.

44. David S. Miall, "The Preceptor as Friend: Radcliffe's Psychology of the Gothic," in *Gothic Literature: A Gale Critical Companion*, ed. Jessica Bomarito (Gale, 2006), 242. PDF e-book.

considered a “Romantic with capital R”⁴⁵, since she enjoys the picturesque nature and chooses a life partner who can be trusted.

Additionally, Moers distinguishes two more kinds of Gothic within the category of Female Gothic itself, “‘travelling heroinism’ of Ann Radcliffe’s novels and the ‘birth myth’ of Frankenstein.”⁴⁶ Radcliffe’s Gothic bears the typical features that has already been mentioned, a castle, a woman in distress, other stereotypical figures and marvellous nature. However, Shelley’s Frankenstein bears features as the Male Gothic. The main character sees himself as a figure corrupted by the society and chooses to adapt some extreme and violent measures to get his revenge.⁴⁷

1.4 Minerva Press

The growth of Gothic literature was, besides the social changes mentioned in the previous chapters, enabled by a new form of distributing books. William Lane of the Minerva Press is a man who has a fair share in this novelty.

Lane set up a shop in 1775 and by 1784 had his own printing business, becoming co-proprietor of the *Star* and *Evening Advertiser* a few years later. The *Advertiser* offered marketing and copy services. In 1790, the name Minerva Press was added to mark a new launch of the department. This was accompanied by advertisements encouraging people to submit their manuscripts “with the promise of excellent printing and perfect respectability.”⁴⁸ Another benefit was a possibility to obtain a library from the Minerva warehouse together with catalogue and instructions on how to manage a successful library.⁴⁹

Therefore, Lane established a network of circulating libraries and used libraries to promote the Minerva books. They were often attached to Assembly rooms to attract readership.⁵⁰ Continually, as the market grew, overviews of new publications were regularly issued, advertisements were placed at the end of novels to attract more readers or the book itself mentioned another book of Minerva. However, the name Minerva Press was a great advantage itself. There is the element of the Goddess of Wisdom on one hand, and the female element, which appealed to the readership that was

45. Miles, “Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis,” 98.

46. Wallace and Smith, introduction, 2.

47. Ibid.

48. Clery, *Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, 136.

49. Ibid.

50. Cheryl A. Wilson, *Fashioning the Silver Fork Novel* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 17.

predominantly female, on the other. The logo appeared on bills and materials issued by Minerva, creating a “unified corporate style.”⁵¹

Minerva Press preferred to publish the books anonymously or under pseudonyms. Nevertheless, there was a group of top-selling authors whose names were real. In 1798, among the most favourite authors there were Regina Maria Roche, Eliza Parsons, Mary Meeke, Isabella Kelly or Anna Maria McKenzie. Since Minerva published largely supernatural fiction and there were even unskilled authors, the following generation of Romantic writers “made its name synonymous with trash.”⁵² Many criticised even the idea of circulating libraries, naming them “a compact of sensationalism, sentimentality, and salaciousness.”⁵³ Despite the quality being questionable, Lane participated in a process of innovation and was capable to capitalize on the ongoing popularity of Gothic. A third of his output was Gothic literature, and in the catalogue there were 10,000 titles in 1790.⁵⁴

1.5 Northanger “Horrid” Novels

Northanger Abbey is concerned with novel reading, the characters discuss novels, particularly the Gothic ones. This is a reflection of the Austen’s family and their fancy in literature.⁵⁵ Catherine is particularly interested in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Isabella proposes a few other titles, which she intends to read. Catherine’s response “are you sure they are all horrid?”⁵⁶ demonstrates popularity of Gothic literature. The label “horrid” in the context means that the literature “produces fright for the reader and the characters . . . Catherine uses it to describe the thrill and fright of the amplified emotions, dark characters, and chilling scenes of Gothic novels.”⁵⁷

As stated in the previous chapters, Gothic literature was in the centre of attention during the period in which *Northanger Abbey* was written. Female writers were encouraged to publish their writings, to this process William Lane contributed

51. Clery, *Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, 137.

52. Ibid.

53. Carol Margaret Davison, *Gothic Literature 1764-1824* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), 109.

54. Ibid., 108.

55. Angela Wright, “Disturbing the Female Gothic: An Excavation of the Northanger Novels,” in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, ed. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 62.

56. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Project Gutenberg, 1994), Kindle edition, chap. 6, accessed March 27, 2017, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/121

57. Karalyn Skinner, “‘Horrid’ Gothicism: Austen’s Northanger Abbey,” *The Explicator* 71 (2013): 229–231, accessed April 4, 2017, doi: 10.1080/00144940.2013.812609.

tremendously. These works were largely repetitive, so is Isabella's list of novels. The names of the authors are not mentioned in the book and the very existence of the Northanger Novels was questioned. A note by John Louis Haney first suggests that they might actually exist. He wrote that "it might be supposed that Miss Austen . . . invented the suggestive titles of contemporary romances. As a matter of fact, they were all actual romances which appeared at London between 1793 – 1798."⁵⁸ Moreover, he provided further information on the titles as to where to find the contemporary reviews.

Michael Sadleir, however, is the person who was interested in the titles more. In *A Footnote to Jane Austen* he states that the choice of titles is not random and that they create a compact whole to show different types of stories. He even divides the titles into several groups. *Clermont* by Regina Maria Roche is a typical romance, *The Castle of Wolfenbach* and *The Mysterious Warning* by Eliza Parsons together with *The Orphan of the Rhine* by Eleanor Sleath and *The Midnight Bell* by Francis Lathom are terror novels which pretend to be of German origin and *The Necromancer* is translated from German by Peter Teuthold. *Horrid Mysteries* by Peter Will is quite different, it pretends to be an autobiography. Sadleir also showed that all the books except *The Midnight Bell* were published by Minerva Press.⁵⁹

The following chapter deals with the analysis of Northanger "horrid" novels. Nevertheless, since the scope is to examine English Female Gothic fiction, *The Midnight Bell*, *The Necromancer* and *Horrid Mysteries* are not analysed, for they do not fit these requirements. They are written by men and in case of the two latter novels, of German origin. The basic premise for this thesis is that Female Gothic is written by women and it is basically a literature of terror. Therefore the second chapter will provide analysis to support this claim.

58. John Louis Haney, "Northanger Abbey," *Modern Language Notes* 16 (1901): 223.

59. Michael Sadleir, "The Northanger Novels: A Footnote to Jane Austen," *The English Association* 68 (1927): 9–10.

2 Gothic Elements in The Northanger “Horrid” Novels

The scope of this chapter is to introduce selected Gothic novels in order to analyse Gothic elements. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is presented first, since it is an exemplary novel regarded as a model of Female Gothic literature. Furthermore, four Northanger novels are compared to this model analysis to show whether it is possible to label them as copies of Radcliffe. The analysis focuses on several elements: setting, nature, supernatural, suspense and characters.

2.1 The Mysteries of Udolpho

Ann Radcliffe published *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794. Emily St. Aubert, a young girl from formerly wealthy family, loses her mother and accompanies her father on a trip around France. There she meets Valancourt who immediately wins her sympathies. Soon after, Emily’s father dies and she has to live with his sister, Madame Cheron. However, her aunt is under the influence of Montoni, whom she eventually marries, and he spoils the wedding of Emily and Valancourt. Montoni’s true nature is revealed after moving to Italy and when his plan to sell Emily to Count Morano fails, he brings her and Madame Cheron to the castle of Udolpho. The castle is a scary place and Madame Cheron dies, leaving Emily a sole heir to her property which Montoni tries to gain by threatening her.

Emily manages to escape with the help of loyal servants, they embark on a boat back to France and arrive at the castle where her father passed away. The mistress of the castle died 18 years ago under suspicious circumstances. Emily is particularly interested in this case, since the lady’s name appeared in her father’s papers and Emily is told she looked exactly like her. Later it is revealed that she was her father’s sister and she was poisoned by the lady of Udolpho. Valancourt arrives, but he has been in prison for gambling, therefore his future with Emily is impossible. However, the affair is explained and Valancourt marries Emily, who gained possession of the family estates.

2.1.1 Gothic Elements in The Mysteries of Udolpho

Although *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is not formally one of the “horrid” novels, Ann Radcliffe is a leading figure in early Female Gothic literature and the novel is a substantial one for the analysis of *Northanger Abbey*. Radcliffe’s contribution is described in chapter 1 and since she influenced all the authors of the Northanger novels,

including Jane Austen herself, the analysis of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is presented to show a model of contemporary Gothic fiction and serves as a ground for demonstrating the Gothic elements in the “horrid” novels.

Radcliffe set the novel in 1584 in the catholic Europe, the characters travel between Italy and France. There are detailed descriptions of nature, especially in the first half of the book, as Emily travels accompanied by her father and later by Madame Cheron and Montoni. However, the extensive descriptions may cause inattention.

Consequently, the marvellous nature often inspires Emily to compose a poem:

But when she opened her casement, looked out upon the woods, bright with the morning sun, and inspired the pure air, her mind was soothed. The scene was filled with that cheering freshness which seems to breathe the very spirit of health, and she heard only sweet and picturesque sounds, if such an expression may be allowed—the martin-bell of a distant convent, the faint murmur of the sea waves, the song of birds, and the far-off low of cattle which she saw coming slowly on between the trunks of the trees. Struck with the circumstances of imagery around her . . . her ideas arranged themselves in the following lines.⁶⁰

Moreover, the character’s names correspond with the geographical setting, in this case they are of French and Italian origin.

Apart from the portrayal of nature, the focus is on the depiction of architecture. There are Emily’s birth house, her aunt's house, Venetian villa and a convent which do not show any significance as for the supernatural elements. Nevertheless, the desire for mystery is satisfied by presumably haunted Castle of Udolpho and Château-le-Blanc. Suspicious deaths, strange appearances and noises, terrifying artefacts and music echoing through the walls all give the characters, as well as the reader, a reason to believe that there is a supernatural presence. Furthermore, hidden passages, staircases, dungeons and tormenting rooms evoke terror. Because of the heightened emotions, the characters often faint. Radcliffe uses these features to create and maintain suspense throughout a significant part of the story.

The iconic passage with a veiled object is mentioned even in *Northanger Abbey*: “When she recovered her recollection, the remembrance of what she had seen had nearly deprived her of it a second time . . . horror occupied her mind.”⁶¹ Emily lifted the veil and saw something hideous, however, what it was is not revealed until the end of the book.

60. Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Di Lernia Publishers), chap. VII, vol. 1, Kindle edition.

61. *Ibid.*, chap. VI, vol. 2.

As for Udolpho, rampart is a place connected with mysterious events:

The figure came opposite to her casement. . . she had not heard even a footfall; and the solemnity of this silence, with the mysterious form she saw, subdued her spirits . . . she observed the figure start away, and glide down the rampart . . . scarcely doubting that she had witnessed a supernatural appearance.⁶²

At Château-le-Blanc, the supernatural is concentrated in the rooms of a suddenly deceased former lady. For Emily, the suspense is even more intense, since there are hints that the lady is somehow connected to her.

Therefore, Emily tries to gain information about the lady by visiting the particular part of the Château:

Emily . . . thought she saw something glide along into the obscurer part of the room . . . the edge of the white pillow only appeared above the blackness of the pall . . . she fancied she saw it move . . . and in the next moment the apparition of a human countenance rose above it.⁶³

A human-like figure is visible in the room that was supposed to be sealed for nearly 20 years. Later on, one servant disappears after spending the night there. Radcliffe thus progressively builds the atmosphere of mystery by sharing only pieces of information. Accordingly, the limited knowledge of certain incidents forces the characters and the reader to use a great deal of imagination. However, towards the end of the book, Radcliffe revises all the previous events and provides additional information resulting in the mysteries being rationally explained. Therefore, the term explained supernatural is used for this process.

I will briefly clarify the above mentioned excerpts. The object under the veil was a wax figure resembling a corpse, strange noises and appearances at Udolpho were made by a servant and the figure in the lady's room was one of the pirates who used the abandoned part of the building and a nearby cave to hide their bounty. The mystery based on suggestions that St. Aubert's had a relationship with the lady of the Château was explained to be a family bond, since they were siblings. Even though there were possible doubts concerning Emily's origin, this theme was not as prominent as in the Northanger "horrid" novels, where the heroine's quest is often motivated by unknown family ties.

62. Ibid., chap. II, vol. 3.

63. Ibid., chap. IV, vol. 4.

Apart from the elements of nature and edifices, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* portrays a variety of characters. Their analysis will form a base which will be used for discussing other novels. First of all, there are minor characters like the silly comical servant Annette. Often she exaggerates, gossips and worries excessively: “What a wild lonely place this is, ma’am! . . . I can almost believe in giants again, and such-like, for this is just like one of their castles . . . I shall see fairies too hopping about in the great old hall.”⁶⁴ Moreover, there are nuns who comfort Emily and the character of an absent mother. Although Emily did not grow up without a mother, her sudden death is a traumatic experience and basically symbolizes an impulse for further development of the story.

However, the most important Gothic characters are the tyrannical male and the female in distress. Montoni pretends to be a wealthy Italian nobleman with perfect manners and imposes himself on Madame Cheron. His true nature is revealed, for he is a gambler in debt and a leader of condottieri, a group of bandits. Montoni’s primary goal is to gain Madame’s Cheron property. It is necessary to state that he does not actually use violence upon Madame Cheron or Emily, his techniques involve intimidation and threatening: “If you have a just opinion of the subject in question, you shall be allowed a safe conveyance to France . . . if you are so unhappy as to be misled by the late assertion of the signora, you shall remain my prisoner till you are convinced of your error.”⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Montoni is undoubtedly the villain of the story and therefore he eventually pays for his crimes.

Emily and her aunt are the women in distress, but only Emily is the traditional Gothic heroine. Madame Cheron cannot deal with Montoni’s threats and spiteful actions, she becomes ill and ultimately dies. Emily, on the other hand, shows mental strength and overcomes her fear in order to search the dungeons and eventually flees from the castle. Although she signs her property over to Montoni after he mentions the possibility of showing her room to his friends, the minute she is safe, Emily takes action to regain what is rightfully hers. In the end, Emily gains possession of the family estates and becomes an independent woman.

Furthermore, there is one character who does not appear to be typically Gothic. Signora Laurentini di Udolpho is a female villain. Because of jealousy she leaves everything behind to pursue a man, however, after being rejected she poisons his wife,

64. *Ibid.*, chap. V, vol. 2.

65. *Ibid.*, chap. V, vol. 3.

the lady of Château-le-Blanc. Consequently, Signora Laurentini shares the fate of many Gothic villains, she enters a convent and dies.

The above mentioned analysis of Gothic elements in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* focuses on geographical setting, various edifices and their function in the story. Moreover, the process of creating suspense and the description of the characters is provided. Similar elements will be examined in the Northanger “horrid” novels.

2.2 The Castle of Wolfenbach

The Castle of Wolfenbach by Eliza Parsons was published in 1793. Matilda flees from her uncle, Mr. Weimar, who intended to marry her, and arrives at the haunted castle of Wolfenbach. There she discovers imprisoned Countess Victoria. Before Victoria can narrate her story, she is kidnapped and believed to be dead. Matilda leaves in a hurry and she is kindly received in Paris by Victoria’s sister where she even finds a soulmate, Count de Bouville. However, Mr. Weimar appears and tells Matilda that her origin is unknown, since she was left on his property as a child. He allows her to go to England, but she must not get engaged. In England, they encounter Victoria, who managed to escape with the help of Lord Delby. The Countess further informs them that she gave birth to a boy 18 years ago and she wants to find him.

Tormented by her unknown origin, Matilda decides to enter the convent. She is kidnapped by Mr. Weimar and they accidentally embark on a pirate ship which takes them to Tunis where Mr. Weimar reveals Matilda’s story. She is of noble origin, he is her uncle but he killed her father and switched her with a dead disfigured baby. Matilda immediately goes to Italy to seek her mother. Meanwhile, the Countess of Wolfenbach arrives in Vienna and meets her son. In the end, Matilda can marry the Count de Bouville and they decide to live in France together with her mother. The Count of Wolfenbach is dead, therefore Victoria inherits his property and agrees to marry Lord Delby who cares deeply about her.

Although the exact period when the novel is set is not revealed, from the content it is possible to estimate that the time setting is very similar to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, therefore distant past approximately at the end of the 16th century. The geographical setting, on the other hand, is quite diverse. Countries like France, Germany, Austria, England, Italy, Switzerland and Tunis are all part of the story, consequently, corresponding names of predominantly French and German origin are

used. However, the description of nature is significantly absent, for the story is developed entirely through dialogue.

As the title of the book suggests, the plot is built around a castle, even though the element of castle is relevant only at the beginning of the story. Matilda is advised not to stay at Wolfenbach since it is believed to be haunted.

This warning proves to be true on the first night of her stay:

She saw a light glide by from the opposite wing, which her room fronted, and which Bertha had informed her was particularly haunted . . . about twelve o'clock she heard plainly a clanking of chains, which was followed by two or three heavy groans . . . soon after she heard a violent noise, like two or three doors clapping to with great force.⁶⁶

Parsons uses the technique of explained supernatural, nevertheless, the mystery is clarified the following day. Thus, it is not used to create and maintain suspense as in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The haunting is fake to keep people from examining the castle and discovering the Countess. The potential of incorporating the element of architecture is wasted, because no other edifice with eerie presence is depicted.

Therefore, the main mystery is not associated with the supernatural, but with the question of Matilda's origin and with the fate of the Countess of Wolfenbach. Consequently, there is a duality of characters. Mr. Weimar and the Count of Wolfenbach are cruel tyrants who have committed murder.

Furthermore, their motive is identical, it is jealousy. Mr. Weimar envies his brother who was always the favourite son and the Count cannot stand another man trying to communicate with his wife:

A violent noise was heard on the stairs . . . and in a moment the door was burst open; the Count and his man appeared, dragging in the Chevalier, with his mouth bound, his hands tied, and every mark of cruel treatment . . . he was then dragged into the closet opposite to where I sat, and immediately repeated stabs were given with a short dagger, by the Count, through several parts of his body.⁶⁷

The description of the brutal act itself is yet another difference from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which relies on suggestion more than on the actual portrayal of wrongdoings. What is typically Gothic, however, is the fate of these male characters. The Count dies and Mr. Weimar enters a convent to redeem himself.

66. Eliza Parsons, *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, (Di Lernia Publishers), Kindle edition.

67. Ibid.

Two women in peril are counterparts of the villains. Matilda suffers from lack of information about her origin, which prevents her from being a full part of the society, even though she is relatively free and under the protection of her beneficiaries.

Therefore, she eventually enters a convent. The Countess Victoria, on the other hand, is literally kept away from the society, since she is imprisoned by her husband.

Nevertheless, both of them make peace with the male tyrants and gain what is rightfully theirs. Moreover, they are free to marry according to their wish, Matilda is reconciled with her mother and Victoria with her son.

2.3 The Orphan of the Rhine

The Orphan of the Rhine by Eleanor Sleath was published in 1798. Julie de Rubine is an orphan who marries the Marchese de Montferrat. After she gives birth to Enrico, the Marchese tells her that the marriage is not valid. A few years later, he asks her to take care of an infant girl, use a false name and never ask why. In return, he will secure Enrico. Julie agrees and on her way to a new home she helps a man, La Roque.

The girl is named Laurette and they live in the castle of Elfinbach for nearly 18 years. Enrico and Laurette have feelings for each other, but Julie fears they might be related through the Marchese. One day, Julie finds La Roque who was imprisoned by the Marchese. She releases him, but loses her bracelet, therefore the Marchese learns about her deed, arranges her abduction and commands Laurette to go live with him. Before her departure, a monk approaches Laurette and tells her that she should not trust the Marchese and gives her a picture of her mother. The Marchese soon proposes marriage to Laurette. She refuses and overhears him talking about getting rid of her, the next day she is taken away. Enrico searches for Laurette and finds her in a ruined edifice. La Roque arrives bringing good news about Julie who is in a near convent and they decide to force the Marchese to confess his crimes and acknowledge Enrico as his son. The Marchese does that on his death bed, Julie and Enrico inherit everything. Consequently, Laurette is revealed to be the heir of the Conte della Caro, who was killed by the Marchese. Enrico and Laurette are married and live together at the castle of Elfinbach.

Similarly to previously analysed novel, *The Orphan of the Rhine* is set in the 16th century. As for the geography, the majority of events takes place in German speaking countries. However, France and Italy are involved as well. Even though the novel is not entirely dependent on dialogues like *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, there is a significant

decline in the description of nature, compared to Radcliffe. If nature is mentioned, it is only a short characterization to complete the knowledge of the scene.

Additionally, Sleath differs from Radcliffe in the conception of suspense. There is no major supernatural element, the mystery is not built around a ghost or inexplicable noises. There is a strange figure in the chapel: “by the expiring gleam of lamp, a tall white figure, who having emerged slowly from behind one of the gigantic statues at the remotest part of the building, glided into an obscure corner.”⁶⁸ However, this figure was mentioned only briefly, therefore no mysterious storyline could really developed around it. Consequently, the suspense lies in the unknown origin of the heroine, Laurette, similarly as in *The Castle of Wolfenbach*. Julie has theories about it which prove to be wrong. There are hints, like the monk who approached Laurette, but full story is revealed at the very end of the book. The Marchese is the villain of the story, as suspected, and his actions were motivated by avarice.

On the whole, Julie and Laurette are both Gothic heroines who are oppressed by the Marchese. He suffers the fate of many Gothic villains and dies, whereupon the heroines acquire a substantial fortune. Nevertheless, the novel contains several displaced narratives. La Roque, Laurette’s grandfather or the Abbess all narrate their story and within these other Gothic characters can be found. What is unique is the fact that there are two displaced narratives focused on Julie, who is the heroine of the whole novel. Because of this plot fragmentation, the story of Laurette and Enrico is developed inadequately.

2.4 Clermont

Regina Maria Roche published *Clermont* in 1798. Madeline lives with her father Clermont in seclusion when she meets De Sevignie. They fall in love but her father does not support this relationship and De Sevignie leaves. Afterwards, an old friend of Clermont, the Countess de Merville, arrives at their cottage and takes Madeline to her castle. However, the Countess and her servant are murdered and Madeline is sent back home. She spends the night at a nearby castle and when the Count de Montmorenci sees a picture of her father, he immediately commands him to visit the castle. It is revealed that Clermont is his son, however, never acknowledged and since the rightful heir, Philippe, is dead, the Count wants to accept Clermont and Madeline.

68. Eleanor Sleath, *The Orphan of the Rhine* (Di Lernia Publishers), chap. V, vol. 2, Kindle edition.

Clermont finally shares his story, he was raised with the Countess de Merville and he was close with Philippe who introduced him to Geraldine. Philippe and Geraldine died very early after Clermont married her, therefore he decided to live in the cottage and raise Madeline himself. Soon after, Madeline is blackmailed by D'Alembert after refusing a marriage proposal and Clermont has to reveal the rest of his story. He was tricked into killing Phillippe. They create a plan to flee, but they are betrayed and captured. Meanwhile, Phillippe is found alive and he discovers that De Sevignie is his son. They meet with the Count de Montmorenci and rescue Clermont and Madeline, who marries De Sevignie.

So far, the analysed Gothic novels have clearly followed the rule that orders to set the story in the distant past. However, *Clermont* breaks this rule and the events take place in more recent past, around 1740. There is not a great variety regarding geography, the majority of the novel is set in France and Italy. Roche, on the other hand, follows Radcliffe's example as for the description of nature: "The landscape seen through the intervening trees which rose before it never satiated her eye; upon every view some new beauty, some new charm, if possible more lovely than the last, was discovered by her."⁶⁹

Otherwise, not many elements can be related to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. There are hints about castles which are haunted, but never actually demonstrated. The mystery lies in the murders of two women and the enigmatic Clermont who refuses to disclose his story. Therefore, not even the characters can be generalized as typically Gothic. Madeline is the central character, however, Clermont suffers the major injustice. More unusual is the fact that the D'Alemberts are the villains, but they appear only as minor characters for a short period of time and their actions are described through displaced narratives. Consequently, some of the narratives are presented without the actual knowledge that D'Alembert is the wrongdoer, which is explained at the end of the novel. Moreover, Roche introduces a great variety of ordinary people who create comic relief, provide back story or serve the main characters.

2.5 The Mysterious Warning

Another novel by Eliza Parsons, *The Mysterious Warning*, was published in 1796. There is a great variety of characters and stories, however, Ferdinand is the main character.

69. Regina Maria Roche, *Clermont*, (Di Lernia Publishers), chap. II, vol. 1, Kindle edition.

Once a favourite son is disinherited by his father for marrying a woman of low birth, Claudina. After the father's death, Ferdinand's brother, Rhodophil, promises to give him half of his fortune. Claudina and their children move to the castle, Ferdinand joins the army to put some money aside, but upon his return he discovers that Claudina with their daughter are in a convent.

Ferdinand leaves the brother's castle and tries to find Claudina. He saves a married couple who has been held captive by a vengeful man. The woman enters a convent and her husband, the Count M***, becomes Ferdinand's best friend. They fight in the army and are taken prisoners by the Turks, where they meet a German woman. She is Ferdinand's half-sister. However, she turns out to be one of the villains. Shortly after their return from Turkey, Ferdinand receives a letter from his dying brother. On his way to his castle he is shot, but manages to survive. His brother reveals that their father forgave Ferdinand and left him some money, but Rhodophil, who has always been jealous of Ferdinand, destroyed the will. Since Claudina died in the convent, Ferdinand remarries.

The Mysterious Warning does not fully fit the concept of Female Gothic which was introduced in chapter 1. First of all, the events take place in the first half of the 18th century, predominantly in Germany and Austria, but there is a part describing imprisonment in Turkey. Despite the fact that the characters travel a lot, the description of nature is minimal.

Moreover, there are only two events which signify supernatural presence. As the title suggests, one of them is a mysterious voice echoing in the chamber of Ferdinand's dead father: "the groan was not a chimera, not the illusion of fancy . . . overcome with every sensation that terror, panting expectation, and trembling apprehension, could inspire . . . a low and hollow voice pronounced the words 'Pardon and peace!'"⁷⁰ Later, the mystery is explained. It was a servant hidden in a closet. Ferdinand observes another supernatural presence on his travels which is, however, produced by a group of bandits.

Nevertheless, the most striking difference from the traditional view of Female Gothic is the overall conception of the novel and selection of characters. *The Mysterious Warning* contains many displaced narratives, often the story is developed through letters. There is no woman who could be regarded as the main heroine, but several women who each have their narrative. Claudina, Eugenia and Louisa are Gothic

70. Eliza Parsons, *The Mysterious Warning*, (Di Lernia Publishers), chap. II, vol. 1, Kindle edition.

heroines, consequently, their stories have three different villains. Above it stands the main character of the whole novel, Ferdinand. Therefore, this is the only novel of the presented pieces of writing to have a male hero as the lead character. However, his difficulties are similar to the ones experienced by a typical Female Gothic heroine. He suffers injustice because of a jealous brother, but eventually marries a girl he loves.

Eliza Parsons chose this variety of stories to demonstrate problems which she mentions at the very end of the novel:

A parent has an undoubted right to a negative voice, to persuade, to reason and direct a young and unexperienced mind; but to force a child to the altar, from motives of ambition, interest, or to gratify any selfish passions . . . lays foundation for indifference, and neglect of the domestic duties, which terminates in folly, vice, and the ruin of all social happiness . . . from the characters of Rhodophil and Fatima, we may trace the progression of vice, and its fatal termination!⁷¹

Emphasis is placed on the parent-child relationship, almost every conflict in *The Mysterious Warning* results from a parent trying to control his child. Therefore, the message of the novel underlined by the moral presented above is that this relationship must not be unhealthy.

2.6 Conclusion

The analysis of the Northanger novels shows that they cannot be treated as mere copies of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. To a certain extent, there are similarities, however, they all belong to the same genre therefore absolute uniqueness is impossible. Furthermore, *The Castle of Wolfenbach* was published before Radcliffe's work.

Nevertheless, the setting varies from the 16th to 18th century, the geographical setting is diverse as well. None of the books provides description of nature nearly as detailed as *The Mysteries of Udolpho* does. Also, none of them builds suspense on Gothic architecture. More frequent are themes like unknown origin or property disputes. Admittedly, they were mentioned by Radcliffe, but works like *Clermont* or *The Castle of Wolfenbach* use the theme of unknown origin better. *The Mysterious Warning*, on the other hand, is nicely built on initial pecuniary issues of the main character who is, furthermore, a man. The following chapter is focused on *Northanger Abbey*.

71. Ibid., chap. X , vol. 4.

3 Northanger Abbey and the Gothic

3.1 Process of Creation and Style of Writing

It is presumed that Austen wrote the first draft of *Northanger Abbey* in 1798 and the title was *Susan*. However, Emden suggests that the novel was actually composed in two stages. The first part describes Catherine's stay in Bath and can be seen as a satire of sentimental novel, the second is set at Northanger Abbey and represents Gothic passages. Therefore, Emden argues that Austen wrote the first half in 1794 as a part of her juvenilia. To prove this claim he points out the similarities in characters and in style of writing. The Gothic part, on the other hand, was added in 1798. Additionally, Catherine's character shows volatility. The Catherine from Bath would not violate good manners and would not jeopardize her good relationship with the Tilneys by breaking into the mother's room.⁷² Emden presents some good arguments to support his theory, therefore I rather agree with it. There certainly are passages which do not entirely fit the rest of the text. But the most obvious contradictions I see in Catherine, as her character was somewhat "abused" to serve the purpose of parody.

Nevertheless, Austen revised the novel in 1803 and sold it for publication. The publisher refused to print it. It was probably due to the popularity of Gothic literature, which was immense, and he expected criticism. Later, the heroine's name was changed into Catherine and therefore the title of the book was altered as well. The book was published posthumously by her brother.

As many scholars emphasize, the novel's composition is relatively experimental and inconsistent. Glock argues that the novel is not sufficiently revised and compares it to *Love and Friendship* from juvenilia. Consequently, the concept of *Northanger Abbey* is regarded as Austen's attempt to find her own style. Commonly it is described as a parody of Gothic novel or rather burlesque of the Gothic and sentimental fiction. Nowak supports the view of *Northanger Abbey* being an experimental work and claims that this novel "actually extends beyond a simple parody; it offers a unique insight regarding her development into a mature writer."⁷³

72. Cecil S. Emden, "The Composition of Northanger Abbey," *The Review of English Studies* 19 (1968): 279–281.

73. Tenille Nowak, "The Orphan in the Abbey: Eleanor Sleath's Influence on Jane Austen's Composition of Northanger Abbey," *Studies in Gothic Fiction* 2 (2011): 39, accessed April 10, 2017, <http://studyingothicfiction.weebly.com/>

The popularity of Gothic literature at the end of the 18th century has been described in chapter 1. Additionally, the Austen family is known to have enjoyed reading. Therefore, Austen had access to a great variety of books in order to choose the novels she would include in *Northanger Abbey*. Michael Sadleir claims that this selection is purposeful. I support this statement since the analysis of “horrid” novels indicates that Austen did not select them randomly. Furthermore, I presume that she knew the novels and not only mentioned them in her book, but was inspired by them while writing it.

It is precisely for the purpose of creating a parody that the knowledge of more than only Radcliffe’s work is necessary. The analysis provided in chapter 2 proves that “horrid” novels cannot be regarded as mere automatic copies of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. However, since it is mentioned in the novel several times, most scholars acknowledge the largest influence of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* on *Northanger Abbey*. Nevertheless, I agree with Nowak’s statement that “by arbitrarily assigning responsibility for all Gothic aspects to *Udolpho*, the complete appreciation of its true depth and relationship with the Gothic is limited.”⁷⁴ Therefore, Nowak is interested in the comparison of *Northanger Abbey* and *The Orphan of the Rhine* and demonstrates on several examples that this selection was not random at all. For example, the part when Henry talks about the possible mysteries which Catherine will experience at the Abbey and he mentions Dorothy. Nowak emphasizes that the main female servant in Sleath’s novel was called Dorothée.⁷⁵

This chapter is focused on particular Gothic elements and the way Austen used them in *Northanger Abbey*. The main question is whether this novel can be seen purely as a parody of the Gothic. Consequently, the elements vary throughout the novel, they are traditionally Gothic or exactly opposite and the analysis below shows to which extent this approach results in mockery on the Gothic. Moreover, the character of Catherine deserves special attention for the Gothic is connected to the process of her development from a naïve child into a mature woman.

Glock talks about one function of the parody which is:

To suggest that romantic and sentimental type of heroine is no longer relevant for the nineteenth century . . . Catherine must learn a different kind of heroism. She represents the modern world of plain fancy, a world in which common sense

74. Ibid., 41.

75. Ibid., 44.

and since intention, not sentimental gestures and exaggerated artifice, must be allowed to define the essential quality of modern life.⁷⁶

Thus, the comparison of typical Gothic heroine and Catherine will be provided as one of the key elements in the categorization of the novel as parody or not.

3.2 Characters

Considering the typical Gothic characters, *Northanger Abbey* presents them all, although altered for the purpose of creating a parody. There is a heroine, a hero and a villain. However, there are no ordinary people or servants to provide comic relief or to comment on the events.

Catherine Morland is the main character. The very first sentence of the novel is: “No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine.”⁷⁷ And the description continues with:

Morlands . . . were in general very plain, and Catherine, for many years of her life, as plain as any . . . and not less unpropitious for heroism seemed her mind . . . she had no taste for a garden . . . she never could learn or understand anything before she was taught; and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid.⁷⁸

Therefore, the initial statement which Austen wants to communicate to her reader is that Catherine, in her infancy, was hardly a heroine. Consequently, this statement has two conclusions, either that she is going to become one or that she never will be. A few paragraphs later, the first option proves to be correct, since Austen suggests that Catherine will undergo a change and will eventually become a heroine despite the initial lack of necessary traits: “but from fifteen to seventeen she was in training for a heroine; she read all such works as heroines must read to supply their memories with those quotations.”⁷⁹

Furthermore, this introduction puts Catherine in opposition with typical Gothic heroine and Austen does that deliberately by pointing out these characteristics. All the

76. Waldo S. Glock, “Catherine Morland’s Gothic Delusions: A Defense of ‘Northanger Abbey,’” *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 32 (1978): 37.

77. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Project Gutenberg, 1994), Kindle edition, chap. 1, accessed March 27, 2017, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/121

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

characters from the “horrid” novels were presented as exceptionally intelligent young girls admiring nature with special talent for composing sonnets, playing instrument and other abilities. Catherine, on the other hand, is an absolute opposite of Madeline of *Clermont*, about whom her father claims that: “one of his chief sources of pleasure was derived from the culture of his daughter’s mind . . . a companion well qualified to diversify his lonely hours . . . she possessed an exquisite taste for drawing and music.”⁸⁰

Usually, the heroine of previously analysed books suffers, the emotions are heightened and she often faints and cries and then contemplates about her future. Catherine’s behaviour shows yet another opposition. She experiences typically Gothic moods, like: “And lucky may she think herself, if she get another good night’s rest in the course of the next three months.”⁸¹ Another time she behaves perfectly calm.

Moreover, I would like to comment on the element of imprisonment, which is common in Gothic literature. Catherine, in a certain way, is imprisoned as well. General Tilney controls everything in the house. Therefore, physical imprisonment takes the form of prohibited places at the Abbey and psychical imprisonment lies in the uneasiness that General’s presence causes. Furthermore, neither the concept of psychical imprisonment is omitted in the “horrid” novels. In *The Orphan of the Rhine* Laurette has to spent time with the Marchese. Even though he behaves like a charming man, there is an inexplicable unpleasant feeling she has when near him.

Additionally, I want to mention another important factor in the analysis of the main heroine and that is her development. In the previous chapter, it has already been determined that the novel is commonly divided into two parts. The time Catherine spends in Bath shows her like a naïve child. It is only by meeting people like Henry and the Thorpes that she begins to understand the world a little more. Doody makes an interesting point about Catherine and that is the fact she does not understand figures of speech, she cannot make puns or comparisons, therefore the most of her life is just an imitation of others. As an example, Doody suggests the ride with John Thorpe, when Catherine only echoed everything he said.⁸² Consequently, Glock argues that after arriving at the Abbey, she changes into typically Gothic heroine and in the end she is

80. Roche, *Clermont*, chap. I, vol. 1.

81. Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, chap. 11.

82. Margaret Anne Doody, “Turns of Speech and Figures of Mind,” in *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 167–170.

matured and she knows that happiness does not lie in fantasy, but in ordinary life with Henry.⁸³

Henry Tilney is presented as the hero of the story. Nevertheless, before he is introduced, Austen emphasizes that Catherine has never really met a suitable young man:

She had reached the age of seventeen . . . without having inspired one real passion, without having excited even any admiration but what was very moderate and very transient . . . There was not one lord in the neighbourhood; no – not even a baronet. There was not one family among their acquaintance who had reared and supported a boy accidentally found at their door – not one young man whose origin was unknown.⁸⁴

Therefore, Austen creates an exaggerated description of a Gothic hero. However, this description does depict the real Gothic hero, which can be demonstrated on *The Orphan of the Rhine*. In this novel, the hero grows up with the heroine without being of noble origin or having an unknown past. When Henry Tilney is introduced, he is a counterpart of the Gothic hero. Furthermore, the Gothic hero should be extraordinarily handsome and usually a romantic soul interested in nature. Henry is described to have “a pleasing countenance, a very intelligent and lively eye, and, if not quite handsome, was very near it.”⁸⁵ Additionally, Henry has one important role in the story. He attempts to educate Catherine, to pull her from the imaginary world created by Gothic literature.

The villain of the story, considered as for his effort to spoil the relationship of Catherine and Henry, is John Thorpe. He is present only for a limited time, though. And he certainly does not impress Catherine, who finds him “quite disagreeable”.⁸⁶ John Thorpe is a figure similar to young D’Alembert in *Clermont*. He also tries to win the heroine’s affection, harms her in the process but is not part of the story for more than a half of the novel.

Nevertheless, I see General Tilney as the main villain of the story. His motivation is similar to many Gothic villains, which is a desire for property. Montoni, the Marchese de Montferrat or the D’Alemberts, all of them oppress the heroine because of property which they cannot obtain. It is necessary to admit that General

83. Glock, “Catherine Morland’s Gothic Delusions: A Defense of ‘Northanger Abbey,’” 38.

84. Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, chap. 1.

85. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

86. *Ibid.*, chap. 9.

Tilney actually does not commit any serious offence, apart from banishing Catherine from the Abbey after discovering that she is not the heir to the Allens. However, what he has in common with the above mentioned villains, is the fierce temper which is hidden to deceive the heroine. But his temper is fully revealed when things do not go as planned.

3.3 Setting

As the analysis of the “horrid” novels shows, the setting is usually in distant past. Austen, on the other hand, set the novel in her time. This enabled her to create a realistic portrayal of contemporary society. Consequently, the geographical setting deviates from the standard model of the 18th century Gothic literature as well. Writers like Radcliffe and Parsons preferred exotic countries like Italy, France, incorporating also places like Turkey or Tunis. Sleath and Roche chose the Germanic countries. Austen abandons this principle and the novel is set in England:

Charming as were all Mrs. Radcliffe’s works, and charming even as were the works of all her imitators, 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 the pine forests and their vices, they might give a faithful delineation; and Italy, Switzerland, and the south of France might be as fruitful in horrors as they were there represented . . . Among the Alps and Pyrenees, perhaps, there were no mixed characters. There, such as were not as spotless as an angle might have the dispositions of a fiend. But in England it was not so; among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad.⁸⁷

Furthermore, an example that shows emphasis on the fact that *Northanger Abbey* should be treated as a novel about English society at the beginning of the 19th century can be found in Henry’s speech to Catherine: “remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians.”⁸⁸ Henry declares that the events that occur in Gothic literature have no place in modern times. Similar remark makes Austen at the beginning of the novel when she describes the journey to Bath as: “neither robbers, nor tempests befriended them, nor one lucky overturn introduced them

87. Ibid., chap. 25.

88. Ibid., chap. 24.

to the hero.”⁸⁹ Yet another allusion to Gothic literature, since this is the way how Valancourt or La Roque were introduced to the story.

Additionally, Austen remembers also political situation of contemporary England when Eleanor misinterprets Catherine’s narration about a new book being published and understands it as a prediction of some political riot: “That I do not know, nor who is the author. I have only heard that it is to be more horrible than anything we have met with yet.”⁹⁰ As was mentioned in chapter 1, this period was characterized by changes in society, therefore the occurrence of riot was quite probable.

3.4 Architecture and Supernatural Elements

Overall, there are two edifices which engage Catherine’s imagination. First is the Blaize Castle which is not actually visited. Thorpe uses it to convince Catherine to accompany him on the ride. Even though she would prefer to stay home, her remorse is weakened by the prospect of visiting a castle similar to Udolpho: “On the other hand, the delight of exploring an edifice like Udolpho, as her fancy represented Blaize Castle to be, was such a counterpoise of good as might console her for almost anything.”⁹¹ This is one of the many occasions when she transfers reading experience to match the real life.

As the title suggest, the second part of the book is situated at the Northanger Abbey. Upon the General’s invitation, Catherine is thrilled to:

See and explore either the ramparts and keep of the one, or the cloisters of the other . . . its long, damp passages, its narrow cells and ruined chapel, were to be within her daily reach, and she could not entirely subdue the hope of some traditional legends, some awful memorials of an injured and ill-fated nun.⁹²

Furthermore, she is teased by Henry Tilney on their way to the Abbey. He reads Gothic himself and he can imagine what Catherine expects. Therefore, Henry tells a narrative which contains typically Gothic elements: “Will not your mind misgive you when you find yourself in this gloomy chamber – too lofty and extensive for you . . . and the bed, of dark green stuff or purple velvet, presenting even a funeral appearance?”⁹³ This story boosts Catherine eagerness, but she is eventually embarrassed.

89. Ibid., chap. 2.

90. Ibid., chap. 14.

91. Ibid., chap. 11.

92. Ibid., chap. 17.

93. Ibid., chap. 20.

However, she feels the biggest disappointment after they arrive at the Abbey, because it is not some ancient gloomy edifice. It is quite modern and renovated: “to pass between the lodges of a modern appearance, to find herself with such ease in the very precincts of the abbey . . . without obstacle, alarm, or solemnity of any kind, struck her as odd and inconsistent.”⁹⁴ Catherine imagined she would feel uneasy just to see the Abbey, but it is rather pleasant place. Neither her room satisfies her taste for old architecture, since it is very light and comfortable. Nevertheless, she still imagines herself as one of the heroines she reads about, furthermore Henry’s narrative influenced her. Therefore, she is convinced that there must be at least some mystery: “her eye suddenly fell on a large high chest, standing back in a deep recess on one side of the fireplace . . . if not originally theirs, by what strange events could it have fallen into the Tilney family?”⁹⁵ However, the chest proves to be completely uninteresting object.

Later, she notices a cabinet which would not open and which fits the description Henry gave her on their way, when he related the made up story. Catherine is highly agitated: “to retire to bed, however, unsatisfied on such a point, would be vain, since sleep must be impossible with the consciousness of a cabinet so mysteriously closed in her immediate vicinity.”⁹⁶ Unfortunately for Catherine’s imagination, upon opening the cabinet, she finds only washing-bill there. In the “horrid” novels, the suspicious object is always connected with mystery. The best example is the object hidden by veil in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The object is described as something terrible, however, the precise nature of it is unknown, resulting in suspense. In *The Mysterious Warning*, a drawer contains memoirs written by the Baron S*** which reveal the hideous crimes he has committed. Catherine probably expected to find something of this sort and not ordinary bills.

Consequently, Catherine finds the rooms of Henry’s deceased mother and she is told they are closed and nobody can go there. However, Catherine feels there might be more to that story and begins to suspect that General might be involved in her death: “of her unhappiness in marriage, she felt persuaded. The general certainly had been an unkind husband. He did not love her walk: could he therefore love her?”⁹⁷ Upon learning that her illness was sudden and short and probably no one was home at that

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid., chap. 21.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid., chap. 22.

time, Catherine is overwhelmed with the discovery: “Could it be possible? Could Henry’s father - ? And yet how many were the examples to justify even the blackest suspicions! . . . It was the air and attitude of Montoni.”⁹⁸ Once again, the allusion to *The Mysteries of Udolpho* signifies distorted reality. Nevertheless, she could have felt the air and attitude of The Count of Wolfenbach or D’Alembert as well, since they are the ones who are suspected of murdering their wives. It is necessary to state that neither of these villains actually committed this crime.

In this chapter, an overview of Gothic elements and the way Austen dealt with them is provided. Each element and the context in which it is used in *Northanger Abbey* can be linked to at least one of the Northanger Novels. The crucial point is that *The Mysteries of Udolpho* might seem to be a model which Austen followed and mocked, however, this view is rather simple and does not credit Austen and the Gothic literature of the 18th century enough.

98. Ibid., chap. 23.

Conclusion

The three chapters provide a complex overview of Female Gothic literature at the end of the 18th century. The theoretical part explains the concept of Female Gothic and describes the historical and social context. Furthermore, Ann Radcliffe and her contribution to this genre are mentioned together with the elements of Gothic literature, which are applied in the analysis of the Northanger novels. It is the description of selected “horrid” novels that enables us to examine whether Austen was inspired by these writings and, moreover, to accept or to deny the label parody attached to *Northanger Abbey*.

Undoubtedly, the style and conception of *Northanger Abbey* prove that it is rather experimental work which needed further revision. I support the view which suggests that Austen wrote the two parts separately. Since the second part was created at the end of the century, Austen was familiar with Gothic literature, its elements and some of the most popular books.

The initial premise of this thesis was that the selection of Northanger “horrid” novels is not random. As the analysis in chapter 2 shows, Austen did not choose mere copies of Radcliffe’s style. On the contrary, each of these novels is somehow unique. It is necessary to say that the overall quality of these works is not brilliant, however, it is the approach to Gothic elements which is substantial for Austen and consequently for this thesis.

Moreover, it is not possible to simply regard *Northanger Abbey* as a parody of the Gothic novel, although there are passages which clearly mock typical Gothic elements. Austen creates a work where satire is embedded into a Gothic story, despite the fact it is not set in distant past and the suspense is not caused by some terrible incident. Nevertheless, the purpose of Gothic literature was to react to contemporary revolutionary period in the first place. Furthermore, Female Gothic was concerned with women struggling for their rights. Even though some elements are exaggerated, there are allusions to contemporary society which was quite unstable. And the heroine, who was described as a completely uninteresting and rather ignorant person, became a mature young woman who adjusted herself well to society.

To conclude, *Northanger Abbey* is easily characterized as a parody. However, if we know the historical background of Gothic literature and if we add the analysis of “horrid” novels, which Austen must have known, this characterization is an

underestimation and undervaluation of both, *Northanger Abbey* and Female Gothic as well.

Resumé

Tato práce si klade za cíl ukázat, zda romány, které Jane Austenová zmínila ve svém díle *Opatství Northanger*, ovlivnily koncepci a styl jejího díla a zda je na toto dílo vůbec možný jednostranný pohled jako na parodii na gotickou literaturu.

Úvodní kapitola seznamuje čtenáře s rozmachem gotické literatury koncem 18. století. Historický a společenský kontext spolu s představením vydavatelství Minerva Press ukazují obrovskou popularitu tohoto žánru ve své době. Jelikož Ann Radcliffe je považována za průkopnici ženského gotického románu, jejímu přínosu je věnována podstatná část první kapitoly. V závěru je zmíněna krátká historie *Northanger Novels*, zejména spor o to, zda nejde pouze o výmysl Austenové.

Analýza těchto románů však tvoří páteř druhé kapitoly. Úvodem jsou uvedeny *Záhady Udolfa* jako modelový příklad, na kterém je rozebráno gotické dílo s ohledem na typicky gotické prvky, zejména architekturu, nadpřirozeno, přírodu, pocit napětí a typické postavy. Od tohoto modelu se poté odvíjí rozbor dalších románů a cílem ukázat, že se nejedná o pouhé kopie *Záhad Udolfa*, ale o pět specifických děl, kdy každé je něčím výjimečné.

Finální část práce se věnuje právě *Opatství Northanger*, na které je nahlíženo jako na dílo gotické literatury. Podstatou je tedy analýza gotických prvků v tomto díle Austenové za použití informací z předchozích kapitol, která v konečném výsledku odpovídá na otázku, zda jde opravdu pouze o parodii na gotický román.

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Anotation

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Title: Northanger “Horrid” Novels: Early Female Gothic Literature and Its Influence upon Jane Austen’s Novel

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The thesis deals with Female Gothic literature at the end of the 18th century, particularly with the Northanger Novels which Austen mentioned in her work. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe forms a model example for analysis, special focus is on the elements of castle, nature, supernatural and on stereotypical characters. Furthermore, *The Orphan of the Rhine*, *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, *Clermont* and *The Mysterious Warning* are described in order to show if Austen was influenced by these novels. The main question is whether *Northanger Abbey* can be treated as a mere parody of Gothic literature.

Anotace

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Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá problematikou ženské gotické literatury konce 18. století, zejména romány, které Austenová zmiňuje v *Opatství Northanger*. *Záhady Udolfa* od Ann Radcliffe tvoří modelový příklad pro analýzu, pozornost je zaměřena speciálně na prvky hradu, přírody, nadpřirozena a na stereotypické postavy. *The Orphan of the Rhine*, *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, *Clermont* a *The Mysterious Warning* jsou dále popsány s cílem ukázat, zda Austenová fakticky byla těmito romány ovlivněna. Hlavní otázka je zaměřena na potvrzení nebo vyvrácení toho, že *Opatství Northanger* je považováno za parodii na gotickou literaturu.