

- The author :**
- It is her first novel. She wrote it at the age of 23.
  - She is known for being a romantic fiction writer
  - Her works are famous for being realistic (the social aspects, the description of the social classes, the dependence of women on marriage to secure social and economic security)
  - She gives a biting social critic of her society.
  - She was not so popular during her lifetime.

**The novel:** In Northanger Abbey, Austen specifically parodies the Gothic genre. Her main character, Catherine Morland, is the exact opposite of the Gothic heroine; she is ugly, boring, and has trouble attracting a man. Catherine also finds herself in situations that are normal and plain, but she believes are truly supernatural. Austen parodies the Gothic genre, but manages to create a unique novel.

### Main themes

- The parody of the gothic. - Life is lived like in gothic novels
- The supernatural, fantasy, mystery
- Fear, horror
- Introspection
- The normal and the abnormal - she turns normal situations into terrifying moments

### The extract:

#### ① A Gothic novel?

Here again, some gothic elements are used to put the reader in a scary atmosphere:

- **The setting:** the scene takes place in an abbey, in the evening + a violent storm outside (raging natural elements)

- **The noises:** besides the noise of the wind and the storm, there are frightening noises inside the house: 'receding footsteps' / 'the closing of a distant door' ...

- **Suspense:** cf the mysterious manuscript: a key element in the passage around which the character's fears and apprehensions are built. It also raises the reader's curiosity.

- **The heroine's inner feelings / extreme emotions** (fear/horror vs attraction and fascination): The character undergoes some kind of inner turmoil which echoes the outer nature turmoil and matches with the heroes in gothic novels. She is overcome with fear, terror, panic... She is unable to keep her self-control.

- **Darkness vs Light**.

- **Time** : a feeling that time has stood still (l24) - she has to wait until the morning to read the manuscript.

...

A superficial reading of the text might therefore lead us to see it as a typical passage from a Gothic novel.

However, everything here sounds exaggerated: far-fetched = parody

The main gothic themes are present throughout the passage but parodied which turns the scene burlesque!

## ② The parody of the Gothic Novel

In this passage many elements point to Parody

- Catherine's feelings are grossly exaggerated with the use of very strong words and expressions (expressions like " agony" / "motionless with horror" / "human nature could support no more" ) and her childish and amusing reaction (she creeps underneath the clothes by the end of the story like a child who is afraid in the dark!)
- The narrator's rhetoric: ex - in the expression "darkness impenetrable and immoveable" the sounds echoe + use of long latin words.
- The burlesque is also conveyed by the constant juxtaposition of high expectations (something extraordinary is going to happen!) and anti-climax (nothing happens in the end).

## ③ Point of view and effect created: a change/a shift of point of view

- At the beginning of the passage, an outside narrator seems to relate the events of the night.
- But very quickly the increased use of extreme words (ex: "horror" ) give us the feeling that we are now seeing things through Catherine's eyes!
- The narrator deliberately adopts Catherine's point of view (cf: the interjection 'alas!') and in the middle passage of the text, we unambiguously see things from Catherine's point of view: the absurd use of emphatic expressions and adverbs of intensification ("so" / "wonderfully" / "absolutely") + the repetition of "entirely out of the question" / "absolutely impossible" shows it is the language of the Gothic heroine.
- The series of questions which follows (free indirect speech) also conveys an increased rhythm of fear and emotion. There we are inside Catherine's mind.
- Afterwards, we slowly return to an outside narrator as Catherine calms down and goes to sleep.

## INTERNAL FOCALIZATION ALLOWS US TO UNDERSTAND CATHERINE BETTER IN SPITE OF HER DELUSION

BBC ADAPTATION: Watch the extract from the film. Would you say it is a faithful and effective/efficient adaptation of the passage we have studied in class? Justify!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doqJ8I1w-t0> (1'10 →5'00)

Conclusion: To what extent is this passage a reflection upon reading?
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