THE GOTHIC NOVEL AND THE INVENTION OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS READER: *NORTHANGER ABBEY* AS CASE STUDY

by

Tenille Nowak, B.A., M.A.

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

December 2008

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI®

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

ABSTRACT
THE GOTHIC NOVEL AND THE INVENTION OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS READER: *NORTHANGER ABBEY* AS CASE STUDY

Tenille Nowak, B.A., M.A.

Marquette University, 2008

This study reopens the conversation regarding Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and its relationship to the Gothic. By placing *Northanger Abbey* as a transitional piece and considering its potential correlation with the invention of the middle-class reader during the eighteenth century, I demonstrate how the seven Gothic novels mentioned by Isabella Thorpe in *Northanger Abbey* influenced Austen's authorial development and enabled her to subtly caution her middle-class audience against mis-appropriating the aristocratic behaviors which Gothic novels often glorified.

To do this, I begin by offering a brief contextual discussion on how the middle class arose, the concerns which were prompted by their access to new reading material like the Gothic, and how institutions such as circulating libraries increased and promoted reading among the middle class. In addition, I position Jane Austen as a writer in the process of transition, emerging from the private sphere to a more public forum, and address the struggles which she encountered while writing and trying to publish *Northanger Abbey*. I briefly summarize how Austen used this particular novel as an experimental ground to test and develop her own writing style and observe how that novel also represents a thematic evolution from writing simple humorous pieces for her family to writing savvy social commentaries for a larger audience.

The majority of this study focuses on the novels that Austen specifically chose to include in *Northanger Abbey*: *Clermont*, *The Orphan of the Rhine*, *The Midnight Bell, The Necromancer, or the Tale of the Black Forest*, *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, *The Mysterious Warning*, and *Horrid Mysteries*. My investigation demonstrates how specific constructional elements from each Northanger Novel influenced the composition of Austen's own text. In addition, I illustrate how each of the novels' thematic elements which she incorporated into her story allowed her to distinguish for her readers the individual benefits and valuable lessons that the "frivolous" Gothic niche could provide. also consider how these same elements allowed her to present her readers with her vision of appropriate, ethical behavior for the newly affluent middle class to emulate as their social, financial, and political status continued to rise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Tenille Nowak, B.A., M.A.

This project would not have been completed without the help and support of several people.

I would like to thank my dissertation advisor, Dr. Diane Long Hoeveler, for her insight, dedication, and patience.

I would also like to thank my dissertation committee members, Dr. Albert J. Rivero and Dr. Stephen Karian, for making time in their busy schedules to take on my project and for providing me with valuable advice and direction.

Special thanks are given to my parents, grandparents, and in-laws for their unwavering support. I especially thank my mother, who once again sacrificed hours of her time to ensure that my project was as complete and error-free as possible.

Finally, I would like to extend my profound gratitude to my husband. His many sacrifices and constant encouragement provided me with the opportunity and the inspiration to pursue my dream.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Introduction

"When you have finished *Udolpho*, we will read the *Italian* together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you."

"Have you indeed! How glad I am! What are they all?"

"I will read you their names directly; here they are, in my pocketbook. *Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine*, and *Horrid Mysteries*. Those will last us some time."

"Yes, pretty well; but are they horrid, are you sure they are all horrid?"

"Yes, quite sure" (Austen 40).

During this conversation with her friend Isabella Thorpe, Catherine Morland (the heroine of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*) reveals her intense infatuation with Gothic novels and alludes to their propensity for instilling blood-tingling, hair-raising horror in their readers. But despite Catherine's evident enthusiasm for reading "horrid" novels and the thinly veiled affinities between the Gothic genre and *Northanger Abbey*, scholars believed for many years that the novels suggested by Isabella were merely contrivances of Austen's vivid imagination. However, in November, 1901, almost one hundred years after *Northanger Abbey* was originally published, John Louis Haney of the University of Pennsylvania informed the editors of *Modern Language Notes* that while "[i]t might be supposed that Miss Austen, in her evident satire of the Udolpho class of fiction, invented the above suggestive titles…[a]s a matter of fact, they were all actual romances which appeared at London between 1793-1798" (446).

In his letter, Haney cited the specific periodicals in which he had uncovered either publication announcements or critical reviews for what became known as the seven Northanger Novels. Among these journals were the *Monthly Review*, the *British Critic*, the *Critical Review*, the *Monthly Mirror*, the *Analytical Review*, and the *Anti-Jacobin*

Review, all well-known and respected late eighteenth-century journals. One would imagine that Haney's discovery, combined with Austen's enduring popularity, would have prompted a flurry of substantial investigations into these seven novels, specifically their influences on *Northanger Abbey* and Austen's motivations for selecting them. Yet the Northanger Novels remained largely ignored by most Austen scholars and eventually faded into the shadows of literature.

Perhaps the absence of academic attention to these novels should be credited to their limited availability to scholars and the reading public.[1] Despite Haney's discovery, these "horrid" novels continued languishing in relative obscurity until February, 1927, when Michael Sadleir presented his essay "The Northanger Novels: A Footnote to Jane Austen" to the English Association in Westminster School Hall. Sadleir's study addressed Austen's allusion to these novels in *Northanger Abbey* and noted that

> it seems probable that the spinster-genius had...actually more pleasure and even profit from the Gothic romance....[C]ertainly a woman of her sympathy and perception – however ready she may have been publicly to make fun of the excesses of a prevailing *chic* – would in her heart have given to that *chic* as much credit for its qualities as mockery for its absurdities. (3)

After investigating the novels and their affiliations with the various schools of Gothic literature, he concluded that Austen's acknowledgement of these particular texts clearly demonstrated her familiarity with the genre's tropes and divisions. Sadleir also proposed that Austen's selection "of Gothic novels was rather deliberate than random, [and] was made for the stories' rather than for their titles' sake" (9). Haney's 1901 letter lends support to Sadleir's claim as it had noted previously that "the lists of New Publications, printed by several of the reviews about the end of the eighteenth century, will verify the

[1] See Table 1 in Chapter 1 for a listing of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century editions released of each Northanger Novel.

fact that Jane Austen could have made her satirical array of titles even more ridiculous without drawing upon the imagination" (447). Several of the seven novels' titles may have added a vague sense of foreboding to the tone Austen was perhaps attempting to create (for example, *The Mysterious Warning* and *Horrid Mysteries*), but her selection was certainly not the most terrifying compendium of Gothic titles available. One could hardly expect an innocuous title like *Clermont* to strike fear into the hearts of readers. As such, the disparity in the thrill-inducing capabilities of the Northanger Novels' titles suggests that Sadleir and Haney were correct in their assumptions that Austen had another motive for selecting *these* novels out of the bevy of popular fiction that was being published at the time. It is that motive (or motives) which I seek to expose in this study.

In his "Footnote," Sadleir offers one possible explanation for Austen's choices. He noted that "[w]ithin the limits of that brief selection are found three or four distinct 'make-ups', assumed by novelists of the day for the greater popularity of their work" (9). These were the sensibility romances, pseudo-German terror novels, and mock-autobiographies. If one reviews the sub-categories to which each of the Northanger Novels belongs, Sadleir's claim that Austen simply wished to use her catalog of Gothic novels to acknowledge the diverse divisions of the genre appears correct. To be sure, despite its brevity, her list provides an excellent sampling of the types of Gothic novels which were available to the Romantic period's reading public.

After examining each novel,[2] Sadleir observed that "the fortunate variety of the Northanger Novels …has [made it] possible to illustrate certain general principles of the

[2]Originally, Sadleir could only speculate about *The Orphan of the Rhine.* The novel was not rediscovered until after Sadleir presented his essay to the English Association in Westminster School Hall and his pamphlet was in the process of being published in the *Edinburgh Review.* When "A Footnote" was finally published in July, 1927, a postscript was included that cited Sadleir's discoveries regarding *The Orphan of the Rhine* (22-23).

Gothic romance" (20). His conclusion is definitely credible; however, I believe that the limits of his investigation must be considered. The scope of his query did not include ascertaining whether any further connections existed between the Northanger Novels and *Northanger Abbey*. Indeed, he sought only to demonstrate that Austen's selection of these "horrid" novels was based solely on their representational qualities. Hence, if we accept his conclusions as being definitive of Austen's motivations, then the reader's understanding and appreciation for Austen's writing abilities, her familiarity with the reading trends of her time, and, to use Claudia Johnson's phrase, the depth of her "most youthful and in many ways her most brilliant novel" (vii) would be extremely limited.

Sadleir's study appears to have provided a foundation for all subsequent investigations into the Northanger Novels, yet despite the groundbreaking nature of his research scholars have apparently been reluctant to move beyond his original theory. The majority of the explorations on these "horrid" novels either focus on one author or novel[3] or are primarily encyclopedic or bibliographic in nature. Only Natalie Neill, in her essay entitled "'the trash with which the press now groans': *Northanger Abbey* and the Gothic Best Sellers of the 1790s" (2004), has attempted a substantial investigation into the novels since Sadleir's pamphlet. But even Neill echoes Sadleir's premise by centering her investigation on the idea that "the novels were chosen by Austen because they are representative of major tendencies in contemporary Gothic literature" (169).

[3] For examples of texts that focus on one novel or author, see Robert Ignatius Le Tellier's *Kindred Spirits: Interrelations and Affinities Between the Romantic Novels of England and Germany* which discusses Carl Grosse, Bette Roberts' "Marital Fears and Polygamous Fantasies in Eliza Parsons' *Mysterious Warning*," and Anthony Mandal's "Revising the Radcliffean Model: Regina Maria Roche's *Clermont* and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*." For selections that are encyclopedic or bibliographic, see Mary Waldron's entry in *The Handbook to Gothic Literature* and Douglass Thompson and Frederick Frank's "Jane Austen and the Northanger Novelists".

Neill does venture slightly beyond Sadleir's investigation to offer a limited analysis of various elements of the Northanger Novels and their connections with *Northanger Abbey*. Noting that "Austen's novel is a great deal more complex than contemporary Gothic burlesques" (165), Neill briefly addresses issues like character similarity, the impact of the Minerva Press on the reception of Gothic novels, the significance of Austen's deliberate economizing of the Gothic's complicated plotlines, and Austen's tendency to trope "fiction and fictionality within [a] realist narrative" (186). In addition, Neill candidly claims that Austen's lasting popularity is due in part to her on-going conversation with the popular novels of her time, and takes a more gracious approach to the Northanger Novels than does Sadleir, though she clearly agrees that Austen's motivation for including them was their representational value. Neill also recognizes that Austen's attention to these seven "horrid" novels extended to an appreciation of their individual merits, a theory upon which I will expound in my study. I must note, however, that Neill's primary argument still echoes Sadleir's premise that Austen's primary consideration for these novels' selection was their generic aspects.

Sadleir's and Neill's essays are invaluable contributions to the discussion on *Northanger Abbey* and the Gothic, but by concluding that the Northanger Novels were selected *only* because they were characteristic of their respective Gothic categories, these scholars (Sadleir in particular) committed a grave disservice to these texts and their future readers. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, few scholars seem eager to extend their own investigations beyond Sadleir's initial premise. However, it is my intention to use Sadleir's and Neill's studies as a "jumping-off point," to move beyond their work and investigate each of the novels *in-depth*, and in doing so elucidate and analyze the

constructional and thematic elements that are echoed in *Northanger Abbey*, thus demonstrating that Austen's selection of these particular "horrid" novels was driven by more than just their representational capabilities.

I suggest here that Sadleir's ground-breaking though somewhat dismissive study, in addition to several negative or apathetic reviews received by the works upon their initial publications and later by contemporary scholars such as Bette Roberts,[4] contributed to these seven "horrid" novels being considered as mediocre imitators of the wide-ranging Gothic genre. As a result, many educators and scholars might be less likely to suggest or study "inferior" representational pieces when they could instead direct their attention towards writers like Ann Radcliffe or Matthew "Monk" Lewis. The current literary interest and canon appears to support my theory regarding the impact of Sadleir's study. Of all the Gothic novels mentioned in *Northanger Abbey*, only Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), as well as Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), have enjoyed a lasting popularity (or, in Lewis's case, notoriety).

Several studies have been conducted into Radcliffe's influence on Austen's first major novel, and these investigations may lead some critics to question how much of another writer's material can an author justifiably "borrow" in the creation of her own text (the controversy surrounding "Monk" Lewis' German "borrowings" comes to mind[5]). Neill suggested that "Austen's distinction as a writer largely results from the fact

---

[4] For example, the critic of the *Analytical Review* claimed that *The Midnight Bell* "is not characterized by that extravagance of passion that belongs to the majority of german novels, and is calculated, perhaps rather to entertain than to make any great impression upon the reader" (644). Further, the review offered by the *Critical Review* stated that "we endure a penance adequately severe in the review of such vapid and servile imitations as the *Orphan of the Rhine*" (356). In addition, the *Critical Review* lamented that "we do not pretend to give this novel [*The Castle of Wolfenbach*] as one of the first order, or even of the second" (50). Roberts' opinion that the Northanger Novels are "typical of the very worst of the genre in their blatant transgression of self-proclaimed moral and aesthetic standards," is available in her essay "The Horrid Novels, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and *Northanger Abbey*".

[5] See Syndy M. Conger's "Confessors and Penitents in M. G. Lewis's *The Monk*" (*Romanticism On the Net* 8 (November 1997) [18 December 2007] http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/confessors.html. In this essay,

that she adapted the work of other, less-known writers" (163), and I agree. For Austen though, referencing other novels, mimicking their plots, imitating their constructions, and adopting their characters as models for her own appears to be intended as a nod to these authors' often elided stylistic talents and techniques rather than committed in the spirit of plagiarism. Further, I would argue that Austen appears to be, as Diane Long Hoeveler notes, appropriating "the utterances of others for the purposes of allowing a new meaning to reside alongside the original viewpoint" (125), again, a theory which I will discuss in-depth during this study. Throughout Austen's works, the wide scope of her allusions offer evidence of her historical, literary, and social savvy, many of which are detailed on the "Republic of Pemberley" website.[6] This site provides an extensive overview of Austen's literary influences, but interestingly, only Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe are acknowledged as her Gothic influences. The Northanger Novels are briefly mentioned, but any explication, detailed or otherwise, of the connections between them and *Northanger Abbey* is conspicuously absent.

The eighteenth-century publishing houses' advertisements that appeared in the periodicals of the time indicate that Austen had literally hundreds of novels from which to compose her list,[7] many of which also would fulfill Sadleir's representational theory; yet she deliberately chose *Clermont, The Orphan of the Rhine, The Midnight Bell, The Necromancer or the Tale of the Black Forest, The Castle of Wolfenbach, The Mysterious*

Conger specifically discusses the relationship between Foucault and Lewis, and how Foucault's study *History of Sexuality* (1976) "offers a useful new contextual framework for the study of Gothic novels like Matthew G. Lewis's *The Monk*." See also Robert Miles' essay "Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis" (*A Companion to the Gothic*. Ed. David Punter. Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000. 41-57) in which he discusses "*The Monk*'s generic illegitimacy" and how the novel "constantly draws attention to itself as a text, beginning with the 'Advertisement' declaring its 'plagiarisms'" (51, 53).

[6] The "Republic of Pemberley" site can be found at: http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/austinfl.html>

[7] See Frederick S. Frank's *The First Gothics* (New York: Garland, 1987) for a bibliography detailing the extensive numbers of Gothic works from which Austen could have chosen her titles.

Warning, and *Horrid Mysteries*. Thus, the question remains: why did Austen choose to "recommend" *these* particular Gothic novels to her heroine and, by extension, her readers? This is a pressing question, and answering it will, I think, lend a new dimension to studies on both Austen and the Gothic. The objective of my study, therefore, is to examine and explode Sadleir's theory that these novels were selected *only* because they represented the Gothic genre's various niches and to refute and move beyond Neill's argument that "Austen clearly define[d] her approach as a writer in opposition to the seven horrid novels" (168). In doing so, I intend to reopen the discussion on *Northanger Abbey*'s relationship to the Gothic by demonstrating that the Northanger Novels performed a significantly greater task than scholars originally believed.

I believe that Austen's relationship with the Gothic is a complicated one, and before I discuss how that relationship is demonstrated in *Northanger Abbey* and the Northanger Novels, I would like to establish my beliefs regarding Austen's opinion of the Gothic in general.[8] First, I believe that, like so many people during the late eighteenth century, Austen appreciated the pure entertainment offered by Gothic novels. Unlike conduct manuals and sermons of the time, Gothic literature provided its readers with an engaging escape from reality, an opportunity for them to lose themselves amongst the pages and forget their worries for a few hours at a time. I would argue that, as an avid reader, Austen was not averse to consuming frivolous works, and thus valued the pleasure and satisfaction that could be had by leisurely turning over the pages of a romance or thriller. Second, I suggest that Austen saw the portrayals of the generally negative aristocratic conduct in Gothic novels as an opportunity to comment on the

[8] All of these issues will be discussed in more depth in Chapter One. My intent here is to clarify my position on Austen's opinion regarding the Gothic in order to set the tone for the remainder of my study.

unacceptability of such behavior and to warn her own readers against engaging in similar deeds in their own lives. By echoing the deplorable aristocratic behaviors the Gothic often glorified in the actions of her antagonists and by juxtaposing those same behaviors in the characters of her protagonists, Austen was able to subtly advance her opinions regarding appropriate behavior by using a dichotomy that was already familiar to her readers. Finally, I would argue that, as a developing writer who was perhaps searching for ways to improve or define her technique, Austen looked beyond the "frivolity" of these Gothic novels and discerned the authorial aptitudes displayed by several of their writers, talents which were often overshadowed by the genre's melodramatic excesses in other arenas. I believe that Austen detected certain stylistic techniques in these seven novels that appealed to her, and decided to incorporate them into her own writing.

If my theory on Austen's attitude toward the Gothic is accurate, and I intend to demonstrate its veracity in the following chapters, then I would suggest that, to quote Sadleir, Austen certainly gained both "pleasure" and "profit" from her encounters with Gothic novels and that she was in fact "ready…to make fun of the excesses of a prevailing *chic*" but also gave "to that *chic* as much credit for its qualities as mockery for its absurdities" (2). Thus, I argue that her relationship with the genre is a multi-faceted and complex entity which can only be understood by a deeper investigation into how these issues are evidenced in her own writing.

I suggest that the elements from each Northanger Novel that Austen imitated or incorporated into her own text offer evidence that she was familiar with the seven novels and indicate which stylistic techniques and thematic issues she, as an emerging writer and conscientious individual, likely found to be most helpful in her authorial development

and amenable to her underlying intention of subtly educating her readers. As such, I intend for this investigation to, first, offer scholars of Jane Austen and the Gothic a unique opportunity to further enhance their understanding of this accomplished author and her writings, and second, to define and clarify her relationship with the popular novels of her time. To do this, I suggest that *Northanger Abbey* be considered as a transitional piece in which Austen began to hone her writing skills and identify her thematic concerns as she developed from a young writer who sought to entertain her family and friends with her humorous burlesques into the talented and perceptive novelist whose works have impacted thousands of readers over the centuries.

To understand the extent of the constructional and thematic influences that I am arguing the Northanger Novels had on Austen, I will address them in a manner that I believe best elucidates each text's relationship with both *Northanger Abbey* and the Gothic. Therefore, although my study seeks to explode Sadleir's representational theory, my presentation, perhaps ironically, will follow his well-organized categorization of these seven "horrid" novels. In doing so, I will provide my readers with a logical plan that allows them to become familiar with each author's respective Gothic niches; at the same time I will elucidate the individual writers' authorial techniques and discuss each Northanger Novel's thematic influences on Austen's construction of her text. This will, I believe, result in a clearer understanding of how she used these seven "horrid" novels to develop as a writer and to critique the aristocratic behaviors promoted in Gothic novels by offering her middle-class reader an alternative version of more acceptable conduct.

This study begins with Chapter One offering a concise synopsis of the middle-class reader's development. I briefly summarize how literature became available to the

middle-class reading public, what types of texts were popular and who was reading them, and the influences that the Gothic was suspected to have on its readers and their behavior. By discussing these elements, I intend to define the audience to whom Austen was ostensibly directing her commentary. This section also provides an outline of Austen's development into a mature writer, and examines her construction of *Northanger Abbey* and its publishing difficulties. My discussion here will support my placement of *Northanger Abbey* as an important transitional piece between Austen's early burlesques, written for her family, and her more mature works which were directed towards a public audience. I will also discuss my theory that Austen regarded the Gothic with an affectionate and witty, yet also realistic, eye, a combination which enabled her to delicately fuse humor and caution into an entertaining and subtly educational novel.

Chapter Two discusses *Clermont* and *The Orphan of the Rhine*, novels that Sadleir categorized as sensibility romances and which repeat, as Robert Miles noted, "the early conventions of early Radcliffe" ("The 1790s…" 59). These are a "kinder, gentler fiction…[that contained] a good dash of romance in the popular understanding of the word as well as the scholarly one, while retaining the classic trilogy of necessary Gothic components – isolation, complicated setting, a threat possibly supernatural but more likely to be human and male" (Tracy 103). Specifically, I consider how *Clermont* allowed Austen to develop her own style of characterization which enabled her to depict the important differences between idealized characters and realistic individuals. I also investigate how *The Orphan of the Rhine* assisted Austen in further evolving her authorial technique by providing various descriptive elements that the young writer adopted into her own work, as well as how that text lent support to her staunch defense of

novels and helped her present her middle-class readers with strong warnings against indulging in excessive behaviors (particularly sensibility).

Next, Chapters Three and Four address *The Midnight Bell* and *The Necromancer,* as well as *The Castle of Wolfenbach* and *The Mysterious Warning*, respectively, as pseudo-German terror novels "that *pretend* – for fashion's sake – to be translations from the German, but are in fact British – made goods" (Sadleir 10). As Hans-Ulrich Mohr noted, these particular novels contain a "suggestion of meaningful, rational forces behind all the turmoil and they advise the individual to take back his/her individualistic ambitions and live in quiet acceptance of the reasonable designs of a benevolent providential power" (65). In Chapter Three, I offer *The Midnight Bell* as a novel that permitted Austen to continue stretching her authorial techniques by providing her with an effective strategy for accomplishing her underlying purpose by working both within and against a specific genre, and as a tool which helped her illustrate the common man's quest for power and its potentially destructive cycle. I also suggest that *The Necromancer* enabled Austen to enjoy her penchant for word games with the term "horrid" and gave her an opportunity to demonstrate her disapproval of the middle-class reader's interest in necromancy. In Chapter Four, I attend to the German "terror" novels written by Eliza Parsons (the only author to have two works included in the Northanger Novels). I propose that *The Castle of Wolfenbach* helped Austen express her own English nationalism and enhanced her discussion on the unjust distribution of power and women's legal inferiority. Then, I contend that *The Mysterious Warning* demonstrated Austen's preferences for a selective use of the explained supernatural in literature and enabled her to address the issues of filial obedience and parental responsibility.

Finally, Chapter Five examines the only mock-autobiography of the Northanger Novels: *Horrid Mysteries*. As Sadleir observed, various elements of *Horrid Mysteries* would seem to qualify it as a typical German terror novel since "it deals at length…with the international intrigues of the sect of Illuminati" and the plot itself is "beyond doubt mainly fictional" (18). However, despite the novel's having true Germanic ancestry and being a translation of a piece written by German author Karl Grosse (18), Sadleir concluded that the novel "pretends to be an autobiography" (10), an element which clearly separates it from the other pseudo-German terror novels on Austen's list. As such, I propose that her inclusion of *Horrid Mysteries* offered a unique opportunity for her to address two particularly intriguing and socially-pertinent subjects, secret societies and sexuality, and to warn her middle-class readers against the dangers inherent in both.

Although *Northanger Abbey* is often considered to be portrayed as a Gothic spoof or studied for its depiction of a young girl's introduction into society, I propose that the novel itself accomplished the significantly more meaningful task of "reshap[ing] and redefine[ing] the central historical, social, and intellectual debates of her era" (Hoeveler 128) by providing Austen with a clever mask for garnering her middle-class reader's attention and subtly admonishing them against adopting or condoning the behaviors and practices championed by Gothic novels. Further, I suggest that mimicking the stylistic techniques and echoing the thematic elements portrayed in these seven "horrid" novels enabled Austen to test and develop her own writing style by choosing those methods and motifs which apparently appealed to her. This allowed her to cleverly convey her underlying message to a reading public who possibly viewed *Northanger Abbey* solely as a means of achieving a few hours of entertainment rather than as an instruction manual

on acceptable conduct, thus making them, perhaps, a more receptive audience. I argue, therefore, that my elucidations on the connections between *Northanger Abbey* and the seven Gothic Northanger Novels will offer new insight into the true depth of Jane Austen as a developing writer and the astuteness and care with which she approached her craft.

Chapter One: Contextual Issues

The Development of the Romantic Period's Reading Public

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many people believed that one's reading material could and would have a lasting and sometimes negative impact on an individual's life and behavior. Specifically, people presumed that "reading…shaped the knowledge, the beliefs, the understanding, the opinions, the sense of identity, the loyalties, the moral values, the sensibility, the memories, the dreams, and therefore, ultimately, the actions, of men, women, and children" (St. Clair 1). As demonstrated by the large number of conduct manuals that addressed this issue, a large portion of the populace placed credence in this theory, and these beliefs spawned the concern that "indiscriminate reading was likely to erode the moral principles, especially those of women, by providing poor examples of conduct" (Richter 123). Thus, the development of the "popular" novel and the concurrent emergence of the middle-class reading public were significant events that merited the attention and concern of countless intellectuals. Evidence gathered by scholars such as William St. Clair, E.J. Clery, and Michael Gamer (to name a few) indicates that a large portion of late eighteenth-century novels, particularly those of the Gothic persuasion, generated considerable anxiety over their potential impact on their intended consumers. To understand why a seemingly harmless form of entertainment would cause such a furor, I believe it is necessary for modern readers to familiarize ourselves with the elements of the Gothic novel and its role in the development of the Romantic middle-class reading nation.

Numerous studies have investigated the reading nation's development during the eighteenth century; [1] therefore, my intention in this chapter is to establish my study's context by providing a synopsis of the most notable of these investigations and to discuss the development of the Romantic period's reading public in order to clarify and define the audience to whom I believe Gothic novelists and Jane Austen were writing. In the following section I offer a review on how literature became available to the middle-class reading public, what type of texts were being read (the "popular" novel), and finally who was actually reading these texts and the impact they supposedly had on their audience.

To begin, I would like to stress that obtaining books (any type of book) was not always as simple as it is today. Modern readers enjoy almost unlimited access to texts covering every conceivable topic through libraries, book stores, and even the internet; therefore, it may be difficult to imagine a time when obtaining even one work was often quite complicated and prohibitively expensive. Until the latter half of the eighteenth century, various legal statutes ensured that only chosen universities and libraries were entitled to carry "one copy of every book published" (St. Clair 236). This stricture, and the subsequent inaccessibility of most works, guaranteed that only a limited audience (namely professionals, researchers, and the clergy) would be granted access to England's scientific and scholarly tomes. Unfortunately, if a person did not live in the vicinity of these universities or libraries, acquiring these texts was a lengthy, difficult, and usually costly procedure, as one had to cover the expenses of shipping the book to and from

[1] For a more in-depth investigation into the development of the Romantic reader see William St. Clair's *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004). Perhaps the most comprehensive of such studies, St. Clair's text considers the significance of the economics, legal history, popular culture, structure of society, and bibliographic information on the development of the middle-class reading public.

himself and insure against its damage in transit. Edward Gibbon's[2] lament of this situation emphasizes the extremely limited availability of texts. He wrote that "for the want of a *good public library*, he was often obliged to send for books from abroad; sometimes large and expensive works, in order to verify a single citation" (St. Clair 236- emphasis mine). Since Gibbon presumably did not reside near an academic institution or library that was governed by the prohibitive legal statutes mentioned above, his statement suggests that if he had ready access to a public library, his work would have been completed in a significantly more expedient manner.

I would argue that Gibbon's statement also implies that circulating libraries should carry or would be able to obtain works for both entertainment and scholarly purposes and several scholars have confirmed this supposition. Kirstin Olsen noted that "circulating libraries stocked mostly nonfiction" (161) while Clery observed that, until the 1790s, "pure commercial interest was counterbalanced and constrained by the representation of the library as a civic institution with moral responsibilities…[and a] book's inclusion in the library catalogue depended, at least in theory, on its moral credentials" (87-88). If this is accurate, then one can justifiably imagine that a library's catalogue would contain both "popular" and academic works that corresponded with that criterion. As further evidence that the "good public library" which Gibbon lamented the shortage of contained both scholarly tomes and works designed for entertainment, St. Clair cites an advertisement that indicates that at least some circulating libraries offered works of a more scholarly nature: "If any Gentlemen repair to my House…they may be

[2] Edward Gibbon was the author of the much acclaimed *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776).

furnished with all manner of English or French Histories, Romances, or Poetry" (239).[3] Further, St. Clair states that "by the romantic period, books other than novels may have been as much as half the total holdings…in the larger libraries" in cities such as London, Bath, and the like (244). Edward Jacobs confirms this in his study on the Gothic novel and circulating libraries, citing the archival work of Paul Kaufman and Jan Fergus[4] which revealed that circulating-library catalogs and business records did not support the misconception that libraries dealt only in fiction, but rather that "fiction…[made a] relatively minor contribution[]" to the business done by these institutions (157). Finally, Austen herself notes that even smaller libraries often offered a broad range of texts: "M^rs Martin tells us that her Collection is not to consist only of Novels, but of every kind of Literature &c &c" (*Letters* 19 December 1798). Obviously, though pervasive during the eighteenth-century and later years, the assumption that circulating libraries were dealing solely with morally "damaging" materials is a misconception since these institutions could and did provide their patrons with a wide variety of reading materials.

[3] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "histories" during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were "a written narrative constituting a continuous methodical record, in order of time, of important or public events, esp. those connected with a particular country, people, individual, etc." This implies that the texts offered by this particular lending house were of a scholarly nature rather than designed solely for entertainment. However, the *OED* also notes that "history" could refer to "a drama representing historical events, a historical play." In this case, while the presentation may be more geared towards entertainment, the content still remains academic in nature. *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* does not contain an entry for "histories" specifically, but defines "history plays" (a related genre) as a " term which may be loosely applied to any dramatic work based largely on history or what a given society accepts as history" and cites Marlowe's and Shakespeare's plays as examples of "histories." Since the "histories" by these two playwrights can be read for entertainment or for education, I believe that the use of "histories" in St. Clair's citation can also be used in both manners.

[4] Jacobs cites Kaufman's works "The Community Library: A Chapter in English Social History" (*Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s., 57:3-67) and "In Defense of Fair Readers" (*Review of English Literature* 8: 68-76). He also acknowledges Fergus' "Eighteenth-Century Readers in Provincial England: The Customers of Samuel Clay's Circulating Library and Bookshop in Warwick, 1770-1772" (*Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 78:155-213) and her joint study with Janice Farrar Thaddeus, "Women, Publishers, and Money, 1790-1820" (*Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 17:191-207).