

Shading Austen:  
Illuminating the Gothic in Jane Austen's Novels



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## Introduction

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).

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). Many inhabitants of eighteenth-century England feared the picture of a changing Europe sketched by – amongst others – Richard Price in his sermon "On the Love of Our Country": "Behold, the light you have struck out, after setting *America* free, reflected to *France*, and there kindled into a blaze that lays despotism in ashes, and warms and illuminates *Europe!*" (151). Austen herself started her earliest writing projects in 1787 when she was twelve years old (Le Faye 66). Her earliest works were, therefore, written during a time when "the novel-writing market flooded with the Gothic" (Miles, "The 1790s" 41). 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.

This thesis explores to what extent Austen's Juvenilia and her adult novels *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* were shaped by her reading and understanding of the Gothic tradition. It will show that Austen's style of characterization and her method of plotting reveal shadows of the Gothic in her works. For Jane Austen was not as "cosy and sweet" as the family's portrayal of her claims (Myer 4). Like the female characters in her novels, she was flawed and far "tougher, more irritable and more sardonic" than her family later acknowledged (Myer 4).

Before Austen's texts will be analysed in detail, the introduction will outline Austen's reading habits to gain a better understanding of the literary traditions she inherited.

Furthermore, the conventions of the Gothic novel will be discussed to help uncover the extent to which Austen's own works are shaped by her knowledge and understanding of these literary conventions. Finally, chapters one to four will illuminate the shades in three works from Austen's Juvenilia and in three of her adult novels: *Northanger Abbey*<sup>1</sup>, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

### *Austen's Reading Habits*

In a letter to her sister Cassandra (October 27<sup>th</sup> 1798), the twenty-two-year-old Jane Austen refers to the Austen family library:

The Books from Winton are all unpacked & put away; — the Binding has compressed them most conveniently, & there is now very good room in the Bookcase for all that we wish to have there. (Letter 10)

Austen's father, George Austen, was a reverend who also prepared young boys from good families for university by providing them with a classical education. As a consequence, the Austen family possessed a fairly large library consisting of more than five hundred books (Grundy 192). As Austen's letters exemplify, many members of the Austen family are known to have read many novels and were "avid book borrowers and book exchangers" (Grundy 192). In letter 78 – again a letter to Cassandra – Austen writes that she and her mother are "quite run over with books" during their stay in Chawton. Yet, in her letter to James Stanier

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<sup>1</sup> I consider Austen's *Northanger Abbey* to be one of her adult novels. Although the first draft of the novel, *Susan*, was accepted for publication in 1803, the manuscript was returned to Austen in 1809. Austen is believed to have revised her novel between 1809 and 1811, a time during which she also rewrote *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

Clarke, chaplain and librarian of the Prince of Wales, Austen argues that she may perhaps be “the most unlearned, & uninformed Female who ever dared to be an Authoress” (Letter 132). However, Austen was not as unlearned and uninformed as she described herself to be. Her father offered all of his children a basic education and Jane and her sister Cassandra were even dispatched to a tutor – Mrs Cawley – in 1783. Their time with Mrs Cawley was limited, however, due to the tutor’s death later that year. Consequently, Jane and Cassandra were sent to the Abbey House School in the spring of 1785 to return home again in December 1786 (Le Faye 51). According to Myer, the Abbey House School was best remembered for its leisurely afternoons, which allowed the attending girls to play in the beautiful, wild garden (35). Austen herself appears to have had nothing but fond memories for her time at the Abbey House School, since she wrote to Cassandra: “I could die of laughter at it, as they used to say at school” (Letter 4).

Literature played a crucial part in Austen’s life from an early age onwards. In his memoir of Austen, James Edward Austen-Leigh argued that Austen the novelist was formed mostly at home (44). Her father and her older brothers exposed Jane and the other younger children to famous essayists such as Richard Steele and they also introduced her to novelists such as Samuel Richardson and Fanny Burney (Le Faye 57). According to Le Faye, Jane’s brother James Austen had the largest share in “directing Jane’s reading and forming her taste” (57). Her brother Henry Austen recalled that Jane enjoyed reading history texts and *belles lettres* from a very young age (Le Faye 57). She particularly enjoyed reading Richardson’s *Sir Charles Grandison* and Samuel Johnson’s romance *The History of Rasselas, the Prince of Abissinnia*, which tells the tale of a young prince who has grown weary of his fate (Le Faye 57).

The fact that Austen read many contemporary best sellers is also reflected in her earliest writings, which she herself – upon reflection - believed to have started when she was

twelve years old (Le Faye 66). These Juvenilia – collected in three different volumes – are written in a fashion which expresses the young author’s knowledge of the popular literature of her time. Many of Austen’s early works, such as “Henry and Eliza,” were stories in which adventures and exciting events followed one another. Samuel Richardson wrote novels of sensibility which offered their readers action and intrigue in order to provoke an emotional response from them. The young Jane was inspired to write stories which were similar to Richardson’s, although – as Waldron argues – her writings can appear satirical to the modern reader (16). The style in Austen’s early works, therefore, is more similar to the style found in the works of Henry Fielding. Fielding’s *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews* – written in response to Richardson’s *Pamela* – are often considered to be the “purest parodies” of the sentimental novel to be found (Lockwood 38-9). However, Henry Fielding was not the only author who ridiculed and critiqued the sentimental novel. As Todd argues, “by the 1790s almost all serious novelists noted the selfishness, irrationality and amorality of the cult of sensibility” (*Sensibility* 144). Yet, according to Todd, none of these authors were as successful in attacking the sentimental novel as Austen, whose works – from the Juvenilia onwards – parody the clichés of sentimental fiction (*Sensibility* 144).

As Waldron states, Austen increasingly began to engage with the stereotypes and the conventions of the novels of sensibility and throughout the Juvenilia starts to experiment with her style (17). Especially her earliest writings show that the author enjoyed “exploiting the comic potential of human faults and failings” (Bree, Sabor, Todd 20). Her final works of the Juvenilia – which Bree, Sabor and Todd argue to be the “Betweenities” – are more composed than her earlier writings (25). Both “Catharine, or the Bower” and “Lady Susan” are closer in style to her later published novels. Yet, Austen’s “Lady Susan” – which she is thought to have written in 1794 – still differs stylistically in comparison to her later published works (Bree, Sabor, Todd 40). Like “Elinor and Marianne”, the prototype of *Sense and Sensibility*, “Lady

Susan” was composed in the epistolary form popularized by Richardson’s *Pamela* and Choderlos de Laclos’ *Les Liaisons dangereuses*. Especially Laclos’ work is thought to have inspired Austen’s “Lady Susan.” The amoral heroine of Austen’s short novella shows striking similarities to the characters presented in the French novel (Bree, Sabor, Todd 25).

However, the young author’s early works of fiction do not merely critique the sentimental novel. Austen’s “Elinor and Marianne” and “Susan” – the first draft of *Northanger Abbey* – were written in response to the Gothic novel. Her father is known to have read Lathorn’s *The Midnight Bell* in October 1798 (Le Faye 110). This is one of the novels Isabella Thorpe recommends to her friend Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*. More precisely, the first two novels Austen completed were composed in reaction to Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic romances. “Elinor and Marianne” closely resembles Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance*, while “Susan” can be seen as both a parody of and a tribute to Radcliffe’s complete oeuvre. Although early critics of Austen, such as Sir Walter Scott, believed her use of Gothic conventions to be a sign of her distancing herself from the escapist novels, her involvement with the genre suggests she did not merely reject it (Keymer 21). According to Keymer, both *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey* display an “exuberant immersion” in the formulaic nature of the genre of the Gothic novel (21).

As Grundy states, Jane Austen assumed “the sufficiency of her own taste as guide to literary value, admiring authors because she likes them and not because of their currency value as great or respected names” (193). While she highly admired the influential novelists Richardson and Fielding, she clearly also enjoyed Radcliffe’s more sensationalist Gothic literature enough to immerse herself in the genre for – at least – two of her novels. In many of her novels, the importance of reading is stressed. The following quote from *Northanger Abbey* is a famous example: “The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid” (Austen 966). While Austen’s parody of the Gothic novel

mocks the genre's conventions, it is also a celebration of the pleasures triggered by reading these novels. Moreover, *Pride and Prejudice*'s Miss Bingley – in an attempt to impress Mr Darcy – declares that “there is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of any thing than of a book! -- When I have a house of my own, I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library” (Austen 229). Although Miss Bingley's sentiments may not be very sincere, she hopes to attract Mr Darcy's attention by showing that she values reading as much as he does. Many of the characters in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* – and also in her other novels – would have recognised the truth in Miss Bingley's statement. Most importantly, the author of the novels herself would likely have agreed with her characters' opinions on the reading of novels, since she and her family were “great Novel-readers & not ashamed of being so” (Letter 14).

### *Gothic Conventions*

The Gothic novel or the literature of terror first took shape in the 1760s and the 1770s. Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* is generally regarded as the first Gothic novel. It was published on Christmas Day 1764 and subtitled *A Story*. When the second edition of this novel was published in 1765, the subtitle changed from *A Story* into *A Gothic Story* in order to mock the literary critics who had heavily criticised Walpole's experimental work of fiction (Clery 21). Many of Walpole's enlightened contemporaries considered the Middle Ages to be an age of barbarism and superstition and for them the term Gothic could be used to refer to anything which was “obsolete, old-fashioned and outlandish” (Clery 21). Eighteenth-century authors such as Tobias Smollett, argued that “romance, no doubt, owes its origin to ignorance, vanity and superstition” and thus regarded the medieval romance as nothing but sensational, mindless mass fiction produced by unskilled authors who wrote solely for gain (iv). The literature of terror evolved from both the medieval romance and the genre of the sentimental



novel made popular by the efforts of – amongst others – Samuel Richardson. The trope of the young girl who had to undergo a trial of virtue was one of the most celebrated tropes in Richardson's sentimental works and this trope was borrowed and used in a less innocent sense in the Gothic novel.

The emergence of the Gothic novel is also very much intertwined with the rise of the sublime. Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* (1757) is one of the landmark works on the sublime. The sublime can be defined as “an apprehension of danger in nature or art without the immediate risk of destruction” (Clery 28). The relevance of Burke's ideas regarding the sublime in relation to the Gothic novel lies mostly in their shared emphasis on terror and danger to ignite the strongest emotions in their audience. The Gothic novel and the sublime tradition both attempted to “elevate the soul to its highest pitch” by playing with the reader's superstitions and by implying the existence of supernatural phenomena (Clery 32). Yet, regardless of the rise of the sublime, *The Castle of Otranto* was not imitated until Clara Reeve published *The Old English Baron* (1778), the novel that solidified the Gothic as a popular genre.

According to Sedgwick, no influential modern literary form has been as inescapably conventional as the genre of the Gothic novel. As Sedgwick argues, “once you know that a novel is of the Gothic kind (and you can tell that from the title), you can predict its contents with an unnerving certainty” (9). Although the setting of the first few Gothic novels was the Middle Ages, this setting soon became less important and some originality thus became possible. What all Gothic novels share, however, is “a revolt against the representation of common experience and familiar situations” (Clery 35). The genre, as Sedgwick states, broadened horizons “beyond social patterns, rational decisions, and institutionally approved emotions” and the Gothic novel, therefore, became “a great liberator of feeling” (3). Despite the genre's variety in focus, the Gothic remains easily identifiable due to the genre's own

characteristic bare elements and narrowness of form. According to Robert Miles, the literary critics of the eighteenth century classified a novel as Gothic aided by the following “marketing cues” (“The 1790s” 41):

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Most Notable Examples</b>
Geographical features	Ruins, rocks, the Alps.
Architectural features	Priory, castle, abbey, ancient house.
Generic pointers	Historical romance, tales, traditions.
Ghosts and their cognates	Apparitions, phantoms, sorcerers.
Exotic names	Predominantly Italian or Spanish names.
Generic or historical figures	Knights, monks, royal captives.

Table based on Robert Miles’ observations in “The 1790s” (41).

Sedgwick acknowledges that the Gothic novel has its own classic plots, characteristic spaces and characters. She states that the Gothic novel is often set in “an oppressive ruin, a wild landscape, a Catholic or feudal society” (9). Furthermore, the literature of terror boasts its own established characters which are representative of the genre: the sensible heroine, the impulsive lover and the tyrannical father figure (Sedgwick 9).

In the novels by the most influential Gothic author, Ann Radcliffe, these same characters abound. Her young heroines often “struggle for even a limited autonomy” and represent a brighter bourgeois future, while the protagonist’s opponent wishes for domination in an old, dark and feudal society (Michasiw 328).

According to Wilt, it is important to “maintain some discretion in applying the Gothic measure to works of fiction” since no novel is entirely without any of the genre’s conventions (99). In addition, Sedgwick states that isolating and naming characteristic Gothic themes is

“to plunge at once into the conflicting claims of the general and of the specific” (4).

Moreover, in *Genre*, John Frow warns against hasty conclusions on a text's genre by arguing that the following questions should be answered before a text is classified as belonging to a certain genre: “first, ‘what is it that is going on here?’; second, ‘what kind of thing is this?’” (100). Several of the conventions characteristic of the Gothic novel have since and before the arrival of the genre disentangled themselves from the formula and have become available to novelists outside of the genre of the literature of terror (Sedgwick 11). Nonetheless, the “internal textual cues” (Frow 102) – the formal and thematic aspects, the characterisation and the plotting – are not the only categories by which the Gothic formula can be recognised. Many critics, such as Miyoshi, have valued the Gothic for the exploration of man's “sharply personal sense of the war within” (xiv). The process of reading a Gothic novel can prove to be a journey in which the reader – as much as the protagonist of the tale itself – has to face psychological challenges. As Sedgwick argues, each Gothic novel harbours the themes of the “unspeakable” and “live burial” (14-5). Although the adjective “unspeakable” often appears as an intensifier in the Gothic novel, the theme of the “unspeakable” can be seen at a broader level since it implies all “things that are naturalistically difficult to talk about, like guilt; but they describe the difficulty, not in terms of resistances ... but in terms of an absolute, often institutional prohibition or imperative” (Sedgwick 14). Furthermore, the theme of “live burial” can be regarded literally as well as metaphorically in the sense of darkness (Sedgwick 43). The psychological journey that both the protagonist and the reader of the literature of terror experience is perhaps caused by dread. According to Wilt, dread is “the father and mother of the Gothic” and can give way to rage, fright, horror, awe and many other human emotions (5). Sedgwick and Wilt are recognised authorities on the Gothic and their scholarship convincingly points out that mental struggling is as much a theme in these novels as physical danger.

In *Ghosts of the Gothic*, Wilt suggests that Austen does not dismiss but embrace the genre of Gothic fiction (xi). While the genre of Gothic fiction was traditionally thought to provide entertainment only, Wilt explains that the genre also “provided tools ... of plot and narrative strategy and even moral and aesthetic vision that the subtle architects of the great ‘serious’ traditions of English fiction used” (5). Moreover, she explains that Austen often made use of the Gothic theme of dread. Most importantly, Wilt states that the genre of the literature of terror contained “formulas for the child artist to absorb, the adolescent artist to parody, the mature artist to ‘outgrow’” (17). This statement appears especially applicable to Austen, who seriously took up writing when she was twelve years of age. The Gothic novel was most popular among the younger generations to the great dislike of concerned parents and Samuel Coleridge, who described the Gothic novel as “a poison for youth” in his review of *The Monk* (188).

Austen’s Juvenilia are at least partially inspired by the Gothic novels she read. Tales of terror and anguished young heroines abound in these early writings which were written for the purpose of entertaining her closest family members. In her early twenties, Austen started working on her gothic parodies “Elinor and Marianne” and “Susan”. By the time she finished her work on *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*, she had outgrown the formulaic nature of the literature of terror and had found her own literary style.

Austen was one of the turn-of-the-century novelists who inherited the Gothic literary machinery – as well as the literary machinery of the sentimental novel – and who attempted to innovate the literary scene of the United Kingdom (Wilt 123). Austen, however, parodied the Gothic machinery she was so familiar with in both *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey* and, furthermore, succeeded in transforming the genre’s machinery in her other works (Wilt 124). In the following chapters, Austen’s style of characterization with respect to her antagonists and her methods of plotting in three works from the Juvenilia and three of her

novels – *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Pride and Prejudice* – will be explored. These chapters will show that her method of plotting and style of characterization was shaped by her reading and understanding of the Gothic tradition and that close scrutiny of Austen's works reveals shadows left by the literary machinery of the Gothic.

### Chapter 1: The Gothic and Jane Austen's Early Writings

Austen's short tales of the Juvenilia were written between 1787 and 1793 when she would have been between twelve and eighteen years old (Bree, Sabor, Todd 39). In this chapter, Austen's style of characterization and her method of plotting in three of her early works – "Henry and Eliza," "Catharine, or the Bower" and "Lady Susan" – will be analysed and discussed. The analysis will show that these works of fiction were to a certain extent shaped by Austen's reading and understanding of the Gothic as well as the sentimental novel. More than anything, however, the analysis of Austen's Juvenilia demonstrates that the young Austen could not yet pinpoint the difference between the Gothic and the sentimental novel.

The author worked on "Henry and Eliza" from December 1788 till January 1789, while "Catharine, or the Bower" was written in 1792. The final work to be discussed in this chapter, "Lady Susan", was composed in 1794 (Bree, Sabor, Todd 23). Austen wrote these short stories during a period of time when the popularity of the genre of the Gothic novel first took shape. The genre itself, however, was not yet fully established and to a young reader and author in the late eighteenth century the difference between the sentimental novel and the Gothic novel may not yet have been apparent. In this chapter it will be argued that Austen's early writings are reflections of the books she herself enjoyed and that her active engagement with the offered material helped her discover the differences between the genre of the sentimental and the Gothic novel.

### *1.1 The Gothic and “Henry and Eliza”*

According to Peter Sabor, the title of Austen’s “Henry and Eliza” is likely an allusion to her fourth brother Henry and her cousin Eliza de Feuillide-Hancock. Although Eliza had married a French soldier in 1781, she showed an interest in Jane’s older brother and married him in 1797 after her husband had been guillotined in 1794 (74). The story itself is dedicated to Austen’s cousin Jane Cooper and this dedication already displays the young author’s knowledge of the published fiction of her time. In dedicating her short work to one of her family members, Austen mimics one of the features which was present in nearly all eighteenth-century novels (Bree, Sabor, Todd 18). Other elements in the author’s work also indicate her understanding of the stylistic conventions of popular eighteenth-century fiction. For example, Austen abbreviates names of towns and people in “Henry and Eliza” by writing that Eliza “took the road to M.” and “wrote the following Letter to the Dutchess of F.” (75).

As Austen-Leigh argued in his memoir, Jane’s knowledge of Richardson’s oeuvre – even in her early teens – was “such as no one is likely again to acquire” (89). However, although Austen-Leigh claimed that his aunt understood the work of Richardson like no other, her “Henry and Eliza” shows that she yet had to discover the differences in style between the genre of the Gothic and the sentimental novel. The following analysis of “Henry and Eliza” will demonstrate that Austen combined elements of both genres in her short story.

Austen’s “Henry and Eliza” tells the tale of the young and beautiful Eliza who is adopted by Sir George and Lady Harcourt after they find her near a heap of hay. However, when Eliza is caught stealing fifty pounds, her adoptive parents send her away and Eliza decides to offer herself as a companion to the Duchess of F. The Duchess accepts and she and her daughter grow fond of the beautiful girl. Yet, once Eliza runs off with Henry – the lover of the Duchess’ daughter – the Duchess is unforgiving. Eliza and Henry flee to France, have two sons and live to the utmost extent of their income. When her husband dies, Eliza decides

to go back to England where the raging Duchess catches her. Eliza and her little boys are locked up, but luckily escape and find their way to Sir George and Lady Harcourt. Once Lady Harcourt lays eyes upon Eliza, she realises that Eliza is her biological daughter and all is well.

This summary of “Henry and Eliza” reveals that the story is built on the trope of the young girl who has to undergo a trial of virtue. This popular trope originates in the sentimental novel and is also used in Gothic fiction, albeit in a less innocent sense. Eliza is a beautiful girl, described as “the delight of all who knew her” (74). Yet, her life takes a turn for the worse when she is caught stealing fifty pounds from her benefactors and this is where her trial appears to begin. Yet, even though her situation does not offer her a bright future, Eliza does not despair for she was “happy in the conscious knowledge of her own Excellence” (75). Moreover, her situation is once again brightened when the Duchess of F. accepts her as her new companion. It can be argued, therefore, that Eliza’s trial does not start once her benefactors turn her away, but that it starts once she is accepted by the Duchess of F. whose “passions were strong ... friendships were firm and ... Enmities, unconquerable” (76). When the Duchess of F. is scorned, her wrath is unyielding.

To a certain extent, the characters of Austen’s “Henry and Eliza” are shaped by the young Austen’s knowledge of the Gothic and the sentimental novel. Both the Gothic and the sentimental novel boast characters representative of the genre: the sensible heroine, the impulsive lover and the tyrannical father. Austen’s Eliza is largely driven by her feelings and Henry Cecil, Eliza’s husband, is impulsive in that he changes his mind on marrying Lady Harriet, the Duchess’ daughter, nearly instantly upon seeing Eliza. The villain of the tale, however, is not a tyrannical father figure, but rather a tyrannical matriarch: the Duchess of F.. While the Duchess of F. may not literally play the role of the tyrannical father, her social position is similar to the position of these powerful fathers. The Duchess of F. has no husband

to control her and, therefore, she gets to run her own estate. She is a powerful woman, as the following passage from “Henry and Eliza” exemplifies:

Her Grace as soon as she had read the letter, which sufficiently explained the whole affair, flew into the most violent passion and after having spent an agreeable half hour, in calling them by all the shocking Names her rage could suggest to her, sent out after them 300 armed Men, with orders not to return without their Bodies, dead or alive; intending that if they should be brought to her in the latter condition to have them put to Death in some torturelike manner, after a few years Confinement. (77)

The Duchess of F. clearly is in a position of power since she controls three hundred armed men. Much like the established villainous character of the Gothic novel, the Duchess thus represents England’s patriarchal society in which a young girl’s freedom is limited.

Moreover, in the passage above, the Duchess of F. is said to fly “into the most violent passion” (77). The word passion can often be found in works of Gothic and sentimental fiction and appears to either have a positive or a negative connotation. For example, in Walpole’s *Otranto* Manfred’s passions are described to often “obscure his reason” (Chapter 1). Similarly, in Richardson’s *Pamela*, Mr B regularly “flew into such a passion, that [Pamela] was forced to run for it” (59). Austen emphasises the violent nature of the Duchess of F.’s passions. The passions of both the Gothic and the sentimental villain are similarly represented as violent. As the quote from *Pamela* exemplifies, Pamela was forced to flee when Mr B entered one of his passions, which indicates that Pamela truly believed that Mr B was dangerous when his passions dominated. The Duchess of F.’s passions could, therefore, be inspired by both the Gothic and the sentimental villain.



However, Austen did borrow one element from the Gothic novel in “Henry and Eliza”. This element belongs to the category of architectural features Robert Miles proposed to belong within the genre of Gothic fiction (“The 1790s” 41). Once Eliza and her children set foot on English soil, they are locked up in a prison by the army of the Duchess of F.. They are, therefore, confined to an enclosed space belonging to the Duchess of F.’s castle. Castles were a stock feature of the Gothic novel and Austen’s inclusion of a castle appears to be taken from the Gothic rather than the sentimental novel, as the style in which Eliza’s captivity is related exemplifies:

No sooner had Eliza entered the Dungeon than the first thought which occurred to her was how to get out of it again. She went to the Door; but it was locked. She looked at the Window; but it was barred with iron; disappointed in both her expectations, she despaired of effecting her Escape (77-78).

Eliza is confined to an enclosed space and sees no possibility to free herself. She dreads the prospect that she may never escape her fate. Moreover, just as Theodore in Walpole’s *Otranto* is locked up in a tower, Eliza is held captive in a tower of the Duchess of F.’s castle. Austen’s use of the word “dungeon” further implies that Eliza is locked up in a dark place of confinement. The Gothic theme of “live burial”, as Sedgwick states, can be used metaphorically in the sense of darkness (14-5). Eliza’s captivity in a dark environment, therefore, appears to be inspired by the Gothic novels Austen read.

Nonetheless, Austen’s “Henry and Eliza” is clearly a combination of elements taken from Gothic and sentimental fiction. Although, the style in which Eliza’s captivity is related signals a Gothic representation, the plot of the tale appears to belong to the sentimental novel. However, the ending of Austen’s “Henry and Eliza” is similar to the conclusion of one of

Fielding's novels. In 1742 Henry Fielding published his *Joseph Andrews* – a parody of Richardson's *Pamela*. In *Joseph Andrews* Fielding relates the life of the footman Joseph Andrews who – finally – is revealed to be the son of a gentleman. Similarly, Austen's Eliza – found as a baby near a heap of hay – is discovered to be the daughter of Sir George and Lady Harcourt. Both protagonists are originally believed to be of a lower-class ancestry, yet – in reality – they are both noble. Moreover, Austen makes frequent use of words which, according to Todd, indicate a “sentimental doctrine” (*Sensibility* 5). The words which point towards a sentimental doctrine are usually nouns and adjectives which imply a feeling of sorts or which succeed in the heightening of intensity. These are nouns such as “virtue” and “delicacy” and adjectives such as “kind”, “honest” or “overflowing”. In Austen's “Henry and Eliza,” Sir George and Lady Harcourt wish “to incite in [Eliza] a Love of Virtue and a Hatred of Vice” (74). Furthermore, upon meeting Eliza, the Duchess of F. throws her arms around the girl's neck and became “resolved they never more should part” (76). The use of words such as “virtue” and word pairs such as “never more” indicate a sentimental doctrine and are part of the conventional vocabulary of the sentimental novel (*Sensibility* 5).

In “Henry and Eliza”, Austen combined elements from Gothic and sentimental fiction. The ending of the tale, however, is more similar to Fielding's satirical works. Although the style in which Eliza's captivity is described implies that “Henry and Eliza” is also partially shaped by Austen's reading and knowledge of the Gothic novel, the language used indicates a sentimental doctrine. Moreover, the plot of “Henry and Eliza” is similar to that of the sentimental novel. Austen's story, therefore, shows that she was not yet capable of differentiating between the style of Richardson's novels and the Gothic novel in her early teens.

### 1.2 *The Gothic and “Catharine, or the Bower”*

“Catharine, or the Bower,” according to Waldron, is shaped by the conduct literature which had been published in the early 1790s (18). An indirect reference to the conduct literature can be found in the first sentence of the short story already:

Catharine had the misfortune, as many heroines have had before her, of losing her Parents when she was very young, and of being brought up under the care of a Maiden Aunt, who while she tenderly loved her, watched over her conduct with so scrutinizing a severity, as to make it very doubtful to many people, and to Catharine among the rest, whether she loved her or not. (164)

Catharine’s Aunt Percival wishes to raise the young girl according to the rules which can be found in the conduct literature of the time. By referring to Catharine directly as her aunt’s conduct, it becomes clear that the young Austen very much intended for her audience to understand according to which rules the young girl was raised. Aunt Percival, moreover, is said to live in “constant apprehension of [Catharine’s] marrying imprudently” and she, therefore, opts to select the young men the open and unreserved girl is to have allowed contact with (167). Furthermore, the woman is shown to pride “herself on the exact propriety and Neatness with which everything in her Family was conducted” (168). All the allusions to Aunt Percival’s need for respectable morals, implies that the slightly rebellious Catharine was created in “a direct negative response to the sort of pontification about the proper behaviour of young girls” (Waldron 19). Moreover, the relationship between Aunt Percival and Catharine is one that is likely derived from the sentimental novel. The romantic plot aside, sentimental novels often tend to include “a plot of female friendship” (Todd, *Sensibility* 117). This plot of female friendship can also be found in Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance*, published two years

prior to Austen's "Catharine, or the Bower" – from now on referred to as "Catharine." As Radcliffe's Julia, Austen's Catharine relies on her governess Madam de Menon for maternal advice and love.

Since the young author's "Catharine" was written in response to her own frustrations regarding the literature of conduct, it could be wondered to what extent this work was shaped by Austen's knowledge of the Gothic or sentimental tradition. However, traces of the Gothic novel can be found in "Catharine." When Catharine converses with her new friend Miss Stanley in order to find out whether their opinions on books are similar, Catharine asks whether Miss Stanley has read the novels of "Mrs Smith" (170). This Mrs Smith is the author Charlotte Turner Smith whose *Emmeline* "stands as the forgotten urtext for the female Gothic novel tradition" (Hoeveler 37) Although, she can be described as a "sentimentalist with a social and political agenda; she was an incipient Gothic feminist" (Hoeveler 37). Smith's *Emmeline* (1788) criticises the traditional marriage arrangements of the eighteenth century. This novel by Smith is praised in Austen's "Catharine" by Miss Stanley, who argues that this novel "is *so much* better" than any of the author's other novels (170). Smith escaped an unhappy marriage in 1787 and her characters similarly have to face the consequences of unhappy matches. Emmeline's refusal to embark on an unhappy marriage, therefore, fits the Gothic genre's reputation for broadening horizons by moving "beyond social patterns, rational decisions, and institutionally approved emotions" (Sedgwick 3). Moreover, both Smith's and Radcliffe's popular Gothic novels show that "the Gothic novel became the site of a heartfelt and, at times, bitter debate about the nature and politics of femininity" (Ellis 48).

Although the plots of *Emmeline* and Austen's "Catharine" do not strictly overlap, important similarities do exist. Both Emmeline and Catharine are orphaned and raised mostly through the reading of conduct books and novels. In addition, Austen's villain in "Catharine" is similar to the villains which can be found in *Emmeline*. Austen's villain is Edward Stanley,

a gentleman who “took infinite pleasure in alarming the jealous fears of [Catharine’s] Aunt by his attentions to [Catharine], without considering what effect they might have on the Lady herself” (195). In *Emmeline* two corrupted gentlemen pose a threat to the young women in the novel. The beautiful Emmeline, for example, is endlessly pursued and eventually even abducted by Lord Delamere. Moreover, her friend Adelina has left her husband and is now abandoned with child by her lover. Both works offer the reader depraved gentlemen who make the lives of the female heroines all the more difficult. These villains can be found in both the sentimental and the Gothic novel. According to Hoeveler, *Emmeline* contains “within it evidence of both the dominant prior discourse system and suggestions and hints of the next paradigm shift” (38). In other words, Smith’s novel contains elements from both Gothic and sentimental fiction and the same thing can be argued regarding Austen’s “Catharine”.

An element in “Catharine” which may be regarded as a Gothic feature can be spotted in the full title: the bower. As the following quote implies, Austen’s protagonist sees her bower as a place of refuge:

a constant relief in all her misfortunes [...] was a fine shady Bower, the work of her own infantine Labours assisted by those of two young Companions who had resided in the same village –. To this Bower, which terminated a very pleasant and retired walk in her Aunt’s Garden, she always wandered whenever anything disturbed her, and it possessed such a charm over her senses, as constantly to tranquilize her mind and quiet her spirits [...] her Bower alone could restore her to herself. (165)

The unsettling feeling of safety mingled with anxiety that Catherine experiences in the bower is an example of the kind of feelings typically experienced by Gothic heroines in the

picturesque and sublime architectural features often found in the Gothic novel. Catharine's bower provides the heroine with a false sense of safety. Similarly, the protagonist of Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1792) is said to feel at ease in the forest when she remembered her misfortunes:

La Motte's books were her chief consolation. With one of these she would frequently ramble into the forest, where the river, winding through a glade, diffused coolness, and with its murmuring accents, invited repose: there she would seat herself, and, resigned to the illusions of the page, pass many hours in oblivion of sorrow. (Chapter 3)

Just as Adeline feels at peace in the forest, Catharine feels at ease within her bower. Yet, this feeling of safety is not entirely validated since both Adeline's and Catharine's trouble starts in their favourite places of dwelling. When Catharine takes a walk through the garden with Edward Stanley, they stop at her bower where the gentleman "suddenly seized hold of her hand, and exclaiming with great emotion, 'Upon my honour you are entirely mistaken,' pressed it passionately to his lips and ran out of the arbour" (197). Aunt Percival notices this exchange and is horrified at what she suspects is Catharine's doing. Catharine's place of refuge is thus not as safe as she originally thought, since this is the place where she – due to the joy Edward Stanley finds in alarming Aunt Percival – transgresses the boundaries set by her benefactress.

Although Gothic elements can be found in Austen's "Catharine, or the Bower," the tale's mocking of the conduct literature of the time is even more apparent. The short story is left unfinished, but it does end with Aunt Percival scolding her ward for her suspected moral depravity. The woman tells Catharine that

‘the welfare of every Nation depends upon the virtue of it’s individuals, and any one who offends in so gross a manner against decorum and propriety, is certainly hastening it’s ruin. You have been giving a bad example to the World, and the World is but too well disposed to receive such’ (198).

Aunt Percival’s speech echoes the language of the literature of conduct. In response to the current events of the French Revolution, conduct literature became increasingly concerned with the welfare of the nation (Waldron 18). The somewhat rebellious Catharine refuses to accept her aunt’s accusations, however, and answers: “‘Pardon me Madam [...] but I *can* have given an Example only to *You*’” (198). Catharine, as do many Gothic heroines, no longer accepts the authority of the parental figure in her life. In her refusal to accept her aunt’s view, she thus shows the same rebellion against “social patterns, rational decisions, and institutionally approved emotions” that is present in the Gothic novel (Sedgwick 3).

Like *Emmeline*, “Catharine” is a sentimental work “with a Gothic novel buried within it struggling to emerge” (Hoeverler 38). Although Aunt Percival accepts values put forth in the sentimental novel and conduct literature only, Catharine rebels against these morals and, as a result, shares similarities with the Gothic heroine. Moreover, Catharine’s bower is similar to the picturesque and sublime architectural features often found in the Gothic novel.

### 1.3 *The Gothic and “Lady Susan”*

Austen’s relatives considered “Lady Susan” to be the product of a period in her writing “when the nonsense was passing away, and before her wonderful talent had found its proper channel” (Sutherland 218). Yet, although her family members regarded this work to have more literary value than her *Juvenilia*, Austen-Leigh decided not to include this work in the first edition of

his *Memoir of Jane Austen*. Nonetheless, he did include the finished manuscript in the second edition. However, the inclusion of “Lady Susan” concerned Austen-Leigh greatly since he feared his aunt’s modest reputation would be harmed due to the story’s contents (Todd, “Lady Susan” 88). Austen’s “Lady Susan” resembles the scandalous French novel *Les Liaisons dangereuses* in style mostly. Both works were written in an epistolary form which was – occasionally – interrupted by a third-person narrator. Yet the work, as Todd argues, also resembles the works earlier female writers such as Frances Sheridan, Susannah Grunning and Elizabeth Inchbald (“Lady Susan” 88). Yet none of these works were as blatantly amoral as Austen’s “Lady Susan.”

“Lady Susan” relates the story of the widowed Lady Susan who wishes to find herself and her daughter a husband. Although the theme of the novella seems quite innocent, Lady Susan is not. She is a selfish woman who attempts to find the most suitable husband while having an affair with a married gentleman. She is a woman who frowns upon “conventional morality” and she feels bored when she is the object of an honourable love (Todd, “Lady Susan” 89). Thus rather than watching the tale unfold through the eyes of an innocent young heroine – as happens in both the Gothic and the sentimental novel – Austen’s “Lady Susan” gives access to female discourse and desire from the point of view of a female villain. However, what was perhaps most shocking to the reader of Austen’s published novels, was not Lady Susan’s deprived character, but the lack of punishment for the female villain at the end of the novella. Unlike the female villains in later fictional works, such as Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862), Lady Susan did not end up mad or dead. Contrastingly, Lady Susan succeeds in finding a suitable husband and marries a wealthy gentleman.

Unlike Austen’s other heroines, Lady Susan is presented as a cold and resentful woman who considers her own daughter “to be the torment of [her] life” (208). She does not appear to be morally conflicted and is regarded to be “the most accomplished coquette in



England” (211). While the official grieving period of an eighteenth-century widow would span approximately two years, Lady Susan succeeds in embarking on an affair with a married man only a month after her husband’s death. Moreover, she successfully distracts the suitor of her lover’s daughter, who she intends to marry to her own daughter, and soon sets her eyes on the handsome Reginald de Courcy to become one of her own suitors. Lady Susan appears to want to collect as many men at her bidding as possible. Widowed women in the eighteenth century could – if enough money was present – live an enviable life, since they had more social and geographical variety than married women (Lane 71). Lady Susan enjoys this newfound freedom and independence to its fullest, yet her need for a husband may imply that she needs to marry again soon because of her financial situation. She refuses to lose her autonomy, however. This becomes clear when she writes to her friend Mrs Johnson that a marriage to the young Reginald de Courcy would be out of the question as long as his father is still alive. Susan emphasises that a marriage in which she would be dependent on the father of her husband would “not suit the freedom of [her] spirit” (255).

Regardless of her financial situation, Lady Susan’s behaviour demands attention. She leaves scandal and misery in her wake wherever she goes and appears to care about very little but herself. The villains of the Gothic novel – typically tyrannical fathers – wish for their power and dominion to remain. Although this dominion and power was commonly related to the patriarchal and feudal society, it can be argued that Lady Susan – like these Gothic villains – also aims to keep control over her own life and relishes her domination over others. She enjoys to exert this power and acts as though the other characters are puppets on strings for her to play with. Whether it be her daughter Frederica, her married lover, Reginald de Courcy or Sir James – the man she intends her daughter to marry – Lady Susan delights in “the pleasure of triumphing over a Mind prepared to dislike [her]” (220). She tricks these people into liking her and it becomes a bit of a game to her. When she does not succeed in this

endeavour, however, she resolves to ban these people from her life: “Your Husband I abhor – Reginald I despise – and I am secure of never seeing either again” (262).

While her mother is an example of the tyrannical villain often found in the Gothic novel, Frederica is said to possess “all the [...] Milkiness” (221). This milkiness should be understood in the sense of Frederica being very mild, gentle and soft. In one of her letters to her friend Mrs Johnson, Lady Susan reveals that her “horrid girl” had attempted to run away from her boarding school (221). The reason for her flight is soon revealed: Frederica had not wanted to marry the man her mother had chosen for her. Since her mother appears to play the role of the Gothic villain, Frederica appears to play the part of the young girl who has to undergo a trial of virtue. This trial being that she needs to escape the clutches of her cold and rather terrible mother. Lady Susan and her daughter Frederica are presented as opposites. Although Lady Susan is constantly contrasted to her daughter, Frederica is “only necessary to emphasize Lady Susan’s unattractiveness” (Gilbert and Gubar 156).

Unlike Mr B in Richardson’s *Pamela* and Montoni from Radcliffe’s *Udolpho*, Austen’s Lady Susan is not punished. The hasty conclusion reveals that – although Lady Susan had sunk even lower in the opinion of her sister-in-law – it cannot be ascertained whether “Lady Susan was, or was not happy” (267). Her new husband, however, appears less lucky. Although his only mistake was to give in to his desire and marry Lady Susan, he “may seem to have drawn an harder Lot than mere Folly merited” (267). Lady Susan does not receive any moral retribution, whereas the villains in Radcliffe’s Gothic novels are typically punished for their wrongdoings. Moreover, Lady Susan’s virtuous daughter Frederica has to endure far more than a mere trial of her virtue. Radcliffe’s tales typically end well for the virtuous heroine, as the conclusions of her novels show. For example, *A Sicilian Romance* is concluded with the following statement:

Here the manuscript annals conclude. In reviewing this story, we perceive a singular and striking instance of moral retribution. We learn, also, that those who do only THAT WHICH IS RIGHT, endure nothing in misfortune but a trial of their virtue, and from trials well endured derive the surest claim to the protection of heaven. (199)

Frederica is not rewarded for her virtuous behaviour, but is rather punished. She cannot win the love of Reginald de Courcy – who had passionately loved her mother – as Austen described that his feelings towards her were “no less lasting than lively” (267). Austen’s “Lady Susan” defers from the norm set in both sentimental and Gothic fiction. She does not punish her villainous heroine and she does not reward those who are virtuous. Perhaps the task of finishing the story with anything but an ironic conclusion proved to be too difficult a task for the eighteen-year-old author. Nonetheless, “Lady Susan” was the first of Austen’s literary projects with a more serious theme which prepared her for her first full-length projects: “Susan”, “Elinor and Marianne” and “First Impressions” (Le Faye 89).

### Chapter 2: The Gothic and *Northanger Abbey*

As she developed her skills, Austen realised that her writing would not be acceptable for publication. Therefore, between 1809 and 1811, she started to revise her early writings in order to make her work more publishable (Doody 74). One of the works which underwent revision was Austen’s “Susan”, the first version of her posthumously published work *Northanger Abbey*. Although Austen’s “Susan” had been accepted for publication by Crosby & Co. in 1803, the novel was never published (Le Faye 172). In what appears to be a final attempt at publication, the author wrote a stern letter to the publisher on 5 April 1809 under

the pseudonym of “Mrs Ashton Dennis”. It is no coincidence that the initials of this pseudonym spell out the word “mad”. Nonetheless, the manuscript was returned to the author and she started her revision of the work. According to Doody, Austen’s works had to undergo a radical transformation in this period, since she had to adjust her style to match the one in either the works of Fielding or Richardson (78). She moreover argues that Austen’s novels are “a special mixture of eighteenth-century qualities of attitude and style combined with domestic seriousness and Romantic respect for both idealism and power” (75). *Northanger Abbey*, however, does not merely match the popular sentimental style of the eighteenth century only. More than anything, it can be argued that Austen’s novel parodies the popular genre of the Gothic novel. Parody, according to Dentith, is “the mere repetition of another’s words, their intonation exaggerated but their substance remaining the same, one utterance [...] is transformed by another, held up to the public gaze, and subjected to ridicule” (5).

According to Waldron, the final form of *Northanger Abbey* “is more schematic in its engagement with popular fiction than any of the other completed novels and is much closer to burlesque (though it is clear even from this novel that Austen has moved on to a more complex kind of fiction)” (26). Burlesque is a special kind of comic writing in which “the mockery of serious matter or style” is achieved by dealing with a subject in a deliberately conflicting manner (Gray 48). Parody is often understood to be a form of burlesque writing. In her *Northanger Abbey*, Austen mocks the traditional conventions of many popular genres of the eighteenth century, such as the novels of sensibility and the novels of virtue. No genre in the novel, however, appears to be critiqued as heavily as the genre of the Gothic novel.

Many critics argue that Austen mirrored her novel on Lennox’s *The Female Quixote*, a novel which relates the tale of the young Arabella who expects her own life to be similar to a French romance. The novels, indeed, show many similarities. Both Arabella and Catherine grow up in the country and temporarily find themselves in Bath where their wild imaginations

expand. However, Austen's Catherine finds joy in Radcliffe's Gothic novels rather than in the reading of French romances. According to Hoeveler, female authors, including Austen, wrote parodies of Gothic novels "to inflate the importance of the issues explored in women's literature under the cover of deflating the excesses of such literature" (125). This authentication of the female narrative also involved a civilising process in which codification of the proper gendered behaviour for each of the sexes was aimed for (Hoeveler 125). Yet, although often described as a parody of the Gothic novel, *Northanger Abbey*'s subversion of the Gothic plot is far more complex than one may at first glance suspect. As Waldron argues, Austen's novel does not merely ridicule the Gothic's stereotypical characters and situations, but it also "defeats the reader's expectations of a burlesque" (Waldron 27). In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen "points in the direction of sublime overkill but holds back from full-throttle parody" (Keymer 25). *Northanger Abbey* is more a celebration of the Gothic novel than a comic imitation of the genre.

According to Hoeveler, *Northanger Abbey* targets *Emmeline* as well as Radcliffe's Gothic novels (124). Keymer argues, however, that Austen's parody is not intended for either Radcliffe's or Smith's work, but rather for the "undistinguished hinterland of bone-chillers that imitated and debased" these successful authors of the Gothic novel (26). Therefore, rather than mercilessly mocking the genre, Austen used – amongst others – novels such as *Udolpho* as a point of reference in her novel. For the genre of the Gothic novel expressed "screams of female distress [...] which continue to operate [...] in a world of polite sociability" (Keymer 29). Thus, as Keymer argues, it may not have been the genre's plot Austen wished to mock, but rather the idiom of the literature of terror in general (26). Moreover, as Wilt states, Austen's novel makes use of five conventional carriers of power: "*The Mysteries of Udolpho* itself, the programmatic Gothic setting, the isolated and tyrannical villain, the ruined church, and the overimaginative heroine" (126). By energizing her works with dread, as Wilt

demonstrates, 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).

In this chapter the idiom and style Austen used in *Northanger Abbey* will be compared to the idiom and style used in Radcliffe’s *Udolpho*, Richardson’s *Clarissa* and Henry Fielding’s *Shamela*. Furthermore, it will demonstrate that Austen’s style of characterization – with regards to her protagonists as well as antagonists – and her method of plotting in *Northanger Abbey* was shaped by her reading, understanding and admiration of the genre of the Gothic novel.

### 2.1 *The Character Arc of the Heroine*

The introduction has shown that the Gothic novel has its own established characters and conventions. The same thing can be stated regarding the genre of the sentimental novel, which Fielding satirised and parodied in – amongst others – *Shamela*. Many of the established characters and conventions of the literature of terror and the sentimental novel, however, overlap to a certain extent. Since the genre of the Gothic novel evolved from the sentimental novel, it should come as no surprise that the virtuous heroine portrayed in, for example, Richardson’s *Clarissa* and *Pamela* is similar to the heroine described in many Gothic novels. Both heroines had to undergo and overcome suffering and a trial of virtue before – hopefully – a happy ending came in sight. In the preface to *Clarissa*, Richardson states that his female protagonist is meant to be “an exemplar to her sex” (35). Moreover, when he introduces the names of his principal characters, Richardson adds that *Clarissa* is “a young lady of great delicacy, mistress of all the accomplishments, natural and acquired, that adorn the sex” (37).

Clarissa's best friend Miss Howe, furthermore, describes her friend in the first letter of the novel as "so steady, so uniform in [her] conduct: so desirous [...] of sliding through life to the end of it unnoted; and [...] not wishing to be observed even for [her] silent benevolence" (40). Although, the manner in which the heroine is described in Richardson's *Clarissa* differs, mostly in form, from the manner in which Radcliffe introduced Emily in *Udolpho*, some similarities can still be found. Radcliffe's narrator writes that Emily "had discovered in her early years uncommon delicacy of mind, warm affections, and ready benevolence" (5). Both Emily's and Clarissa's benevolent nature urged them to do good and to be kind and generous towards others. Moreover, Emily – like Clarissa – is described as a beauty: "Emily resembled her mother; having the same elegant symmetry of form, the same delicacy of features, and the same blue eyes, full of tender sweetness" (5). When compared on this level, the heroine of Richardson's sentimental novel resembles the heroine of Radcliffe's Gothic novel.

Austen was familiar with Fielding's satirical works and may have used similar tools in order to subvert the heroine of her work into an anti-heroine of the genre she aimed to mock. In *Shamela* Fielding creates an anti-heroine of the sentimental novel who differs from the virtuous heroine in the original sentimental novel significantly. Instead of virtuous, Shamela is remarkably vulgar in tone (Lockwood 38). While Pamela protects her virtue at all costs in Richardson's *Pamela*, Fielding's Shamela revels in having captured her master's attention: "O what News, since I writ my last! The young Squire hath been here, and as sure as a Gun he hath taken a Fancy to me; [...] he took me by the Hand, and I pretended to be shy [...] and then he kissed me, 'till he took away my Breath" (315). Fielding's Shamela's is thus the complete opposite of Richardson's virtuous Pamela. Correspondingly, Austen declared that "no one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine" (917).

Both Fielding's heroine and Austen's heroine were not the typical protagonists of the

respective genres which the novels in which they appear mocked. Shamela only acts out the part of a virtuous young woman, since she admits that she “pretended to be shy” and angry (315). Similarly, Catherine Morland does not display the gendered behaviour displayed in the Gothic novel. Catherine “was fond of all boys’ plays” and – as a child – transgressed the boundaries set for those of the female gender. Both Austen’s and Fielding’s heroine, therefore, cannot be regarded as exemplars to their respective sexes. It can be argued, therefore, that Austen used similar tools to Fielding’s when it comes to the subversion of the typical heroine of the genre she aimed to mock.

According to Hoeveler, Austen self-consciously deflates her anti-Gothic heroine by stating that no one would recognise her as such. Yet, in creating Catherine, Austen – as Hoeveler states – creates the “Everywoman heroine – plain, ordinary, insufficiently educated, nothing special – but she still manages to become a heroine by following her instincts, waiting passively and learning to keep her mouth shut” (130). In contrast to Radcliffe’s clever Emily, Austen’s young Catherine was “inattentive, and occasionally stupid” (917). Moreover, Emily’s appearance is far more attractive than Catherine’s, who delights when her parents consider her “*almost pretty to-day*” (918). Austen’s Catherine is, therefore, in many ways the reverse of Radcliffe’s Emily. However, not only their intelligence and beauty are presented as oppositions, since – as Wilt argues – Austen’s Catherine Morland, Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse “go to the journey not of the Gothic heroine but of the Gothic antihero, struggling against self-hate, trying to cut that destructive emotion down to size” (135).

According to Ellis, “Radcliffe’s combination of fear and the familiar created a horror that could not be dismissed [...] Her novels intimately explore fears and horrors endemic to the private lives of her female readership” (50). Austen also confronts her readership with the status of women in the early nineteenth century. However, by placing her novels in a contemporary, everyday setting, she makes the horrors that the women in her novels have to



face more realistic to her female readership. In contrast to Emily's struggles, Catherine's struggles become real at the end of *Northanger Abbey*. Although both heroines can escape the toxic environment of the Gothic castles, Emily leaves the Castle of Udolpho willingly and happily, whereas Catherine's departure from Northanger Abbey reveals her own faults and failures. Unlike the Gothic heroine, she is not immediately rewarded with a happy ending. Rather she needs to understand and learn from her own mistakes before she is given a similar happy resolution. Catherine's true trial, therefore, only begins when General Tilney bans her from his property, whereas Emily has endured and overcome her trial upon leaving the Castle of Udolpho. Catherine is roused from her suspicions when her love interest Henry Tilney confronts her with the falseness of her wild imaginations. Yet, her faults do not truly sink in until she leaves Northanger Abbey and comes to the realisation that "the day which she had spent at that place had been one of the happiest of her life" (1029). Contrastingly, Emily's departure from the Castle of Udolpho is far less melancholic as she muses silently and eyes the beauty surrounding her.

Therefore, just as Richardson's Pamela and Fielding's Shamela are presented as polar opposites, Austen presents Catherine's character as the reverse of Radcliffe's Emily. Instead of travelling the path of a Gothic heroine such as Emily, Catherine's journey becomes a real struggle at the close of the novel. In creating her heroine, Austen thus created an anti-heroine of the Gothic novel and subverted this element of the popular genre.

## 2.2 Austen's "Gothic" Style

Both Emily in *Udolpho* and Catherine in *Northanger Abbey* move away from "the childhood familiar setting, to an intermediate series of exotic settings in which [they are] ignorant, exhilarated, and bewildered, to a lonely crisis-setting in which the apparently frightening and the truly frightening alternate" (Wilt 137). In imitation of Radcliffe's Gothic novels, Austen

also used different “marketing cues” in order to create a Gothic setting (Miles, “The 1790s” 41). Catherine moved from her childhood home to Bath and then visited the Tilney family’s estate: Northanger Abbey. As was argued in the introduction, there are several “marketing cues” the critics of the eighteenth century would have used to classify a novel as belonging to the literature of terror (Miles, “The 1790s” 410). Yet, in *Northanger Abbey*, Austen did not merely imitate these cues, but rather – in true mocking fashion – played with them.

Although Austen used one of the key architectural features of the Gothic novel by setting the second half of the tale in a former abbey, the author subverted the genre’s typical convention by placing this abbey in England rather than in a foreign country. While Emily’s adventures take place in France and Italy, Catherine is confined to England. This subversion of a typical element of the genre of the Gothic novel, already provides differences in setting. When Emily first sets eyes on the Castle of Udolpho, she describes it as follows:

the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a loomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. (226-7)

Although the reader is given a description of the exterior of the castle, he or she is urged to view the castle as a possible threatening or toxic location. When the beams of the sun fade, the castle seems “melancholy” and a “thin vapour” surrounds the sublime environment. As was argued in the introduction, the sublime can be defined as “an apprehension of danger in nature or art without the immediate risk of destruction” (Clery 28). The threat of danger upon approaching the Castle of Udolpho is apparent in Emily’s first observation of it.

Catherine's approach to Northanger Abbey provides a stark contrast to this threatening appearance of the Castle of Udolpho. Upon nearing the home of the Tilneys, Catherine grows confused:

To pass between lodges of a modern appearance, to find herself with such ease in the very precincts of the abbey, and driven so rapidly along a smooth, level road of fine gravel, without obstacle, alarm or solemnity of any kind, struck her as odd and inconsistent. (993)

Catherine's knowledge of abbeys has to a large extent been shaped by her reading of Gothic novels, including *Udolpho*. The utter normalcy of the environment she finds herself in and the lack of sublime nature strikes her as strange. As an avid reader of the Gothic novel and as an imaginative young woman, she hopes to find a sight more exciting to the senses. This is again emphasised when Catherine enters Northanger Abbey:

The windows, to which she looked with peculiar dependence, from having heard the general talk of his preserving them in their Gothic form with reverential care, were yet less what her fancy had portrayed. To be sure, the pointed arch was preserved – the form of them was Gothic – they might be even casements – but every pane was so large, so clear, so light! To an imagination which had hoped for the smallest divisions, and the heaviest stonework, for painted glass, dirt, and cobwebs, the difference was very distressing. (993-4)

According to Hoeveler, Gothic novels presented both feminine and masculine environments

(128). The castles, abbeys and ruins which could be found in the Gothic novel, can be seen as the masculine world in which “psychic artifice, self-haunting and haunted, concealment through deception of the mercenary motives for marriage in a vacuous society” existed (Hoeveler 128-9). However – at first glance – this is not the world Catherine is shown at her arrival at Northanger Abbey, resulting in the passionate heroine’s disappointment.

Nonetheless, her disappointment at her surroundings, does not predominate Catherine’s visit to Northanger Abbey. The imaginative heroine soon imagines she has been trapped in her own Gothic adventure. After she has been shown to her room, Catherine adjusts to her surroundings and her spirits are lifted when her eyes fall on a high chest next to the fireplace. Her curiosity piqued, she kneels in front of it to seize “with trembling hands, the hasp of the lock [...] with difficulty, for something seemed to resist her efforts” (995). The chest provided Catherine with her first self-proclaimed mystery in Northanger Abbey and she becomes resolved to open the chest, “but how strangely mysterious! The door was still immovable” (997). In these sentences, Austen makes use of the idiom which can be found in the Gothic novel. Catherine’s anxiety and inability to open mysterious objects, could have come straight from one of Radcliffe’s novels. The characters in the Gothic novel are often taken possession of – “seized” – by feelings or they take possession of something by claiming it as their own to keep or examine. In this scene, Austen’s Catherine seized the chest in order to examine it with trembling hands. Catherine’s trembling hands may, furthermore, indicate the feeling of dread which has taken possession of her heart at the sight of this mysterious object. Austen’s usage of the Gothic idiom displays the parody in her work. She repeats Radcliffe’s words, yet slightly exaggerates their intonation, exposing them to ridicule. Nonetheless, she does not mercilessly mock the Gothic in *Northanger Abbey*, but rather deflates the importance of the heroine’s imaginations and, in doing so, emphasises the true “fears and horrors” in eighteenth-century polite society (Ellis 50).

Not only the setting of Austen's novel and the idiom in which Catherine's adventures are described are similar to the traditional conventions of the Gothic novel. The patriarchal father figure in Austen's *Northanger Abbey* – General Tilney – can be seen as a subverted Gothic villain. The Gothic villain, as argued in chapter two, generally longed for domination in an old, dark and feudal society. Austen's General Tilney is a widowed father who longs to see his children married to proper matches. He assumes Catherine is the heiress of the estate of Mr and Mrs Allen and, therefore, thinks her a proper match for one of his sons. Once he is informed that Catherine is not in fact a wealthy heiress he evicts her from his home and "is greatly, very greatly discomposed" (1026). Several of his characteristics are similar to the characteristics of the typical patriarchal villain in the literature of terror. Like Mazzini in *A Sicilian Romance*, he attempts to arrange the marriages of his children in order to hold on to his domination and wealth. Moreover, mystery appears to surround him, causing Catherine to believe that he has a terrible secret. When her walk with General Tilney in the gardens of Northanger Abbey is disturbed, Catherine "was shocked to find how much her spirits were relieved by the separation" (1002). Similarly, Radcliffe's Emily's "terror vanished" after Montoni's departure from the room.

According to Hoeveler, General Tilney "is a patriarch and a usurper" in his own home whose pleasantries towards Catherine exist only because of a courtship for her and his son (137). She, furthermore, argues that Austen's definition of the female Gothic concerns itself with a tale of female disinheritance and suppression (138). Therefore, instead of mocking the genre of the Gothic novel in this respect, Austen appears to embrace the Gothic in order to explain female distress in polite society. Women in everyday society were oppressed by men as well and this urged the unmarried author to express and address her frustration towards this topic in her novels. As Gilbert and Gubar state, Austen rewrote the Gothic

not because she disagrees with her sister novelists about the confinement of women, but because she believes women have been imprisoned more effectively by miseducation than by walls and more by financial dependency, which is the authentic ancestral curse, than by any verbal oath of warning. (135)

Yet, although General Tilney appears to be a perfect example of a subverted Gothic villain, he is effectively not guilty of the crimes Catherine suspected. Upon realising that her imaginations have led her astray, Catherine's feelings turn from dread and terror into "astonishment and doubt [...] and a shortly succeeding ray of common sense added some bitter emotions of shame" (1010). Catherine has awoken from her Gothic imaginations and reluctantly starts to rely on her common sense. She comes to the realisation that:

Charming as were all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and charming even was the work of all her imitators, it was not in them perhaps that human nature, at least in the Midland counties of England, was to be looked for [...] among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad. (1013)

In this passage, Catherine scolds herself both in order to calm herself down as well as to punish herself for her foolish imaginations. She starts to believe that the Gothic works she has read do not truly and factually display human nature. Although, she leaves some leeway by arguing that perhaps only the English were not either good or bad, but a mixture of both. Therefore, she does not dismiss her belief that "among the Alps and Pyrenees, perhaps, there were no mixed characters" (1013). According to Wilt, this passage points towards "a complex

admission rather than rejection of the Gothic” on Austen’s part (127). Rather than parodying and satirising the genre of the Gothic novel, Austen’s narrator and protagonist – in this excerpt – appear to accept its established characters and conventions. More than anything, however, this passage reveals Catherine’s development as a character. While at the start she was presented as a Gothic anti-heroine and as an “inattentive, and occasionally stupid” girl who could be considered “*almost* pretty to-day,” the end of the novel shows that she has learned to accept exactly what the Gothic novel may sometimes ignore: she has gained a basic understanding of human nature (917; 918).

### Chapter 3: The Gothic and *Sense and Sensibility*

Although not the first of Austen’s novels to be finished, *Sense and Sensibility* was the first of her novels to be published in 1811, approximately sixteen years after its prototype “Elinor and Marianne” was first begun. The novel has often been described as a “state-of-the-art regency novel” (Keymer 31). The novel’s focus on female experiences and emotions and on the female struggle against romantic obstacles and social conventions, are similar to the regency novel. The regency novel focusses on female experience and emotion in love. While Austen’s novel contains these elements, it also explores “the contrast between a woman who submits herself to the guidance of common sense and one who follows impulse” (Chew and Altick 1200). In creating Elinor and Marianne, Austen provided the reader with “the pleasure of character types,” something which had been popularised by the genre of the medieval romance (Keymer 32). Romance characterisation, according to Ellis, tended “towards idealization of particular traits, expressed the essence of its heroes and villains in generalized portraits depicted in the most profuse and sensuous detail” (19). Unlike the characters in the medieval romances, however, Austen’s characters were not generalized, but rather displayed “complex new expressions of interior life” (Keymer 32). Austen began her work on “Elinor

and Marianne” in 1795, five years after Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance* was published. Both novels tell the tale of two sisters and it can be argued that Austen mirrored her own characters on Radcliffe’s Emilia and Julia, since the similarities between the pair of sisters are striking and cannot be assigned to coincidence only.

According to Waldron, Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* challenges the fictions of her time – both sentimental as well as Gothic fiction – by making a stand against relativism and the ease with which problems in these novels are solved (63). Traces of the Gothic, however, can still be found in Austen’s novel. In this chapter the main characters of Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* will be compared to two characters of Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance*.

Furthermore, the chapter will explore the use of Gothic conventions and antagonists in the first novel of Austen to be published. This analysis will reveal that Austen’s style of characterization – with regards to her protagonists as well as antagonists – and her method of plotting in *Sense and Sensibility* was shaped by her reading, understanding and admiration of *A Sicilian Romance*.

### 3.1 *Sense and Sensibility and A Sicilian Romance*

*A Sicilian Romance* is dominated by the romance structure. According to Ellis, the medieval romance “was conventionally located at a distance from the contemporary scene of everyday life: in a socially remote society (amongst the nobility and aristocracy); in the distant past and exotic locations; and revising well-known stories” (19). According to Ferguson Ellis, however, Radcliffe “transformed the features of romance ... into instruments of didacticism whose lessons addressed real problems” (99). She argues that Radcliffe’s protagonists – like the heroines of the sentimental novel – “exist entirely inside parameters of virtue” (Ferguson 99). Yet, unlike the heroine of the sentimental novel, Radcliffe’s heroine responds with rationality and independence to the problems she encounters. In contrast to Richardson’s



protagonists, Radcliffe's protagonists portray rational behaviour. Nonetheless, they act rationally and independently without moving outside of "a definition that denied this resource to women" for they "exhibit a hyper-sensitivity to God's hand," which indicates their virtue (Ferguson 100).

As in many Gothic romances, the dynastic ambitions of the tyrannical father figure are contrasted with the heroine's love interest. According to Hoeveler, Radcliffe's early Gothic novels were dominated by two main characteristics. The first of these characteristics is the premise "that men are intrinsically and inherently violent and aggressive, and as such, to be feared by women" (Hoeveler 53). The second characteristic of Radcliffe's Gothic novel is the heroine's "strangely convoluted relationship with her parents" (Hoeveler 53). According to Hoeveler, all Gothic heroines have a mysterious relationship with their parents (53). Either they are orphaned – or think they are – or one of her parents displays immoral behaviour by imprisoning or murdering the other parent. Radcliffe's heroine Julia de Mazzini finds out that her tyrannical father has imprisoned her mother, who she had supposed long dead. This dark family secret reveals the existence of the first characteristic in Radcliffe's novel. The Marquis de Mazzini dislikes all the supposedly good characters and only displays fondness of his unamiable second wife. As Hoeveler states, the Marquis "cannot appreciate good when he is confronted with it" and he instead opts to imprison, destroy or punish the good characters of the novel (63).

The good characters in *A Sicilian Romance* are – undoubtedly – the Mazzini sisters and their mother. When Julia comes across a painting of her supposedly dead mother, she comments on the kindness of the woman in the portrait: "the eyes were fixed on hers with a look of penetrating softness" (28). Hoeveler argues that Julia embodies her mother's sensibility and her part in the story is defined by a task of redemption (63). Her mother was imprisoned by her false father and Julia needs to rewrite history by avenging her tyrannical

father and stepmother by marrying a good husband. Like her mother, Julia de Mazzini possesses a good character:

The figure of Julia was light and graceful – her step was airy – her mien animated, and her smile enchanting. Her eyes were dark, and full of fire, but tempered with modest sweetness. Her features were finely turned – every laughing grace played round her mouth, and her countenance quickly discovered all the various emotions of her soul. (6)

Julia – as the quote exemplifies – is a young woman driven by her emotions. These feelings are often betrayed through her eyes and she is said to sometimes “sigh for the airy image which her fancies painted” (7). As Hoeveler states, she is “self-dramatizing, extreme, hyperbolic, and given to excesses of emotion and imagination befitting her situation” (59). Although Hoeveler’s assessment of Julia’s character is not exactly positive, Julia is good because she is “professionally feminized and victimized” (60). She has remained a loving and obedient daughter to the Marquis de Mazzini for a large part of her life. As Ellis argues, sensibility both restricts and empowers in Radcliffe’s novels (55). In her novels sensibility is seen as crucial to the domestic environment. Contrastingly, sensibility also empowered since it recognised the deeper power of the emotions and passions, which opened the domestic economy to wilder currents of sexuality and feeling.

Julia’s excessive feelings are often tempered by her ability to be touched by music and art. Julia is said to be “uncommonly susceptible of the charms of harmony. She had feelings which trembled in unison to all its various and enchanting powers” (4). Due to their sensibility, “all of the good, sentimental characters in the gothic universe” are blessed with a good taste in music (Hoeveler 60). Julia’s sister, Emilia de Mazzini, similarly displays an

ability to be affected by art: “Emilia’s taste led her to drawing, and she soon made rapid advances in that art” (4). Although this quote appears to indicate that both sisters are prone to sensibility, Emilia’s feelings are not as excessive as her younger sister’s. She is said to possess a “tender timidity,” which makes her less sensitive to her Gothic surroundings (6). It may be for this reason that Emilia de Mazzini soon disappears to the background of *A Sicilian Romance*, while her sister becomes the tale’s heroine. Emilia is simply not as in tune with her feelings as her sister and, therefore, cannot become the heroine in a Gothic novel “forever rummaging through chests of papers, just happening to stumble on some secret, long-lost document that explains a hidden and unsolved crime” (Hoeveler 61).

Although Julia becomes Radcliffe’s heroine, the author herself did not necessarily approve of Julia’s sentimental nature. As Smith argues, Radcliffe aimed to expose the weaknesses and flaws of the sentimental heroine by placing this heroine in a Gothic environment (577). While sensibility was regarded to be a positive character trait, an excess of sensibility and exaggerated responses to actions or events was criticised in the late eighteenth century.

In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen similarly attempts to show the faults of excessive sentimental behaviour by exposing the heroines of her tale to more realistic horrors. Unlike Radcliffe, however, Austen does not criticise this sentimental state of mind by revealing how “such a state of mind brings about many of the terrors which the heroine faces” (Smith 580). Rather, Austen’s criticism of overly sentimental behaviour is humorous, which may indicate that Austen – as she did in *Northanger Abbey* – again parodied the conventions of the Gothic novel in *Sense and Sensibility*.

In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen’s heroines are Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. As Radcliffe’s Julia, Austen’s Marianne is inclined to feel in excess:

‘Oh!’ cried Marianne, ‘with what transporting sensations have I formerly seen them fall! How have I delighted, as I walked, to see them driven in showers about me by the wind! What feelings have they, the season, the air altogether inspired! Now there is no one to regard them. They are seen only as a nuisance, swept hastily off, and driven as much as possible from the sight!’ ‘It is not everyone,’ said Elinor, ‘who has your passion for dead leaves.’ (47)

In this passage, Austen’s Marianne is overcome by the beauty found in the falling of leaves and the changing of the seasons. In her description of this event, however, Marianne uses overly sentimental language, which can be compared to the moments of sublimity in Radcliffe’s Gothic romance. In Radcliffe’s novels, however, a moment of sublimity is related to the grand and grotesque wonders of nature. While Marianne admires fallen leaves on the ground, Madame de Menon, in Radcliffe’s novel, is awe-struck when her eyes fall on the nature surrounding the mountains:

A group of wild and grotesque rocks rose in a semicircular form, and their fantastic shapes exhibited Nature in her most sublime and striking attitudes. Here her vast magnificence elevated the mind of the beholder to enthusiasm. Fancy caught the thrilling sensation, and at her touch the towering steeps became shaded with unreal glooms; the caves more darkly frowned – the projecting cliffs assumed a more terrific aspect, and the wild overhanging shrubs waved to the gale in deeper murmurs. The scene inspired madame with reverential awe, and her thoughts involuntarily rose, ‘from Nature up to Nature's God.’ (104)

A moment of sublimity, according to Philip Shaw, “refers to the moment when the ability to apprehend, to know, and to express a thought is defeated” (3). Through this inability of apprehension, however, the mind is illumined and gets an insight into what lies beyond thought and language. In the extracts above, both Madame de Menon and Marianne are overcome by their emotions. Nonetheless, Austen appears to mock these moments of sublimity in the Gothic novel by having one of her heroines respond to the falling of leaves rather than to a more impressive landscape. She repeats Radcliffe’s words, but exaggerates their tone and intonation due to the fact that Marianne’s mind is illumined by the falling of leaves rather than by a grander landscape. Contrastingly, Marianne’s sister Elinor is far less sentimental than her younger sister and – rather humorously – attempts to bring Marianne’s feet back to the ground. Like the Mazzini sisters, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood deal with their feelings differently, making the one less and the other more susceptible to feeling in excess.

Unlike Emilia, however, Elinor does not disappear from Austen’s narrative. While Emilia could not have become the heroine in Radcliffe’s Gothic novel, Elinor is arguably the main protagonist in Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*. Elinor Dashwood is introduced to the reader as follows:

Elinor, this eldest daughter, whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother [...] She had an excellent heart; - her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them. (4-5)

The quote shows that Elinor is sentimental to a certain extent, but that she is also sensible for

she knows how to control her feelings. Contrastingly, her younger sister Marianne “had resolved never to be taught” how to command her feelings (5). She, although similarly “sensible and clever,” was “everything but prudent” and her feelings “could have no moderation” (5). According to Waldron, Elinor and Marianne’s different habits of mind stem from different trends and traditions. While Marianne’s ideals are based upon the fashionable sentimental novels of the 1760s and 1770s, Elinor’s ideals are those of discipline and self-control (Waldron 68). Elinor’s ideals are also valued by Radcliffe, whose heroines needed to learn how to respond with rationality and independence to the problems they encountered. The sentimental moral theory Marianne preferred “projected the idea that society was, or ought to be, based on mutual love and benevolence” (Ellis 54). Moreover, it promoted “a heightened sensitivity to the social and moral problems of economic change, and engaged actively in the promotion of philanthropic institutions to relieve distress” (Ellis 54).

Marianne’s belief in the strength of feelings over the mind would thus leave her more easily affected by emotional influences. Therefore – like Julia – she possessed all the character traits to become a Gothic heroine and as a result is more susceptible to encounter trouble – in the form of Mr Willoughby – in Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* than her older sister. Elinor, however, intuitively knows which action or judgement should be deemed appropriate in a given situation or sphere of activity. She is truly sensible and, therefore, less inclined to be drawn to confrontation. She is prudent, perhaps too much so, since she nearly misses out on the love of her life. Austen’s novel does not reject either sense or sensibility, but rather exploits the variety of senses (Keymer 35).

### 3.2 *The Gothic Roots of Sense and Sensibility’s Antagonists*

The main antagonist in the Gothic novel was the tyrannical father figure. However, the Gothic novel proved to be open to other villains as well, such as the evil stepmother, the powerful

Catholic church or the “genteel demon-lover” (Wilt 144). In *Sense and Sensibility* similar villains can be found and one of the main helpers of these villains is already introduced on the first page of the novel: the dead father of the Dashwood sisters. Although, Henry Dashwood had been a loving father to the daughters from his second marriage, his will “gave as much disappointment as pleasure” (3). Even though the son from his first marriage was already well provided for and his daughters needed protection, the old gentleman left his entire fortune and estate to his son and grandson. Although, it was customary to leave your fortune to the male heir, Henry Dashwood could have provided for his daughters by enclosing a letter in his will stating that he wished his son to provide for his stepmother and half-sisters. However, due to the fact that Henry Dashwood grew up in an androcentric society, he assumes the order of nature that he is familiar with. Androcentrism centers about the concept that “males and male experience are treated as a neutral standard or norm for the culture or the species as a whole” (Lipsitz Bem 41). Henry Dashwood is said “to leave himself no power of providing for those who were most dear to him, and who most needed provision” (Austen 3).

Like Emily’s father in Radcliffe’s *Udolpho*, the powerless father of the Dashwood sisters leaves his wife and daughters “vulnerable to villains in his own family” (Wilt 128). These opponents within his own family arrive immediately after the father’s funeral: John and Fanny Dashwood. John Dashwood “was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold hearted, and rather selfish is to be ill-disposed” (4). Moreover, his wife is said to be a “strong caricature of [John Dashwood] himself; – more narrow-minded and selfish” (4). Her selfish nature is already exposed upon her immediate arrival at the home of the Dashwood sisters after her father-in-law’s funeral, because this explains “how little attention to the comfort of other people she could act when occasion required it” (4). This lack of sympathy is further displayed when Fanny Dashwood urges her husband to lower the sum he intends to give to his half-sisters by his father’s request. She finally succeeds in manipulating her

husband not to provide his mother-in-law and sisters with any money, but rather to gift them some furniture instead. Although the father of the Dashwood sisters thus enables the villains in his family to act by not stating clearly in his will that he wishes his wife and daughters to have a sum of three thousand pounds, Fanny Dashwood's manipulations and John Dashwood's adoration of his wife finally push Elinor and Marianne into genteel poverty. Like Radcliffe's villains, John and Fanny Dashwood "crave the stimulation of meteoric profits and conspicuous consumption" (Ferguson 101). While John and Fanny Dashwood are the ones who confront Mrs Dashwood and her daughters with the discriminatory inheritance law of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, it is Henry Dashwood who enables these opponents of the Dashwood sisters by not clearly stating in his will that he wishes his son to care for his wife and daughters.

Like Ferdinand Mazzini in *A Sicilian Romance*, Henry Dashwood has remarried after the death of his first wife and was very fond of Mrs Dashwood. Although Mazzini's first wife never died and although he never had children with his second wife, both men are in effect blinded by love or lust. Mazzini is said to "be governed by his [second] wife" (3), while the old Henry Dashwood's faith in his son and fondness of his grandson blind him to the impossible situation he leaves his wife and daughters in. Henry Dashwood, therefore, may not be the tyrannical father figure that the Marquis de Mazzini is, but he does seriously affect his daughters' futures. Mazzini "whose heart was dead to parental tenderness" posed a direct danger to his daughters due to his aggressive temper, whereas the tender-hearted Henry Dashwood unwillingly shatters the prospects of those he loves most. Similarly, Emily St Aubert's father in *Udolpho* is ruined after trusting the wrong people and, as a result, he pushes his daughter into poverty. By having the kind Henry Dashwood complicate the lives of his wife and daughters, Austen attempts to show the everyday reality for many women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. For many of these women, one of the true terrors in



life was being left behind without any prospects.

As Mary Wollstonecraft stated in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, learned men such as Rousseau declared that “a woman should never, for a moment, feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear” (179). By subverting several elements which played a large part in the Gothic novel or the literature of terror, Austen was able to show the true horrors which could terrorise women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. By landing into genteel poverty, the Dashwood sisters experience a painful personal setback due to their potentially endangered and ruined future. The only escape from their fate left would have been a good marriage to a proper and respectable gentleman.

The proper and respectable gentleman on which Marianne lays her eyes, arrives in a moment of need. As a true knight in shining armour, Willoughby rescues Marianne after she has fallen and twisted her ankle. The young man “was uncommonly handsome [and] received additional charms from his voice and expression,” leaving the women of the Dashwood family in awe (23). Not only was he handsome and charming, however, since “of music and dancing he was passionately fond” and he was thus “exactly formed to engage Marianne’s heart” (25, 26). As was previously argued, “all of the good, sentimental characters in the Gothic universe” are blessed with a good taste in music (Hoeveler 60). Willoughby thus appears to be a perfectly proper and respectable gentleman and the women of the Dashwood family, therefore, allow him to court Marianne. Looks can be deceiving, however, and this certainly applies to Willoughby. Although he takes a lock of Marianne’s hair – a sign of his love and affection – he also displays improper behaviour when he takes Marianne to Allenham without anyone else to accompany them. Elinor scolds her sister after this visit, but Marianne – convinced of Willoughby’s earnest behaviour – responds: “if there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time, for we always know when we are acting wrong” (37).

Not long after this event, Willoughby leaves the area. An air of secrecy surrounds his departure. He leaves behind a desperate Marianne and a confused Elinor and Mrs Dashwood. However, Elinor suspects Willoughby is not to be trusted and questions her mother whether she knows if Marianne and Willoughby are engaged. Mrs Dashwood responds in shock: “You must think wretchedly indeed of Mr Willoughby, if, after all that has openly passed between them, you can doubt the nature of the terms on which they are together” (43). Mrs Dashwood refuses to believe that Willoughby and her own daughter could ever display such improper behaviour.

Although both Marianne and Mrs Dashwood scarcely believe it, Willoughby is not truthful. Even though Marianne keeps writing to him when they are in the same town, no letter from Willoughby arrives and no visit is paid. After meeting at a party, however, Willoughby does write to Marianne and shatters any hope she still had left by writing: “if I have been so unfortunate as to give rise to a belief of more than I felt, or meant to express, I shall reproach myself” (95). Willoughby appears to have had no good intentions towards Marianne. He merely used her for his own pleasure and entertainment. The terror of being used, according to Wilt, is pure Gothic (138). The male’s exercise of power over the ignorant female is a trope that can often be found in Austen’s novel – in *Northanger Abbey* John Thorpe similarly manipulates Catherine Morland. In *Sense and Sensibility* Marianne is used by Willoughby in pursuit of an unseen end and the young woman is left miserable for it. Marianne is a “student heroine,” while Willoughby is the genteel demon-lover or the lover-villain (Wilt 139).

In many of Radcliffe’s novels, including *Udolpho* and *A Sicilian Romance*, a lover-villain can similarly be found. *Udolpho*’s Count Morano falls in love with Emily St. Aubert and – when she does not return his affections – twice attempts to kidnap her. The Duke de Luovo from *A Sicilian Romance* equally proves to be amoral when he – together with the

Marquis de Mazzini – hunts Julia down as she flees. While Willoughby is not completely similar to either Count Morano or the Duke de Luovo, all three pose as potential lovers and finally threaten or endanger the women they supposedly love. Yet, Count Morano and the Duke de Luovo threaten the heroines physically, whereas Willoughby's behaviour threatens and endangers Marianne's mental state. Even after Willoughby's letter, Marianne continues to believe that the world conspires against her rather than Willoughby himself: “is there a creature in the world whom I would not rather suspect of evil than Willoughby, whose heart I know so well?” (98).

Soon, however, Willoughby's true nature is exposed and Marianne falls ill. According to Gilbert and Gubar, Marianne's illness is caused by her indulgence in sensibility (157). The “unfettered play of her imagination ... represents how imaginative women are infected and sickened by their dreams” (Gilbert and Gubar 156-7). When Willoughby – after hearing the news of her illness – comes to see Marianne, he meets with Elinor and – although her anger towards him is great – he succeeds in charming her “and in spite of herself made her think him sincere” (165). Perhaps Willoughby's talent to attract compassion in those he meets, whatever his own faults, is what makes him so dangerous to sentimental women such as Marianne. Therefore, in contrast to the dangerous lovers from Radcliffe's novel, he does not merely physically endanger women, but rather threatens them by exposing them to his charms. Willoughby thus appears to represent a more realistic threat to the women of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. As Henry Dashwood's death confronted his wife and daughters with the reality of the world, Willoughby terrorises Marianne by exposing her to one of the true terrors in the life of a young female: to be used by a supposedly respectful gentleman.

Unlike the original Gothic novel, Radcliffe's Gothic fiction did not allow for “experiences beyond the rational” (Ellis 21). Radcliffe, instead of describing the supernatural

in a mode of realism, explained away the supernatural in her novels. Similarly, Austen subverted the mystery created in the Gothic novel by revealing the truth. Austen uses the tension of the mystery – Willoughby’s strange behaviour – to set her novel in motion, but finally exposes the gentleman’s true nature. Although charming at first glance, he is a genteel demon-lover with no high regard for anyone but himself.

#### Chapter 4: The Gothic and *Pride and Prejudice*

*Pride and Prejudice* was first published in 1813. Although the novel was met with great praise from family members and friends, the author herself declared the novel to be “too light & bright & sparkling – it wants shade” (Letter 80). Often described as a novel of manners, Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* was first drafted between October 1796 and August 1797 under the name “First Impressions.” Although this manuscript was rejected for publication by Cadell & Davies, the manuscript remained a favourite among Austen’s family members (Mandal 45). In one of her letters to Cassandra, written in June 1799, Austen states that:

I would not let Martha read First Impressions again upon any account, & am very glad that I did not leave it in your power. — She is very cunning, but I see through her design; — she means to publish it from Memory, & one more perusal must enable her to do it. (Letter 21)

While Austen does not appear to have been very keen on publishing “First Impressions” after its initial rejection, she did begin to revise her manuscript in 1810. In a letter to Cassandra, written in January 1813, Austen confides in her sister by telling her that:

The 2d vol. is shorter than I cd wish — but the difference is not so much in reality as in look, there being a larger proportion of Narrative in that part. I have lopt & cropt so successfully however that I imagine it must be rather shorter than S. & S. altogether. (Letter 78)

A few days after writing this letter to Cassandra, Jane received her own copy of her newly published novel. Although she admits to being “vain enough & well satisfied enough” with her final editing of the novel, she also comments that the story would have benefitted by the addition of another chapter “of sense if it could be had, if not of solemn specious nonsense — about something unconnected with the story” (Letter 80).

According to Bree, Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* is to a large extent shaped by her reading of Fanny Burney’s *Cecilia* and *Camilla* (63). In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen humorously contrasts these works by Burney with the more popular Gothic novels by describing them as:

only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best-chosen language. (929)

Austen’s praise of the anti-Gothic works that are “only” novels in this extract cannot be missed (929). Moreover, Austen’s subscription to *Camilla* – as “Miss J. Austen, Steventon” – further emphasises her love and admiration for the female novelist’s works (Jones 111). Furthermore, the title of Austen’s novel may well have been derived from a paragraph in

Burney's *Cecilia*:

The whole of this unfortunate business, said Dr Lyster, has been the result of PRIDE and PREJUDICE. [...] if to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you owe your miseries, so wonderfully is good and evil balanced, that to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you will also owe their termination. (908)

There certainly is a close intertextual relationship between Burney's and Austen's novel. Yet, at the same time it is possible that Austen's original title – "First Impressions" – was taken from a sentence in the first chapter of Radcliffe's *Udolpho*: "he instructed [Emily] to resist first impressions, and to acquire that steady dignity of mind, that can alone counterbalance the passions" (5). If the title of the first draft of her tale is indeed drawn from Radcliffe's Gothic novel, it could be wondered whether Austen's knowledge and understanding of the literature of terror is also reflected in *Pride and Prejudice*. It can be said with certainty, however, that both the quote from Burney's novel and the quote from Radcliffe's work reflect the lesson found in Austen's work: "that our perceptions are often inadequate, or even wrong" (Knox-Shaw 32). This chapter will show that Austen's characterization and her method of plotting in *Pride and Prejudice* were indeed shaped by her reading and knowledge of Gothic fiction.

#### 4.1 Patriarchal and Matriarchal Power in *Pride and Prejudice*

The very first chapter of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* opens with a comic discussion between Mr and Mrs Bennet, the parents of five daughters. Mrs Bennet urges Mr Bennet to visit their new and single neighbour, Mr Bingley, for the sake of their daughters. Although Mr Bennet gives no indication of visiting the young gentleman, he does abide her wish.

Teasingly, however, he does not admit his visit to his wife until she declares to be sick of

hearing about Mr Bingley. To which Mr Bennet replies: “I am sorry to hear that; but why did not you tell me so before? If I had known as much this morning, I certainly would not have called on him. It is very unlucky; but as I have actually paid the visit, we cannot escape the acquaintance now” (203). Mr Bennet – as the head of the Bennet household – holds the future of his daughters in his hands. Since he has no male heir, his fortune will go to his cousin Mr Collins eventually, which would leave his wife and daughters penniless.

The only escape from poverty his daughters are offered is marriage and the somewhat hysterical Mrs Bennet cannot wait to see her daughters brought to safety. In contrast to Catherine Morland’s nearly invisible father and the Dashwood sisters’ deceased father, Mr Bennet is present for a large part of the narrative. Yet, as Wilt argues, Mr Bennet is as sarcastic as he is ineffectual and, therefore, he is “as wilful and threatening to [his] daughters’ happiness as many of the Gothic villains” (129). Moreover, like *Sense and Sensibility*’s Mrs Dashwood, Mrs Bennet is as “immature and silly” as her youngest daughters and she is, therefore, “unable to guide [them] into maturity” (Gilbert and Gubar 125).

Despite their good intentions, both parents in *Pride and Prejudice* are capable of harming their daughters’ futures. By creating an inefficient set of parents to the five Bennet daughters, Austen demonstrates “her discomfort with her cultural inheritance, specifically her dissatisfaction with the tight place assigned women in patriarchy and her analysis of the economics of sexual exploitation” (Gilbert and Gubar 112). Female authors of Gothic fiction – such as Radcliffe – effectually showed the same dissatisfaction in their novels by subtly directing their readership “to consider one of the central issues of the 1790s: the status of women” (Ellis 50). In contrast to Radcliffe, however, Austen opts for her novels to take place in eighteenth-century England instead of locating the story in a distant society of the past.

Mr Bennet, according to Wilt, is as harmful to his daughters as the patriarchal villain in a Gothic novel (129). Although Mr Bennet does visit Mr Bingley to allow his daughters to

be introduced to him, he is often sarcastic rather than effective as a father. While Mr Bennet is as witty and charming as his daughter Elizabeth, he often prefers to nurture his own private pleasures over acting out his obligations towards his family (Miles, "Character" 20).

Furthermore, the Bennet daughters cannot turn to their mother to compensate their lack of father. Due to their mother's silliness, they are figuratively motherless. They are thus easily persuaded to look to their father for security (Gilbert and Gubar 125). Mr Bennet, however, cannot offer his daughters complete security. His ineffective and, at times, hopeless parenting most clearly comes to light after Lydia Bennet has run off with Mr Wickham. To borrow a phrase from *Mansfield Park*, Lydia Bennet is "prepared for matrimony by an hatred of home, restraint and tranquility" (513). Characters who are in a similar situation in Austen's novels are *Sense and Sensibility*'s Eliza Brandon and Lucy Steele, *Pride and Prejudice*'s Georgiana Darcy and *Mansfield Park*'s Julia and Maria Bertram. Mr Bennet – who "is to curb his wife's silliness" – fails to teach his daughter to preserve her respectability (Miles, "Character" 20). Moreover, when in search of his youngest daughter, Mr Bennet – "a most negligent and dilatory correspondent" (354) – fails to inform his family. It is Mrs Bennet's brother, Mr Gardiner, who has to step in and ensure that Mr Bennet is – as his wife fears – "not killed in a duel" (Austen 354). When Mr Bennet returns empty-handed, leaving Mr Gardiner to the task of finding his daughter, he laments his ineffective parenting: "Who should suffer but myself? It has been my own doing, and I ought to feel it" (Austen 356). Yet, the moment a letter arrives from Mr Gardiner to inform the family of Lydia's whereabouts, Mr Bennet again proves to be an ineffective parent in that he needs his daughters to urge him to write back to their uncle.

Although Mr Bennet cannot be compared to the Gothic novel's patriarchal villain, he and his wife threaten the happiness of their daughters. Both Mr Bennet and Mrs Bennet, are improper, powerless and ineffective parents who are unable to preserve their parental power.



However, Mr and Mrs Bennet are not the only faulty parents in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Another parent who threatens the happiness of her own child is Lady Catherine de Bourgh. In contrast to Mr and Mrs Bennet, however, Lady Catherine is no powerless parent. Lady Catherine represents matriarchal power in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and, as figures of patriarchal power in the Gothic novel, Lady Catherine is vilified. Mr Darcy's aunt is an arrogant, egotistical and rude woman who "patronizes all the other characters in the novel" and attempts to manage the affairs of others (Gilbert and Gubar 172).

Like Lady Susan in Austen's early story, Lady Catherine feels nothing but disdain for her pale, weak and passive daughter. The mother-daughter pair from *Pride and Prejudice* is similar to the mother-daughter pair found in Austen's "Lady Susan." Both Miss de Bourgh and Frederica are dominated by their powerful mothers. Moreover, the unattractiveness of both Lady Susan and Lady Catherine is emphasised by the way they treat their daughters. However, while Lady Susan's daughter attempts to escape the clutches of her mother, Miss de Bourgh remains passive throughout the novel. She appears to be patronised by the presence of her mother, since she prefers not to converse at all and eats very little. According to Ferguson Ellis, "the Gothic novel can be distinguished by the presence of houses in which people are locked in and locked out. They are concerned with violence done to familial bods that is frequently directed against women" (3). In Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Miss de Bourgh is a prisoner in her own home. She is controlled by her mother and does not dare speak up against her. The familial bond between these two women is thus disturbed.

Although Mr Collins appears to worship Lady Catherine de Bourgh, others cower in her presence. When Elizabeth is first introduced to Lady Catherine she is accompanied by Charlotte's sister: Maria Lucas. The young girl's "alarm was every moment increasing" when ascending the stairs in Lady Catherine's home (285). Moreover, she is said to be "frightened almost out of her senses" as she sits on a chair in the lady's household (286). Lady

Catherine's presence thus appears to excite fear in sensitive girls such as Maria Lucas and the "pale and sickly" Miss de Bourgh (286). It can be questioned, however, why young women such as Maria Lucas and Miss de Bourgh cower in the presence of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. When questioned by Elizabeth, Wickham declares that he "never liked her [...] her manners were dictatorial and insolent" (245). Although, Wickham may not seem to be the most trustworthy gentleman, his opinion of Lady Catherine is accurate. Lady Catherine aims to dominate those she knows and does not tolerate those who may contradict her. As becomes clear when Elizabeth first meets her ladyship:

there was little to be done but to hear Lady Catherine talk, which she did without any intermission till coffee came in, delivering her opinion on every subject in so decisive a manner as proved that she was not used to have her judgment controverted (286-7)

Lady Catherine exerts her matriarchal power so successfully that no one in her own household dares to contradict her. The only person who attempts to challenge her opinions is Elizabeth, who – on several occasions – shocks Lady Catherine by expressing her "opinion very decidedly for so young a person" (288). Moreover, just as the Gothic villains in *A Sicilian Romance* and *Udolpho* declare they should "not be trifled with" (77; 198), Lady Catherine informs Elizabeth that she "ought to know, that I am not to be trifled with" (Austen 386).

Lady Catherine de Bourgh's character is clearly similar to that of the Gothic villain. Like the typical Gothic villain, Lady Catherine aims to control her own life as well as the lives of others in order to gain more power. According to Ferguson Ellis, "the rebellion of Gothic children is confined to the matter of marriage choice" (3). Lady Catherine's own daughter, however, does not rebel against her mother. Rather, her nephew Mr Darcy rebels by

falling in love with a woman of inferior status. When Elizabeth and Darcy have one of their first pleasant conversations at his aunt's home:

they were interrupted by Lady Catherine, who called out to know what they were talking of. Elizabeth immediately began playing again. Lady Catherine approached, and, after listening for a few minutes, said to Darcy, 'Miss Bennet would not play at all amiss, if she practised more, and could have the advantage of a London master. She has a very good notion of fingering, though her taste is not equal to Anne's. Anne would have been a delightful performer, had her health allowed her to learn.' (Austen 293)

Lady Catherine appears to observe her nephew's romantic interest in Elizabeth and decides to interrupt their conversation. Moreover, she subtly reminds Mr Darcy of his engagement to her own daughter by turning the subject to Anne's excellence. Darcy continues to rebel against his aunt, however, by choosing Elizabeth over Miss de Bourgh. When Lady Catherine overhears the "scandalous falsehood" of Darcy's engagement to Elizabeth, she rushes to the home of the Bennet household and attempts to scare Elizabeth off (386). Although, Lady Catherine would not go so far as to physically harm Elizabeth – Mazzini appears to kill Hippolitus when he discovers the gentleman's elopement with his daughter – she does tell Elizabeth that she can "depend upon it I will carry my point" (389). In true villainous fashion, Lady Catherine threatens those who stand in her way and is resolved to win.

Unlike authors of the Gothic novel, however, Austen does not turn to the sublime to describe her villain. Rather, Austen describes Lady Catherine in a satirical fashion. When Lady Catherine attempts to persuade Elizabeth never to marry her nephew Darcy, she says

that she “expected to find a more reasonable young woman” (388). Elizabeth, however, is nothing but thoughtful in the argument with Lady Catherine and – on several occasions – only speaks “after a moment’s deliberation” (388). Like Mazzini, Lady Catherine becomes hysterical when her command is not obeyed and her will is refused, remarking that she “hoped to find [Elizabeth] reasonable”, but – since she is not – must act. However, her display of patriarchal power is mocked by Austen. The reader – who has seen nothing but a thoughtful and reasonable Elizabeth for the entirety of the novel – recognises the humour in Lady Catherine’s accusations. Moreover, whereas *A Sicilian Romance*’s Julia despairs at her father’s passionate response, Elizabeth stands her ground when confronted by Lady Catherine.

#### 4.2 *The Genteel Demon-Lover*

Darcy’s apparent change from a brooding gentleman to a hero worthy of Elizabeth’s love is one of the most celebrated transformations in Austen’s novels. Although Charlotte Brontë described *Pride and Prejudice* as “a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck”, Rochester, in *Jane Eyre*, shares similarities with Darcy (qtd in Smith 10). For although Darcy has become many a woman’s ideal lover, he is not as amiable at the start of the novel. As Todd argues, Darcy is initially introduced as a gentleman who believed himself to possess many a superior quality (“The Romantic Hero” 150). He is described as “haughty, reserved and fastidious” and immensely proud of his high birth, regarding men of a lower class and women as his subordinates (208).

In the late eighteenth century, Radcliffe and her followers introduced a new male character in their Gothic novels. This new male character was “largely unknown from the inside, a man who treated the heroine with cruelty – but with whom she and the reader were nonetheless fascinated” (Todd, “The Romantic Hero” 156). Although he is not placed in a

Gothic setting, Darcy has much in common with this Gothic male character. Yet, even though “the pride of aristocracy trumps the affability of the gentleman demanded in realistic romance”, Darcy – a Gothic villain in a realistic setting – remains fascinating to the characters and readers of *Pride and Prejudice* (Todd, “The Romantic Hero” 155).

At the onset of Austen’s novel, Darcy assumes that he possesses “a real superiority of mind” and that he is among “the wisest and best of men” with “a strong understanding” which he insists should not be ridiculed (230). He considers Elizabeth to be “tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt” (205). Yet, after conversing with her at Netherfield Park, Darcy “began to feel the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention” (231). In the second daughter of the Bennet family he recognises a clever and intellectual young woman who is very well capable of holding his attention in conversation. When he meets Elizabeth again at his aunt’s estate, his first impression is again refuted and he can no longer contain his feelings for her (205). He visits Elizabeth at the Collins’s home – only hours after Colonel Fitzwilliam affirmed Lizzy’s suspicion that Darcy is the source of her sister’s unhappiness – and professes his love for her. Although flattered, Elizabeth is not impressed for she “could easily see that he had no doubt of a favourable answer. He spoke of apprehension and anxiety, but his countenance expressed real security” (300). Darcy’s pride and his “haughty, reserved and fastidious” manners have not prepared him for a negative reply (208). He believes that Elizabeth could simply not refuse him, because he views his proposal – as does Elizabeth – to be a great compliment to her. For not only are her own circumstances not as impressive as his, she also does not meet all of the criteria Bingley claimed he set for a woman at the beginning of the novel:

‘A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this,

she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved.’ ‘All this she must possess,’ added Darcy, ‘and to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading.’ (220)

This set of criteria is similar to the talents the heroines in both Richardson’s sentimental novels as well as Radcliffe’s Gothic novels possess. In *A Sicilian Romance*, the sisters Julia and Emila are accomplished in the arts and Julia is said to possess an “airy” step (6). Moreover, in the preface to his novel, Richardson argues that Pamela “will become the bright Example and Imitation of all the fashionable young ladies of *Great Britain*” (10). Unlike Richardson, however, Austen – like Radcliffe – does not seriously consider women to be capable of meeting such standards. Elizabeth – in response to Darcy’s comments – argues that she is “no longer surprised at [his] knowing *only* six accomplished women” (Austen 220). Like the male characters in Richardson’s and Radcliffe’s novels, Darcy appreciates the ideals set by British society for women. He, as do all the Gothic villains, believes women to be subordinate to men and, as a consequence, expects Elizabeth – “she who is to be chosen, not choosing” – to accept his proposal (Todd, “The Romantic Hero” 151).

Another character in *Pride and Prejudice* who sees women as subordinate creatures is Mr Collins. Although, the cleric differs significantly from Darcy in character, both qualify Elizabeth Bennet as simply a member of a subordinate group: “‘I am not now to learn,’ replied Collins, with a formal wave of the hand, ‘that it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept’” (257). Darcy and Collins, as Todd argues, mirror each other and “impose on Elizabeth [...] crude addresses based on a failure to rate the sex as individuals but simply as members of a subordinate group” (151). Collins is a

cleric and represents the Church of England in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The Catholic Church and religion in itself, as Wilt argues, "is a special and subtle kind of ruin" in the Gothic novel (142). In *A Sicilian Romance*, for example, the monastery where Julia seeks refuge turns out to be corrupt. Although Collins is no member of the catholic church, Austen does subtly comment on the Church of England by introducing a cleric who is little more than a clown (Wilt 142).

Unlike the cleric Mr Collins, however, Darcy redeems himself towards the close of *Pride and Prejudice* by taking on "the mantle of the polite eighteenth-century gentleman" (Todd 155). His "haughty, reserved and fastidious" manners have not disappeared, but a different side to the character is revealed (208). Darcy transforms into a "combination of the old social and civic progress with the new sexual charisma of the romantic hero" (Todd 157). Therefore, in contrast to the Gothic villain, Darcy incorporates values which fit in a brighter bourgeois future, while – at the same time – not discarding his earlier beliefs. Darcy learns to accept his own wrongs and dares to think that perhaps he is not as wise as he had previously thought:

‘The recollection of what I then said, of my conduct, my manners, my expressions during the whole of it, is now, and has been many months, inexpressibly painful to me. Your reproof, so well applied, I shall never forget: ‘had you behaved in a more gentleman-like manner’. Those were your words. You know not, you can scarcely conceive, how they have tortured me;’ (394)

Darcy regrets his behaviour and – in retrospect – acknowledges that his own behaviour was not befitting of a gentleman. Rather than being an impulsive lover – as, for example, *A Sicilian Romance*'s Hippolitus – his behaviour was similar to that of the Gothic villain at the

onset of the novel due to his immense pride. However, when he decided to rebel against his aunt, Lady Catherine, by choosing to marry Elizabeth over his cousin, the mystery surrounding Darcy lifted and his true nature is revealed. At the start of the novel, Lady Catherine's influence over her nephew was great. However, once Darcy steps out of his aunt's shadow and once he is released from her matriarchal powers and her controlling nature, he can no longer be regarded as a Gothic villain.

Yet, Elizabeth is as proud as Darcy himself and her pride deceives her on more than one occasion. As Wilt argues, Elizabeth is the reverse of the Gothic heroine for she goes "to the journey not of the Gothic heroine but of the Gothic antihero, struggling against self-hate trying to cut that destructive emotion down to size" (135). Although no Gothic heroine, Elizabeth is no heroine of sensibility either. Her pride is hurt when Darcy describes her as "tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt" (205). Her injured pride makes it easier for Elizabeth to believe the stories Wickham tells her about Darcy. The image he creates of the gentleman fits the impression she – a woman scorned – gained at the assembly. Contrastingly, her first impressions of Wickham, as Knox-Shaw argues, "are remarkably downright and robust" (33). Wickham's attraction is largely sexual as is explained by his ability to capture "the attention of every lady" (238). He is described to have "all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address" (238). Charming as he may be, it is made "abundantly clear that the core of the Lieutenant's attraction is sexual" (Knox-Shaw 33). In many ways, he is similar to *Sense and Sensibility's* Willoughby. Both males appear to possess a talent to attract compassion in those they meet, whatever their own faults. Although Wickham appears innocent at the onset of the narrative, his presence is as threatening as the existence of the Gothic lover villain. Unlike the Gothic lover villain, however, Wickham represents a more realistic threat to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century female reader of Austen's novels.



Like *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* associates “the perils of the imagination with the pitfalls of selfhood, sexuality and assertion” (Gilbert and Gubar 157). Elizabeth’s first impressions of both Wickham and Darcy are misled due to her injured pride. When she, ultimately, realises her mistakes, she cannot help but feel that she “had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd” (Austen 310). Catherine Morland and Marianne Dashwood go through a similar journey, since both characters are revealed to have let their imaginations run away with them. Like Radcliffe’s Gothic heroine and Catherine Morland and Marianne Dashwood, Elizabeth starts to believe in fictional versions of the truth. Moreover, like the Gothic heroine, Lizzy struggles “for even a limited autonomy” by refusing to marry for anything but love (Michasiw 328). Yet, unlike the Gothic heroine, Elizabeth’s struggles result from her own faults rather than from a false, tyrannical father figure.

Again, the mystery Austen created – this time revolving Darcy – is refuted. At the start of the novel, Austen uses the tension found in the Gothic novel to set the story in motion. At the end of the novel, however, the mystery surrounding Darcy is explained to be anything but a mystery. Just as Radcliffe explained away the supernatural in her Gothic novels, Austen explained the mystery in hers. Austen uses concepts and conventions found in the Gothic novels, but makes them more realistic and, as a result, succeeds in subverting the Gothic.

### Conclusion

This thesis explored the extent to which Austen’s Juvenilia and her adult novels – *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* – were shaped by her reading and understanding of the Gothic tradition. Austen’s Juvenilia were written between 1787 and 1793, a time during which the boundaries between sentimental and Gothic fiction were not yet established. Therefore, it will have been difficult for the young Austen to differentiate

between the genres of sentimental and Gothic fiction. Austen's Juvenilia, therefore, display evidence of both the dominant sentimental discourse system as well as the upcoming discourse system of the Gothic novel.

*Northanger Abbey* has often been described as a parody of the Gothic novel. Austen's novel, however, is more a celebration of the genre than it could ever be a comic imitation. Although, Austen's heroine is the reverse of the typical Gothic heroine, her novel is no full-throttle parody. Instead, Austen heightens the common anxiety present in the Gothic novel by interposing the Gothic machinery into *Northanger Abbey*'s realistic setting. In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen subverts elements typical of the Gothic novel. By placing the novel in England as opposed to in a foreign country, Austen brings the terrors and horrors described in the novel closer to home. As Gilbert and Gubar argued, Austen rewrote the Gothic to show that "women have been imprisoned more effectively" in the real world than they every could have been in the distant reality of the Gothic novels (135).

In both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen's subversion of the Gothic is less apparent. In effect, however, Austen subverts Radcliffe's Gothic in these novels in the same manner in which Radcliffe changed the original Gothic novel. While Radcliffe, in contrast to other writers of the Gothic novel, explained the supernatural in her Gothic novels, Austen refuted the mystery in her own. Austen uses the tension found in the Gothic novel to set her stories in motion and subverts concepts found in the Gothic novel by making them more realistic. Although Darcy is presented as a mysterious and brooding man at the onset of *Pride and Prejudice*, he – in the end – realises his mistakes and swallows his pride when he notices that his behaviour has not been befitting of that of a gentleman. Nonetheless, his aunt Lady Catherine is presented as a Gothic villain. Yet, she is mocked by Austen in the final scene between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine when she argues that Elizabeth is nothing but unreasonable.

Austen, therefore, did shade her novels by using and subverting several Gothic conventions in the *Juvenilia* and her adult novels to highlight the “screams of female distress [...] which continue to operate [...] in a world of polite sociability” (Keymer 29). Rather than distancing herself from the Gothic, as early critics of Austen, such as Sir Walter Scott, believed her use of Gothic conventions to be a sign of, she used her knowledge and understanding of the genre in her own novels. Austen used the Gothic because it provided her with tools to stress that women are also effectively imprisoned in the real world. Austen, therefore, was not anti-Gothic, but rather a Gothic feminist.

Austen was not the last author to subvert the Gothic in such a manner. According to Wilt, famous authors such as Charles Dickens and the Brontë sisters also kept on using the Gothic machinery they had grown up with (124). The often criticised genre of the Gothic novel thus proves to be much more than “a poison for youth” (Coleridge, 188). On the contrary, the genre has scattered its conventions into various fictional modes and has, therefore, been blessed with as rich an afterlife as Austen’s own novels.

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