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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

The Art of Satire in Gothic Novel Parodies in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Thomas Love Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey*

Umění satiry v parodiích gotických románů *Northangerské opatství* Jane Austenové a *Opatství Nightmare* Thomase Love Peacocka

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I hereby declare that the bachelor thesis “The Art of Satire in Gothic Novel Parodies in Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* and Thomas Love Peacock’s *Nightmare Abbey*“ is written by me and that all the sources used in the thesis are listed “Sources” page. I also declare that this thesis was not used to attain any other university degrees.

Prague, 10 July 2023

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na aspekty parodií gotických románů *Northangerské opatství* Jane Austenové a *Opatství Nightmare* Thomase Love Peacocka. Vybrané knihy jsou příklady parodií gotických románů, každá z nich však satirizuje jiné žánrové prvky. Teoretická část práce popisuje význam parodií gotického románu, jeho klasifikaci, význam a dobovou oblibu. Zaměřuje se také na kulturní pozadí doby vzniku těchto románů. Praktická část porovnává charakteristiku parodií gotických románů.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Gotický román, Jane Austenová, Opatství Nightmare, Northangerské opatství, parodie, satira, Thomas Love Peacock

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis focuses on the aspects of gothic novel parodies *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen and *Nightmare Abbey* by Thomas Love Peacock. The selected books are examples of mock gothic novels, but each satirizes different genre elements. The theoretical part of the thesis describes the meaning of a mock gothic novel, its classification, importance and popularity at the time. It also focuses on the cultural background of the period of these novels. The practical part compares the characteristics of gothic novel parodies.

KEYWORDS

Gothic Novel, Jane Austen, Mock Gothic, Nightmare Abbey, Northanger Abbey, Parody, Satire, Thomas Love Peacock

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Introduction

Satire, as a literary device, has long been employed by authors to critique social norms and conventions, often with a touch of humour and irony. In the realm of Gothic literature, a subgenre characterised by eerie settings, supernatural elements, and exaggerated emotions, the use of satire takes on a unique significance. This thesis delves into the exploration of satire as a powerful tool in two prominent Gothic novel parodies: Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Thomas Love Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey*. By examining these two works, this thesis aims to unravel the intricacies of satire employed by the authors to both entertain and criticise the prevailing literary trends and societal norms of their time.

This study intends to analyse the distinct ways in which Austen and Peacock employ satire within their respective works. By closely examining the elements of both parodies, this thesis seeks to uncover the underlying motivations behind their satirical portrayals. It also aims to shed light on the contexts in which these novels were written, considering the impact of societal expectations, literary trends, and the authors' personal experiences on the development of their satirical narratives.

Furthermore, it aims to gain a deeper understanding of the art of satire as utilised within the Gothic novel parodies of Austen and Peacock. By analysing the techniques employed by these authors, one can illuminate the ways in which satire can challenge and subvert established norms, offering both social critique and entertainment. Ultimately, this thesis aims to highlight the enduring relevance and artistic prowess of Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey*, as well as their contributions to the broader literary tradition of satire in Gothic fiction.

1 Gothic novel

The Gothic novel, very popular mainly in the second half of the 18th century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, is still a widely read type of literature. During its boom period, the Gothic novel was similar to the contemporary 'chick lit'. Full of suspense and sexuality, which was often not spoken of and was a huge taboo, especially for the Victorian period.

Gothic can be defined as "a writing of excess." "It appears in the awful obscurity that haunted eighteenth-century rationality and morality. It shadows the despairing ecstasies of Romantic idealism and individualism and the uncanny dualities of Victorian realism and decadence." (Botting 1)

Mullan states that Gothic fiction began as a sophisticated joke. In the subtitle of *The Castle of Otranto,* published in 1764, Horace Walpole wrote 'A Gothic Story', the term 'Gothic' originally meaning 'barbarous' and 'deriving from the Middle Ages'. In the preface, Walpole tried to convince the readers of its sixteenth-century origin by using a translator from Italian to English who found an Italian antique relic from 1529 in an ancient catholic family's library in the north of England. When the book turned out to be a modern forgery, some of the readers felt deceived and outraged by this fact. (Mullan)

Botting claims that Gothic was created as a reaction to the changes in the world, such as "urbanisation, industrialisation and revolution." When religion was superseded as the authoritative manner of understanding the cosmos by Enlightenment rationalism, it transformed perceptions of the relationships "between individuals and natural, supernatural, and social worlds." Gothic writings and their ambivalence can therefore be regarded as consequences of fear and anxiety, as attempts to cope with the uncertainty of these changes. They also attempted to explain what was left unexplained by the Enlightenment, to rebuild the divine mysteries that reason had started to deconstruct, and there were attempts to recover pasts and histories that proposed a "permanence and unity that transcended the limits of rational and moral order." (Botting 23)

1.1 Elements of the Gothic novel

Typical elements of a Gothic novel are, for example, the settings. Early Gothic fiction often revolved around the castle, which served as the primary setting for dark and eerie plots. These castles were depicted as "decaying, bleak and full of hidden passageways." (Botting 2) Other medieval structures such as "abbeys, churches and graveyards," represented the past that was associated with "barbarity, superstition and fear." The buildings from the Medieval Era create a mysterious atmosphere and make the plot so much more thrilling and make one think of all the possible events that might have taken place in such structures. In connection to the settings, it is said that the use old architecture helped create and contrast the separation between the values and beliefs of the past and the present. (Botting 3) It is not only the buildings that create an eerie atmosphere but also the addition of the scenery, which helps to create suspense. Gothic landscapes are "desolate, alienating and full of menace," which can be seen in the works of eighteenth-century Gothic writers who used mainly wild and mountainous locations. (Botting 2)

As mentioned before, another essential element of Gothic was the "gloomy and mysterious atmosphere" that pointed to a disturbing return of the past to the present. (Botting 1) It is argued that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, stories with villains who use violence and, through devious means, supplant rightful heirs, demolish reputable families' reputations, endangering the honour of wives and orphaned daughters were considered complete abominations. (Botting. 4) The terrifying prospect of complete societal collapse develops from "the skeletons that leap from family closets and the erotic and often incestuous tendencies" of Gothic villains. (Botting 5) According to Botting, such narratives posed a significant threat to civilised and domestic values, as they exposed the potential realities of British families' lives. (Botting 4-5)

To create an eerie atmosphere, Gothic uses a list of characters, imagined and realistic, that seemed threatening in the eighteenth century, such as "spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats, monks and nuns, fainting, heroines and bandits." Writers of the nineteenth century added several other characters such as "scientists, fathers, husbands, madmen, criminals and the monstrous double signifying duplicity and evil nature." (Botting 2) These additional characters often scared the audience more because of

their human origins. The reason was that people could not believe that humans could do such horrid actions.

In contrast with mysterious beings from Gothic fiction, Ann Radcliffe's Gothic novels may be even more disturbing. In the past, people could have always blamed mysterious occurrences on something supernatural. In the novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Radcliffe gave her mysteries a realistic justification, making the reality even more frightening. This idea was advanced by John Mullan, who stated: "Gothic has always been more about fear of the supernatural than the supernatural itself." (Mullan) The terrifying aspect is the fear of the unknown and one's unconscious creations of monsters creeping behind every corner. There does not have to be a monster per se for writing to be classified as Gothic. The suspense and fear can leave the readers' minds to create a horrid picture themselves.

The close connection between Gothic and imagination emphasises the dominance of emotional effects over logical thinking. Botting states, "Passion, excitement and sensation transgress social properties and moral laws." Unlike the Neoclassical style that followed fixed aesthetic rules, Gothic prioritises feelings and emotions and particularly the concept of the sublime. (Botting 3)

1.1.1 The Sublime

The term "sublime" can have different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. It has been a subject of philosophical, artistic, and literary discussions for centuries. Encyclopaedia Britannica describes the sublime, in connection to literary criticism, as the "grandeur of thought, emotion, and spirit that characterises great literature." ("sublime")

Longinus, the author of *On the Sublime*, defines sublimity in literature as "the echo of greatness of spirit," (Longinus qtd in "On the Sublime") which shows the moral and imaginative powers of the writer that they put into their works. He was the first to connect the greatness of literature to the innate qualities of the writer rather than the art itself. ("On the Sublime") Until the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when it had the greatest impact in England, the notion had little influence on modern criticism.

Its popularity was gained through the revived interest in William Shakespeare's plays, and it served as a crucial critical foundation for Romanticism. ("sublime")

Philip Shaw broadly described the sublime in his book *The Sublime* (2006). He explains that when our "conventional understanding" of something falls short and we cannot describe or compare it adequately, we turn to the feeling of the sublime. The sublime represents "the limits of reason and expression," hinting at something that surpasses those limits. (Shaw 1)

The sublime is frequently used in art and literature, and it refers to works that evoke a sensation of awe and greatness. It can be observed in paintings, poems, or other forms of art that depict grandeur, splendour, or nature's overpowering strength. Overall, the sublime represents an experience that surpasses the ordinary and inspires awe, wonder, and, at times, terror or reverence.

1.2 Reception of Gothic novels

Only a few writers who wrote Gothic novels have received recognition, including the aforementioned Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe. Other writers were not received as well as their predecessors. Gothic novels were mainly seen as a lesser genre than all the other genres of that time. The critics did not spare the writers much in their reviews. For example, *The British Critic* wrote the following about Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796):

> Lust, murder, incest, and every atrocity that can disgrace human nature, brought together, without the apology of probability, or even possibility for their introduction. To make amends, the moral is general and very practical; it is, 'not to deal in witchcraft and magic because that devil will have you at last!!' We are sorry to observe that good talents have been misapplied in the production of this monster. (*The British Critic* 7, 677)

In a later volume of *The British Critic,* the writers apologised for treating the criticism of *The Monk* too loosely and followed by adding a harsher review. (*The British Critic* 12, 108) Even other authors of that time criticised *The Monk*. For example, Jane Austen mentioned *The Monk* in her novel *Northanger Abbey* (1817) and mocked his writing

practices. Mullan sees *The Monk* as "an experiment in how outrageous a Gothic novelist can be." He then mentions all of the supernatural and realistic characters that appear in *The Monk* but is most surprised by the appearance of Satan. (Mullan)

As for the popularity of Gothic productions in society, novels were mainly meant for women to read because they were seen as lesser literature. Men usually did not care to read Gothic fiction, or they at least did not admit to reading it. As will be seen later, in the practical part, Jane Austen dismantled this stigma in *Northanger Abbey* when she made Mr Tilney an enthusiast of novels and namely Ann Radcliff's novels.

Gothic writings have struggled to overcome their negative reputation and gain acceptance as respectable literature. (Botting 22) However, the Gothic was an equally important milestone as its contemporaries. Although it was often seen as a farce in its time, in modern times, readers often return to it and admire the newness and freshness it brought to a relatively bleak period. Although the Gothic novel is mainly set in the Middle Ages, or at least refers to that period, it highlights the problems of its time through images of monsters and criminals.

2 Satire

Satire is undoubtedly one of the most prominent literary forces. Many different definitions of satire exist, but they all agree on a few aspects. As professor Elliott mentions, satire does not have to be strictly connected to writing. It can be seen in all of the spheres of media – be it paintings, television and movies or songs. As long as there is "wit employed to expose" the actions of humans or the whole society, whether they are done viciously or by a foolish mistake, "there satire exists." (Elliott)

Encyclopaedia Britannica describes satire as an "artistic form, chiefly literary and dramatic, in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule derision, burlesque, irony, parody, caricature, or other methods, sometimes with an intent to inspire social reform." ("satire")

Another definition comes from Samuel Johnson, an English lexicographer, who defined satire in his dictionary *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) as "a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured." (Johnson qtd in Elliott) This definition seems to be one of the most widely accepted. Even though satire does not have to be written as a poem, such a simple definition is much better than those that restrict satire to fit only in a tiny box.

2.1 Historical background

Throughout its existence, satire has been given many definitions based on deriving them from the wrong origin and terminology. Elliott mentions the interesting problem of defining satire because of its origin. Quintilian, a Roman rhetorician stated, "Satire is wholly our own." (Quintilian qtd in Elliott), meaning satire is a uniquely Roman concept, even though he was aware of Greek forms of satire. The Greeks did not have a term for satire; therefore, Quantilian's 'satura' "which originally meant 'medley' or 'miscellany'" has come to be used. (Elliott)

'Satura' went through an orthographic modification and changed to 'satyra' and eventually to 'satyre' in the sixteenth century. Some of the Elizabethan writers believed that the origin was derived from the Greek satyr play. Satyrs were known for being rude and unmannerly creatures. Deriving from this false etymology, satyre was meant to be "harsh, coarse, rough."

(Elliott 2023) More on this type of satire will be mentioned when talking about Juvenal. Such an example can be seen in Joseph Hall's *Virgidemiarum* (1753), where he wrote:

> The Satyre should be like the Porcupine,
> That shoots sharpe quils out in each angry line,
> And wounds the blushing cheeke, and fiery eye,
> Of him that heares, and readeth guiltily. (Hall qtd in Elliott)

2.2 Kinds of satire

2.2.1 Horatian and Juvenalian satire

This diversity of satire can be seen in the two leading writers of satire. They are Roman poets Horace and Juvenal. Even though Horace and Juvenal wrote only verses and in two different styles, until this day, they are used as the perfect examples of satire as a whole and the scale that these works can stretch out to. Elliott states that although the laws that Horace and Juvenal gave to the form were very loose, they still have great importance. (Elliott)

To differentiate between these two kinds of satire, it is important to mention the style aspect of satire, where Horace prefers "mild mockery" to the harshness of his predecessors. Horace uses playful wit, instead of using malicious remarks, to laugh at nonsense because he does not want to harm anybody with his words. Horace's view of satirical verse is that "it should be easy and unpretentious, sharp when necessary, but flexible enough to vary from grave to gay." In essence, Horace envisions a satirist as a sophisticated individual who observes widespread foolishness but responds with amusement rather than anger. (Elliott)

To present the contrast of Horace, Elliott mentions Juvenal, who perceives the satirist's role differently than his predecessor. Juvenal sees himself as an "upright man who looks with horror on the corruptions of his time, his heart consumed with anger and frustration." He is deeply disturbed by the pervasive viciousness and corruption in Roman society. He feels compelled to write satire as a means of expressing his anger and frustration. Juvenal believes that satire has evolved beyond its previous boundaries and now takes on a more serious and tragic tone. (Elliott) Juvenal's satire corresponds more with Sutherland's view of satire, in which he sees the satirist as a destructive force. He claims that the satirist

destroys the world and our ideas of the world as we know it. After such destruction, the satirist often leaves readers with a blank space for them to fill themselves. (Sutherland 1) The writer of satire aspires to restore the balance in the world and correct all of its errors while also trying "to correct or punish the wrongdoer." (Sutherland 4)

According to Elliott, Horace and Juvenal offer contrasting perspectives on satire, leading to a lack of a universally accepted definition. (Elliott) John Dryden's widely accepted formulation categorises Roman satire into "comical satire and tragical satire, each with its own kind of legitimacy." (Dryden qtd in Elliott) These two types now serve as the boundaries of the satiric spectrum, regardless of the genre or medium of the work. On the Horatian end of the spectrum, satire merges with comedy and focuses on human foolishness without a reformist agenda. (Elliott) An example of this kind of satire is Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712). Other notable writers of the Horatian side of the spectrum are, for example, Chaucer or Donne. (Smeaton) In contrast to the mild mockery of Horatian satire, the Juvenalian end is a more vicious end of the spectrum. At this end, satire blends with tragedy, melodrama, and nightmare, resulting in being "sombre, deeply probing, and prophetic." (Elliott) A typical example of Juvenalian satire is *A Modest Proposal* (1729), written by Jonathan Swift or one of the more modern works, Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange (1962)*.

2.2.2 Menippean satire

Since the practical part of this thesis deals with Thomas Love Peacock's novel *Nightmare Abbey*, which uses a different kind of satire than the two already mentioned, it is necessary to mention Menippean satire.

Encyclopaedia Britannica defines Menippean satire as a "seriocomic genre" that originated in ancient Greek and Latin literature It involves the mocking and critical portrayal of contemporary institutions, conventions, and ideas through a combination of prose and verse. These satires often feature unconventional settings, "such as the descent into Hades." ("Menippean satire")

Musgrave states that Menippean satire can be most effectively comprehended as a "radically heterogeneous form which has its origin in an ancient genre." It is named after the Cynic philosopher Menippus of Gadara, who as a first used the combination of prose and verse.

The existence of this form is now indisputable, as the evident impact of Menippus and authors of what we refer to as 'Menippean satire' can be observed throughout history up to the present era. (Musgrave 1)

Menippus' satire is known not only for its combination of prose and poetry but is also characteristic for its "bombastic and often coarse attacks" aimed at pompous intellectuals and scholars. The popularity of Menippus' satire can be attributed to its ability to adapt as well as its unwavering cynicism. (Musgrave 2) Just as Menippus' satire combined different genres and styles, Menippean satire is typical for its ability to move between different styles and the mixing of different features and points of view and focuses, rather than on individuals or society, on viewpoints and mental attitudes. Menippean satire would be placed more on the Juvenalian side of the satirical spectre, even though some examples are often seen as Horatian satire, such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726).

Musgraves argues that, as Menippean satire was not well-known in the past, writers usually did not know they were writing in such a style. Even though they did not know, there are many examples of Menippean satires throughout history. (Musgrave 6) The most famous examples of Menippean satire are Thomas Love Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939).

2.3 Satire and comedy

When discussing satire, it is crucial to draw a line between satire and comedy. As has already been mentioned, Horace's satire blends with comedy and is almost identical to it. With the use of the same material, what distinguishes these two styles from each other is the intention behind writing them. Sutherland argues that satirists aim to uncover and protest against human shortcomings while also prompting readers to think critically about them. In contrast, writers of comedy simply make fun of these flaws without a more profound purpose. (Sutherland 5) According to Elliott, the only aspect that sets satire and comedy apart is that only satire provides the reader with a moral objective in the story. (Elliott) Whereas comedy is written only for entertainment.

Writers of comedy aim to engage and amuse readers, creating captivating patterns using characters and their actions, while satirists go beyond mere entertainment. It seems as if the satirist seeks to persuade readers "to accept his judgement of good and bad, right and wrong." (Sutherland 5) An excellent description of satire and the satirist is the one by George Bernard Shaw in his essay *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891), where he suggests that it is the men who refuse to "take evil good-humouredly" and instead use their laughter to expose and undermine foolishness, that hold the key to salvation. (Shaw qtd in Sutherland 4)

2.4 Parody

It is extremely difficult to distinguish between parody, satire and comedy from each other as they are closely connected.

As mentioned in Encyclopaedia Britannica, in literature, parody refers to the act of imitating "the style and manner of a particular writer or school of writers." Its main aim is usually to criticise and mock perceived flaws in the writer's work or the excessive use of conventions within a particular literary school. Nonetheless, parody can also be used constructively or as "an expression of admiration," and sometimes it serves as "a comic exercise." ("parody") As Rose discusses in her book *Parody: ancient, modern, and post-modern*, there is still an ongoing disagreement and uncertainty surrounding the ancient interpretations and purposes of words related to parody. (Rose 6) Nevertheless, it is believed that the term 'parody' originates from the Greek word 'parōidía', which means "a song sung alongside another." ("parody")

Parody can be also viewed as a type of literary criticism, as it represents a thoughtful response to one or more literary texts. Without appreciation and a complete understanding of the work mimicked, there would not be a successful parody. ("parody") That is why parodists must be fascinated by their model and study it thoroughly to be able to create a faithful parody.

As for examples of parody, Encyclopaedia Britannica offers works from all of the eras. One of the earliest documented parodies is *Batrachomyomachia (The Battle of Frogs and Mice)*, in which an unknown poet imitated Homer's writing style. When mentioning

the earliest parodies, then in England, there has to be a mention of Geoffrey Chaucer, who parodied the genre of chivalric romance in one of the stories from *The Canterbury Tales* (1387) called *The Tale of Sir Thopas* (1387). William Shakespeare also created a few parodies himself. One of them is one of his best-known plays, *Hamlet* (circa 1599-1601). With the rise of the satirical novel in eighteenth-century Britain, parody became a popular form of literature. This nuance can be seen in Henry Fielding's parody of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) called *Shamela* (1741). ("parody")

2.5 Satire in literature

Satire and satirists have played a prominent role throughout history. They employ various tools, such as "irony, sarcasm, invective, wit, and humour," to convey their message. Smeaton argues that when writers express their satirical criticism of societal injustices or abuses with a burning sense of indignation, their work can achieve the highest level of literature. These satirists, as well as any other writer who incorporates social aspects of life into their satire, provide a glimpse into the era they belong to, "of the men, their manners, fashions, tastes, and prevalent opinions." Although these depictions may not always be comprehensive or impartial, they hold historical, literary, and ethical significance. (Smeaton)

As for the intentions of a satirical writer, it can be claimed that the intention of a writer of satire is to persuade readers to adopt their critical viewpoint. Merely telling the truth does not make someone a satirist; they become one when they consciously compel people to confront societal issues that have been ignored. Satirists aim to dismantle illusions and reveal the unvarnished truth by exposing pretences and disguises. (Sutherland 11) As seen before, there are different views of satirists. While Smeaton sees the satirist as a writer who provides a view of the world, Sutherland sees the satirist as a destructive force and somebody who wants to persuade the reader. However, both statements are correct because the satirical spectrum is so vast.

Satire often focuses on a limited aspect of the truth rather than the entire truth; "not the complete man, but one side of him," the satirist becomes "the advocate pleading a cause" and somebody who is willing to overlook most facts while exaggerating the remaining ones

in order to gain the reader's approval. (Sutherland 15-16) Examples of such writers are Ben Jonson and Samuel Butler. (Sutherland 18)

Regarding modern satire, the satirist is now "concerned to save the human race, either from complete extinction, or a change so fundamental that its individual humanity would be lost." Sutherland gives examples of such satires. They are Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) or George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). (Sutherland 21)

2.5.1 Satirical novel

A satirical novel is a work of fiction that uses irony, humour, and ridicule to criticise or mock various aspects of society, individuals, institutions, or ideas. It uses satire, a literary technique employed to expose and highlight its subjects' flaws, vices, or absurdities in an often humorous and exaggerated manner. The power of satirical novels cannot be denied. Sutherland mentions a quote by Smollett where he states in the preface of *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748):

> "Of all kinds of satire, there is none so entertaining, and universally improving, as that which is introduced, as it were occasionally, in the course of an interesting story." (Smollett qtd in Sutherland 108)

He expresses his belief that the most effective way to create entertaining and educational satire is by incorporating it into a captivating narrative. This approach allows satire to vividly portray various events and situations. A satirical novel helps readers identify similar real-life situations that are automatically more interesting and meaningful. Satirical novels can be entertaining and thought-provoking, offering a unique perspective on the human condition and society's flaws through the lens of humour and satire.

Sutherland thinks of satirical novels as a minor genre, which has perhaps never achieved widespread popularity. "From the time of Henry Fielding, however, incidental satire has been an important ingredient in English fiction." (Sutherland 108) Prominent examples of satirical novels include *Animal Farm* (1945) by George Orwell, which uses a farm allegory to critique the Soviet Union and totalitarianism, and another well-known example

is *Don Quixote* (1605) by Miguel de Cervantes, a satirical novel that mocks the chivalric romance genre and explores the contrast between illusion and reality.

Satirical novel distinguishes itself from the rest of the genres by using narrative structure, plot, character development, and the length of novels leaves the writer with more opportunities to explore broader themes.

3 Gothic parody

Recognising parody and satire as important components of the Romantic era challenges the typical views of the era. By examining how prevalent and influential these forms were, one can better understand how humour, criticism, and the Romantic era's cultural context interacted. In a work that imitates the Gothic style, writers use humour, irony, and exaggeration to ridicule or undermine conventional Gothic elements. They may create absurd scenarios, intentionally over-the-top characters, and employ parody or satire to humorously critique the Gothic genre.

In her work *Gothic Parody*, Natalie Neill states that parody and satire are often associated with humour and mockery. However, their connection to the Romantic period has yet to be commonly acknowledged. Recently, there has been light shed on the prevalence of these forms during that era, particularly in connection with the popularity of Gothic literature, which became a prime target for parodists. According to Neill, numerous parodic Gothic novels were published during what is referred to as the 'first wave' of the Gothic between the 1760s and 1830s. The range of Gothic parody, which extended to various forms of literature, including poetry, plays, short stories, cartoons, and essays, showcasing its wide-ranging influence. (Neill 185)

Despite being dismissed as "beneath contempt" by parodists and critics, the ongoing attacks and the great number of parodies published demonstrate the fascination and anxiety evoked by the Gothic genre. (Neill 185)

Lewis discusses the ways in which mock Gothic literature exaggerates the self-awareness of its satirical targets. There are two main approaches employed to achieve this effect. The first approach involves intensifying the contrast "between the real and the fictional world, or by breaking down this contrast altogether." This creates a satirical space where the exaggerated norms and conventions of the Gothic genre are openly ridiculed. Authors like Eaton Stannard Barrett and several others have employed this method to create works of comfortable and didactic satire. (Lewis 411) This method could also be attributed to Jane Austen's novel, *Northanger Abbey*. The second approach focuses on exploring the "nature of fear" and the prospect of "escaping Gothic terror by returning to a 'real' world." This method, exemplified by Edgar Allan Poe in his work *A Predicament* (1838), aims

to challenge the reader's perception of the boundaries between reality and the fictional world of the Gothic. (Lewis 412)

Notable works of Gothic parody from the period are still recognized today, such as Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813), Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), and Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817), many others have been forgotten along with the texts they satirised. (Neill 185)

4 Jane Austen

When we analyse literary works, it is often beneficial to know basic information about the authors of these works, as their lives are often reflected in their works.

The following biography of Jane Austen was created with the help of Oxford University Press's introduction to Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* (2008).

Jane Austen is, without a doubt, one of the most famous English writers. She was born in Steventon, Hampshire, in 1775, to a cultured but not wealthy family. Although they were not rich, they tried to give their eight children the best education possible. Her least productive period was between 1801 and 1809 when the family lived in Bath and Southampton. It is no coincidence that Austen chose Bath in her book *Northanger Abbey* as the target of her social criticism, having spent several years there. In 1809, she moved Lloyd to Chawton, Hampshire, where she lived a wrote until her death in 1817. During her time in Chawton, Austen published four of her major novels, the most famous of which are *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). Two of her novels, *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey,* were published after her death in 1818.

4.1 Northanger Abbey

Jane Austen's novel *Northanger Abbey*, first published in 1817, presents a compelling narrative that blends romance, social satire, and Gothic elements. The story follows the young and naive Catherine Morland as she embarks on a journey of self-discovery, love, and personal growth.

Set in the late eighteenth century, the novel opens with Catherine leaving her quiet rural home to visit Bath, quite the opposite of what the heroine is used to. There, she encounters many colourful characters, including the witty and charming Henry Tilney, with whom she forms a deep connection. As Catherine navigates the complex world of social interactions, she learns valuable lessons about love, friendship, and the pitfalls of naivety.

As Catherine's relationship with Henry evolves, she receives an invitation to visit his family's estate, Northanger Abbey. Expecting a grand, mysterious mansion similar to those in Gothic novels, Catherine's imagination runs wild. However, upon arrival, she discovers a more ordinary country house, dispelling her fantastical expectations. That

is a turning point for Catherine's character development, prompting her to reevaluate her preconceived notions and learn the importance of discerning truth from fiction.

Austen skilfully incorporates themes of societal expectations, gender roles, and the power of observation throughout the novel. Through her witty and insightful prose, she critiques the constraints placed on women in a patriarchal society and promotes the importance of independent thinking and self-awareness.

In *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen creates a blend of romance, social commentary, and satire. Through the journey of Catherine Morland, readers are reminded of the importance of self-reflection, the dangers of excessive imagination, and the transformative power of love and personal growth. Austen's timeless exploration of human nature and societal norms continues to captivate readers, establishing *Northanger Abbey* as a beloved classic in English literature.

The novel is also known for its unique structure and metafictional elements. Austen cleverly incorporates a parody of the Gothic novel genre, which was popular during her time. She does this by portraying Catherine's fascination with the supernatural and her vivid imagination. Through this parody, Austen satirises the excessive melodrama and sensationalism commonly found in Gothic literature, emphasising the importance of distinguishing between reality and fantasy.

5 Thomas Love Peacock

The following biography of Thomas Love Peacock was created with the help of Henry Morley's introduction to Peacock's *Crotchet Castle* in 1887.

Thomas Love Peacock was born in 1785 in Weymouth. He was a poet, novelist, and close friend of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Peacock's novels were unique expressions of his independent thinking, combining free quotation, satire, and unconventional storytelling. The narrative is consistently enjoyable, yet it always takes a backseat to the intellectual exploration it inspires. In 1820, he wrote an article, *The Four Ages of Poetry*, criticising poetry and poets of his time, including Wordsworth, Coleridge, Moore, and Campbell. It was this article that inspired Shelley to write a response to his friends critique called *Defence of Poetry*. Peacock also wrote a poem titled *Rhododaphne*, which pleased only a few readers. That is why he believed his true impact would come through his novels rather than poetry. His best-known novels are *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) and *Crotchet Castle* (1837). He passed away in 1866 at the age of eighty-one. (Morley 5-8)

5.1 Nightmare Abbey

Thomas Love Peacock's novel *Nightmare Abbey*, published in 1818, is a satirical work that critiques Romanticism and its excesses. Set in a Gothic abbey, the story follows the protagonist, Christopher Glowry, who embodies the pessimistic outlook of the age, constantly bemoaning the state of society. His gloomy disposition is reflected in the decay and desolation of Nightmare Abbey itself. The abbey is a crumbling structure that serves as a metaphor for the crumbling ideals of the Romantics. Mr Glowry's son, Scythrop, is a young man deeply immersed in melancholy and dissatisfaction with the world. Peacock uses this character to satirise the Romantic ideals of the time, presenting them as futile and misguided.

The novel introduces a display of eccentric characters who embody various Romantic stereotypes. Mr Flosky, an extreme advocate of idealism, talks about all his philosophical thoughts and complaints about the shortcomings of humanity. Marionetta, the love interest of Scythrop, is a shallow and materialistic woman who embodies the pursuit of worldly pleasure. These characters, along with others, serve as targets of Peacock's satire, revealing

the absurdity and emptiness of their beliefs. The novella is structured as a series of conversations and debates in which all of the characters discuss various topics, including love, poetry, politics, and philosophy, and their qualities are on display.

Peacock's prose is witty and ironic, employing sharp dialogue and clever wordplay to highlight the contradictions and pretensions of Romanticism. Through humorous and exaggerated situations, he challenges the Romantic notions of unattainable love, intense emotions, and the pursuit of individual freedom.

Overall, *Nightmare Abbey* is a satirical novella that critiques the excesses of Romanticism, exposing the contradictions and flaws in the movement's idealistic aspirations. Peacock offers a humorous and thought-provoking commentary on the Romantic era and its impact on society through its memorable characters and clever writing.

6 Satire in abbeys

The practical part of this thesis focuses on examples of the use of satire in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Thomas Love Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey*. The books are analysed separately and after analysing the two works, their elements are compared.

6.1 Exploring satire in *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen

Northanger Abbey by Jane Austen is a satirical novel that pokes fun at the conventions and tropes of Gothic novels popular during Austen's time and is also a social satire as all of her other works.

6.1.1 Parody of Gothic novels

Northanger Abbey is indeed a satire of the Gothic genre, which was popular in the late eighteenth century. The novel playfully mocks the exaggerated and melodramatic elements of Gothic literature while highlighting the dangers of letting one's imagination run wild.

Catherine Morland, the novel's protagonist, is an avid reader of Gothic novels and has an overactive imagination. Her fantasies are often far removed from reality, and Austen uses this to satirise the exaggerated emotions and ideas found in Gothic literature. Catherine's expectation of finding mysterious secrets and hidden passages in Northanger Abbey mirrors the Gothic trope of an eerie ancestral home. Austen satirises the tendency of readers to let their imaginations overpower their rational thinking. An instance of this can be seen when Catherine gets an offer to go with the Tilneys to their Northanger Abbey estate:

> Its long, damp passages, its narrow cells and ruined chapel, were to be within her daily reach, and she could not entirely subdue the hope of some traditional legends, some awful memorials of an injured and ill-fated nun. (*Northanger Abbey* 99)

Catherine's instant thoughts are with the Gothic elements. Even before she sees the abbey, she already creates Gothic spaces and figures in her mind and thinks of all the legends that could be connected to such a place. However, her imagination of a mystery-filled place could not be further from the truth.

> An abbey! Yes, it was delightful to be really in an abbey! But she doubted, as she looked round the room, whether anything within her observation would have given her the consciousness. The furniture was in all the profusion and elegance

> of modern taste. The fireplace, where she had expected the ample width and ponderous carving of former times, was contracted to a Rumford, with slabs of plain though handsome marble, and ornaments over it of the prettiest English china. 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 stone-work, for painted glass, dirt, and cobwebs, the difference was very distressing. (*Northanger Abbey* 114)

When Catherine comes to Northanger Abbey, she is surprised and disappointed when she finds out that the abbey is entirely different from what she imagined as it is a mundane and ordinary house. She expected all parts of the abbey to conform to her ideas and the descriptions from Gothic novels, but she could not be more mistaken. The Tilney family home had been restored, only a few aspects of medieval design remained, and even these were in good condition. Catherine had expected the abbey to be old and dilapidated, just like the ones in her favourite books, but it was the complete opposite. With a lack of mystery, Catherine begins to create her own:

> There must be some deeper cause: something was to be done which could be done only while the household slept; and the probability that Mrs. Tilney yet lived, shut up for causes unknown, and receiving from the pitiless hands of her husband a nightly supply of coarse food, was the conclusion which necessarily followed. Shocking as was the idea, it was at least better than a death unfairly hastened, as, in the natural course of things, she must ere long be released. The suddenness of her reputed illness, the absence of her daughter, and probably of her other children, at the time—all favoured the supposition of her imprisonment. Its origin—jealousy perhaps, or wanton cruelty—was yet to be unravelled. (*Northanger Abbey* 134)

Catherine is so caught up in the idea that the abbey must be at least partly connected to her favourite books that she tries to figure out a mystery. Because of this, she begins to suspect General Tilney of hiding his wife, who is supposed to be dead, somewhere

in the abbey. At the same time, she immediately puts herself in the role of a detective and is ready to reveal all the secrets that are connected to this fictional case. Any evidence that could be used to clear General Tilney's name is disregarded by Catherine. Because of her thorough reading of Gothic novels, she knows that any evidence of someone's guilt or innocence could be falsified, as seen in the following text:

> The erection of the monument itself could not in the smallest degree affect her doubts of Mrs. Tilney's actual decease. Were she even to descend into the family vault where her ashes were supposed to slumber, were she to behold the coffin in which they were said to be enclosed—what could it avail in such a case? Catherine had read too much not to be perfectly aware of the ease with which a waxen figure might be introduced, and a supposititious funeral carried on. (*Northanger Abbey* 136)

General Tilney and his children, Henry and Eleanor, are introduced as potential Gothic characters, but Austen subverts these expectations. General Tilney appears intimidating and forbidding, reminiscent of Gothic villains, while Eleanor is portrayed as an amiable, intelligent, sweet-tempered young woman. Henry, on the other hand, becomes the voice of reason and often pokes fun at Catherine's Gothic notions. His wit and humour highlight the absurdity of these fictional devices. Catherine's first impressions of the family are changed in the course of the story. By presenting characters who defy Gothic stereotypes, Austen challenges the genre's conventions, therefore the novel can be seen as a parody of novel conventions.

Austen directly addresses the reader and comments on the nature of storytelling. She acknowledges the popularity of Gothic novels and exposes their flaws by contrasting them with her own realistic style. Austen's narrator explicitly critiques the excessive sentimentality and unrealistic plot twists found in the Gothic genre, encouraging readers to question their own reading habits. By employing these techniques, Jane Austen successfully satirises the Gothic genre in *Northanger Abbey*, offering a humorous and critical perspective on the excesses and absurdities of Gothic literature.

Northanger Abbey is purposely filled with Gothic elements, which Austen includes only to deflate them later. For example, the supposed haunting of Northanger Abbey is revealed to be a product of Catherine's imagination, and the explanation for Mrs Tilney's death is far

from the sinister events Catherine anticipated. Another example of this notion is the time when she sees a large chest in her room and automatically starts thinking about the chest's story:

> "This is strange indeed! I did not expect such a sight as this! An immense heavy chest! What can it hold? Why should it be placed here? Pushed back too, as if meant to be out of sight! I will look into it—cost me what it may, I will look into it—and directly too—by daylight." (*Northanger Abbey* 115-116)

The mysterious chest in Catherine's bedroom turns out to contain nothing more than farrier's bills. These subversions highlight the absurdity and over-dramatisation commonly found in Gothic novels.

The parody of the conventions of Gothic novels can be seen already in the novel's first paragraph. While introducing the heroine, Gothic novels usually try to present the heroine of their stories as someone with at least a somewhat tragic past. This, however, is not the case with *Northanger Abbey*:

> No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. (*Northanger Abbey* 3)

Austen mocks the tendency of Gothic fiction to create an orphaned or at least motherless heroine to portray a more vulnerable character. Catherine grew up in, for many people unconventional, but loving family. She was not a beauty or a genius growing up; she was just an ordinary plain girl. The narrator also points out that Catherine has kind parents and a father "who was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters." (*Northanger Abbey* 3) This brings up another frequent theme in Gothic literature that makes the reader pity the heroine. From all of the aspects mentioned above of Catherine's life, Austen makes her point that Catherine did not have the makings of a heroine.

Northanger Abbey is best known as a parody of Ann Radcliffe's renowned novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. With delightful wit and irony, Austen takes aim not only at Radcliffe's specific work but also at the entire genre of Gothic novels. Yet Austen's

critique does not end there; she weaves in additional references to 'horrid' novels through Isabella's list of novels that Catherine must read together with her:

> "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." (*Northanger Abbey* 23)

The entire novel is a satire of the Gothic genre. Austen exaggerates and mocks the elements typically found in Gothic novels, such as eerie settings, mysterious family secrets, and supernatural occurrences. She undermines the melodrama and excesses of these novels by presenting them as ridiculous and comical.

6.1.2 Social satire

In *Northanger Abbey*, satire is not limited to only Gothic novels but extends to the social conventions and behaviours of the characters. Bath, where Catherine spends a significant portion of the novel, serves as a satirical backdrop, allowing Austen to mock such cities' social structures and customs. The portrayal of Bath's social scene emphasises its shallowness and superficiality, drawing a sharp contrast between the triviality of daily life and the heightened emotions found in Catherine's beloved Gothic novels. The most famous example of this from *Nightmare Abbey* is when Catherine speaks with Mr Tilney after their first dance:

> "I have hitherto been very remiss, madam, in the proper attentions of a partner here; I have not yet asked you how long you have been in Bath; whether you were ever here before; whether you have been at the Upper Rooms, the theatre, and the concert; and how you like the place altogether. I have been very negligent—but are you now at leisure to satisfy me in these particulars? If you are I will begin directly."
>
> "You need not give yourself that trouble, sir."
>
> "No trouble, I assure you, madam." Then forming his features into a set smile, and affectedly softening his voice, he added, with a simpering air, "Have you been long in Bath, madam?"
>
> "About a week, sir," replied Catherine, trying not to laugh.

> "Really!" with affected astonishment.
>
> "Why should you be surprised, sir?"
>
> "Why, indeed!" said he, in his natural tone. "But some emotion must appear to be raised by your reply, and surprise is more easily assumed, and not less reasonable than any other. Now let us go on. Were you never here before, madam?" (*Northanger Abbey* 12-13)

After talking in this manner for some time, Mr Tilney says: "Now I must give one smirk, and then we may be rational again." (*Northanger Abbey* 13) In this dialogue, Austen refers to the customs of high society in Bath, to certain etiquette that people in that society should follow. Through Mr Tilney, she parodies such conversations and shows their stupidity.

Another target of Austen's satire is the prevalence of social pretensions, including social climbing and snobbery in society. Characters like General Tilney and Mrs Allen exemplify this obsession with status and wealth. General Tilney views Catherine Morland as a potential wealthy daughter-in-law and treats her kindly. However, his attitude changes drastically when he learns that Catherine will not inherit the fortune of Mr and Mrs Allen. Consumed by anger, he promptly returns to Northanger Abbey, determined to remove Catherine from his home to prevent his son from marrying a woman with no fortune. As for Mrs Allen, she becomes fixated on attending fashionable events and associating with many people and mainly individuals of higher social standing. She seeks out new acquaintances and takes Catherine to various social gathering places in search of new people to talk to.

> Every morning now brought its regular duties—shops were to be visited; some new part of the town to be looked at; and the pump-room to be attended, where they paraded up and down for an hour, looking at everybody and speaking to no one. The wish of a numerous acquaintance in Bath was still uppermost with Mrs. Allen, and she repeated it after every fresh proof, which every morning brought, of her knowing nobody at all. (*Northanger Abbey* 12)

Marriage and courtship are also recurring themes in Austen's works, providing a canvas for her satirical commentary. She skilfully critiques societal expectations and conventions associated with these institutions, exemplified through characters like Isabella Thorpe

and John Thorpe, who are portrayed as insincere and manipulative in their pursuit of advantageous marriages. Austen employs irony to expose the hypocrisy and shallowness of those prioritising wealth and social status over genuine love and compatibility. Initially, John appears to be genuinely attracted to Catherine, seemingly in love with her. However, as the story unfolds, the reader discovers his true motivations: he sought Catherine's affection due to his belief that she would inherit from the Allens. This revelation highlights John and his sister's manipulative nature, which becomes evident in various instances throughout the narrative. One such example can be observed in the conversation between Catherine and Isabella, where Isabella discloses the content of a letter from her brother, John Thorpe, shedding further light on their manipulative tendencies:

> His attentions were such as a child must have noticed. And it was but half an hour before he left Bath that you gave him the most positive encouragement. He says so in this letter, says that he as good as made you an offer, and that you received his advances in the kindest way; and now he wants me to urge his suit, and say all manner of pretty things to you. So it is in vain to affect ignorance. (*Northanger Abbey* 100)

Isabella's manipulative nature becomes evident in her attempts to persuade Catherine of her claims being true while simultaneously urging her to choose her brother over the Tilneys. Furthermore, she employs another manipulative tactic by persistently trying to convince Catherine and everybody around her of her love for James Morland, Catherine's brother. However, at the same time, she also engages in flirtatious behaviour with Captain Tilney, Henry Tilney's brother, all while pretending she has no interest in him:

> I refused him as long as I possibly could, but he would take no denial. You have no idea how he pressed me. I begged him to excuse me, and get some other partner—but no, not he; after aspiring to my hand, there was nobody else in the room he could bear to think of; and it was not that he wanted merely to dance, he wanted to be with me. (*Northanger Abbey* 94)

In addition, Austen subtly challenges traditional gender roles and expectations by portraying Catherine Morland as a character who defies the norms. Unlike the typical demure and submissive heroine, Catherine possesses an independent mind and frequently indulges in flights of fancy. Austen uses Catherine's character to critique the limitations imposed

on women by society and to question the unequal power dynamics within relationships. By not surrendering to John Thorpe, Catherine shows that she can decide for herself about her future and not let another man decide for her. This act of self-determination showcases Catherine's defiance of societal expectations. During a conversation with Mr Tilney and his sister about history books, Catherine expresses a thought that challenges conventional views. She humorously remarks, "The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all." (*Northanger Abbey* 76) This perspective is revolutionary, as Catherine playfully mocks the male-dominated narratives of history, highlighting the constant conflicts and wars driven by the 'good for nothing' men. She also notes the marginalisation of women within these accounts, emphasising their significant yet often overlooked roles in history. Additionally, Austen addresses gender stereotypes in the context of reading novels. She subtly introduces the notion of men reading novels through a conversation between Catherine and Mr Tilney:

> "But you never read novels, I dare say?"
>
> "Why not?"
>
> "Because they are not clever enough for you–gentlemen read better books."
>
> "The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid. I have read all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and most of them with great pleasure. The Mysteries of Udolpho, when I had once begun it, I could not lay down again; I remember finishing it in two days–my hair standing on end the whole time." (*Northanger Abbey* 75)

Through all of these examples, it becomes evident that Austen employs satire in *Northanger Abbey* to criticise and expose the follies and flaws of society. Her work highlights the importance of genuine values and individuality, shedding light on the shallowness of superficiality and societal expectations.

6.2 Exploring satire in *Nightmare Abbey* by Thomas Love Peacock

As mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, Thomas Love Peacock wrote a special type of satire, namely Menippean satire. This type of satire is primarily concerned with satirising mental attitudes instead of specific people or the whole society. However, this does

not mean that Peacock only focused on what is typical for Menippean satire. *Nightmare Abbey's* satire focuses on the Romantic and Gothic literature of its time, various aspects of society, and intellectual movements. It is strongly built on social stereotypes, which can be mainly found with the help of the characters of *Nightmare Abbey*.

6.2.1 Romantic stereotypes

There are many aspects of the Romantic movement that Peacock satirised in *Nightmare Abbey*, and one of them is the archetype of the Romantic hero. Mr Glowry can be seen as a satirical depiction of the traditional hero rather than a true embodiment of one. He serves as a caricature of the melancholic and brooding figures commonly found in literature of its time. One prominent aspect of Mr Glowry's character is his obsession with melancholy and pessimism, which aligns with the typical hero's disposition. He is constantly gloomy and finds pleasure in being miserable. This exaggerated portrayal mocks the Romantic notion of the tormented, melancholic soul, a recurring trope in Romantic literature. Mr Glowry used to be lively, but after being deceived by his first love and marrying his wife, he becomes entirely engrossed in his own sorrow. His need to create a melancholic and gloomy atmosphere in his household operates his process of choosing his servants. They are chosen based on two criteria: "a long face, or a dismal name." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. I) To provide an example, his butler is named Raven, his steward's name is Crow, and his other servants are Mattocks and Graves. Mr Glowry's obsession with the melancholic atmosphere was so extreme that he was "horror-struck by the sight" when he met the new footman who had a "round ruddy face, and a pair of laughing eyes." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. I) His enjoyment of the state of sadness is also depicted in the third chapter when Mr Glowry returns home from London:

> He [Mr Glowry] found Scythrop in a mood most sympathetically tragic; and they vied with each other in enlivening their cups by lamenting the depravity of this degenerate age, and occasionally interspersing divers grim jokes about graves, worms, and epitaphs. (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. III)

Peacock's writing makes the situation seem almost as if Mr Glowry is happy to find Scythrop with a sad disposition. Mr Glowry further isolates himself within the confines of Nightmare Abbey, actively avoiding social interaction and preferring to dwell on his own miseries.

This withdrawal from society is a characteristic frequently associated with Romantic heroes, who are portrayed as misunderstood and alienated figures. It gets to the point where he feels forced to receive his family members, mainly because of his lively brother-in-law Mr Hillary who "often exploded in some burst of outrageous merriment to the signal discomposure of Mr Glowry's nerves." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. I) Peacock satirically highlights the absurdity of Glowry's self-imposed isolation, shedding light on the exaggerated nature of the Romantic archetype. By exposing the flaws and absurdities inherent in the archetype of the hero, Peacock effectively challenges the idealised vision of the individual and their pursuit of emotional intensity and solitude that defined the Romantic movement.

Another character who embodies a Romantic archetype is Scythrop. He poses as the extreme version of the Romantic poet and serves as a satirical representation of their introspective nature. His obsession with ideals of Romanticism and a tendency for gloomy reflections mock the poets' inclination to prioritise their own emotional experiences above all else. He uses writing as a medium to convey his innermost feelings and explore his personal experiences. This is akin to introspective poets who often use their art form as a means of self-expression and introspection. Furthermore, Scythrop's radical political views, discontent with society and philosophical views mirror the Romantic poets' inclination towards revolutionary ideals and their criticism of social and political norms. However, his radicalism is portrayed in a parodic manner, emphasising the poet's tendency to embrace extreme ideologies without considering their practical consequences. Scythrop also believes that he has to write about his ideas. He writes to "feel the pulse of the wisdom and genius of the age." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. III) By the mention of 'genius of the age' he means himself. When his first treatise does not do well, he convinces himself that he will use the few readers to make a change:

> "Seven copies," he thought, "have been sold. Seven is a mystical number, and the omen is good. Let me find the seven purchasers of my seven copies, and they shall be the seven golden candle-sticks with which I will illuminate the world." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. III)

The previous citation also goes perfectly with Scythrop's ironic self-awareness and inflated sense of self-importance, emphasising the Romantic poets' tendency to take themselves

too seriously. His introspection is often presented as self-indulgent and self-obsessed, mocking the Romantic poets' fixation on their own emotions and experiences.

6.2.2 Gothic fiction

Satirisation of Gothic fiction is a large part of *Nightmare Abbey*. Peacock satirises Gothic fiction mainly through his characters. The narrator portrays Mr Flosky as a peculiar character, describing him as a "very lachrymose and morbid gentleman, of some note in the literary world, but in his own estimation of much more merit than name." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. I) Peacock's footnote reveals that his name, Flosky, is a corruption of the Greek word Filosky, meaning "a lover, or sectator, of shadows." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. I) Mr Flosky delighted in cultivating an air of mystery and excelled at recounting chilling tales. His fascination with being mysterious is exposed in his dialogue with Marionetta:

> "Nothing is so becoming to a man as an air of mystery. Mystery is the very key-stone of all that is beautiful in poetry, all that is sacred in faith, and all that is recondite in transcendental psychology. I am writing a ballad which is all mystery." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. VIII)

As the company at Nightmare Abbey begins to engage in a conversation about the mysterious figure, Mr Flosky uses the situation to turn the situation on himself. He automatically takes the spotlight, filling the others in on his experiences with ghosts and his knowledge of them:

> "There are two gates through which ghosts find their way to the upper air: fraud and self-delusion. In the latter case, a ghost is a *deceptio visûs*, an ocular spectrum, an idea with the force of a sensation. I have seen many ghosts myself. I dare say there are few in this company who have not seen a ghost." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. XII)

Another character through which Peacock parodies the Gothic elements is Scythrop. Being named Scythrop (derived from Greek, meaning 'of sad or gloomy countenance') after his dead relative who hanged himself adds to his dark and gloomy personality, coupled with his fascination for morbid and supernatural themes. This fascination can be seen, for instance, in the second chapter, where he shifts his attention from his broken heart

to romance books and mainly transcendental philosophy, which he starts studying "by their mystical jargon and necromantic imagery." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. II)

6.2.3 Political and social commentary and philosophical debates

A large part of *Nightmare Abbey* is the characters' philosophising about various aspects of life. The company talks about the state of the world, education or the pursuit of knowledge. These humorous and exaggerated debates between characters who represent different philosophical and intellectual viewpoints mock the self-importance and absurdity of such discussions.

However, these conversations do not always have to be in pairs or groups. Scythrop, for example, has most of his philosophical breakthroughs when he is by himself. Throughout the story, Scythrop engages in discussions and intellectual pursuits in his search for meaning and truth. This mirrors the philosophical inclination often found in the works of introspective poets as they delve into profound questions about the nature of reality and human existence. Scythrop's sudden interest in philosophy is portrayed in the second chapter by his need to reform the world. It is the first of many times that he philosophies by himself. He started building "many castles in the air, and peopled them with secret tribunals, and bands of illuminati, who were always the imaginary instruments of his projected regeneration of the human species." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. II) His brooding is accentuated by being every morning "immersed in gloomy reverie, stalking about the room in his nightcap" and the writer creates a comical picture when he mentions that Scythrop pulls his nightcap "over his eyes like a cowl, and folding his striped calico dressing-gown about him like the mantle of a conspirator." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. II) To further the point, Scythrop even seems to prefer talking to himself about his ideas, which only adds to his introspective personality:

> "Action," thus he soliloquised, "is the result of opinion, and to new-model opinion would be to new-model society. Knowledge is power; it is in the hands of a few, who employ it to mislead the many, for their own selfish purposes of aggrandisement and appropriation. What if it were in the hands of a few who should employ it to lead the many? What if it were universal, and the multitude were enlightened? No. The many must be always in leading-strings; but let them have wise and honest

> conductors. A few to think, and many to act; that is the only basis of perfect society." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. II)

He then goes on speculating by himself. The Enlightenment brought a new way of thinking about everything, and it is no surprise that almost everybody tried to philosophise themselves. This notion of Scythrop's excessive need to philosophise and create the best possible society is a commentary on the philosophical debates of Peacock's time as well as the self-importance of the Romantic hero.

An example of satire which is very much still true to this day is the satire of the classical worldview of the young. They have many groundbreaking ideas, do not want to be like their parents, and yet end up being more like their parents than they would like. In the beginning, Scythrop does not want to be like his father, but he adopts many of the same characteristic traits, that had doomed Mr Glowry in the past, towards the end. An example of this can be found in Scythrop's relationships with women and his view on women. In Scythrop's relationship issues, it is clear that women were just pawns in the game of men in Peacock's time. Scythrop himself, while talking to his father in the first chapter, defends women as individuals and criticises society:

> "But how is it that their minds are locked up? The fault is in their artificial education, which studiously models them into mere musical dolls, to be set out for sale in the great toy-shop of society." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. I)

He believes that women are not the problem; it is the society that makes them seem as 'mere musical dolls'. Throughout the story, it is apparent that even though he is against women being treated this way, he is also one of the 'puppet masters.' Because of Mr Glowry's displeasure, Scythrop cannot marry Marionetta, who is then married to Mr Listless. And even though Celinda is clever, feels independent, and forges her own path, she has to submit to patriarchal society and be merely a pawn for other men because of Scythrop's indecisiveness and marries Mr Flosky. By this, Peacock satirises marriage, in which women are seen more as an object in a purchase. This satire is more on the Juvenalian side of the satirical spectrum, as it is more biting, but it is satire nonetheless. Connected to this plot line is also the satirisation of young lovers:

> He fell in love; which is nothing new. He was favourably received; which is nothing strange. Mr Glowry and Mr Girouette had a meeting on the occasion, and quarrelled about the terms of the bargain; which is neither new nor strange. The lovers were torn asunder, weeping and vowing everlasting constancy; and, in three weeks after this tragical event, the lady was led a smiling bride to the altar, by the Honourable Mr Lackwit; which is neither strange nor new. (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. I)

In the previous paragraph, Peacock shows how fast one can fall in and out of love. Even though the lovers think they will never forget the person other person and never love anybody else, they eventually do. This point is repeated when Scythrop completely forgets about Miss Emily Girouette, with only a few flirtatious glances from his cousin Marionetta.

One of the points that Peacock makes through the character of Mr Flosky is the satirical commentary on a societal tendency, particularly prevalent in modern times, where people frequently assert that everything was better in the past and has deteriorated in the present. In the introduction of Mr Flosky, the narrator describes him as a person with "the good old times" reference "always on his lips." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. I) This notion also aligns with the Romantic inclination to idealise the past as a superior era.

Through a summary of Scythrop's years at the school, the narrator creates a satirical view of the school system of his time:

> When Scythrop grew up, he was sent, as usual, to a public school, where a little learning was painfully beaten into him, and from thence to the university, where it was carefully taken out of him; and he was sent home like a well-threshed ear of corn, with nothing in his head. (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. I)

The previous quote connects with one of the previous statements where Scythrop talks to his father about the change education could make if women could get the same education as men. However, from this quotation, it seems that education does not qualify anybody with anything.

6.2.4 Religious extremism

Another aspect satirised by Peacock is religious extremism. Mr Toobad, a friend of Mr Glowry, is also portrayed as a satirical character, specifically for being a Manichaean

Millenarian. He believes that two main forces are ruling the world, good and evil, and he sees the enlightened era as the time when evil is in power. His satirical portrayal arises from the exaggeration of his beliefs, as well as his overall character and behaviour. In the first chapter, he is described as a person who constantly talks of the twelfth verse of the twelfth chapter of Revelations: "Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come among you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." (John qtd in *Nightmare Abbey*, ch. I), which pointed to the temporary domination of the devil and, therefore, evil. He tried to insert this theory into all his conversations with the others at Nightmare Abbey to justify everything that was happening around him. The following quotation is from the third chapter, where Scythrop collides with Mr Toobad, who immediately attributes the incident to the forces of evil and especially the devil:

> "You see, my dear Scythrop, in this little incident, one of the innumerable proofs of the temporary supremacy of the devil; for what but a systematic design and concurrent contrivance of evil could have made the angles of time and place coincide in our unfortunate persons at the head of this accursed staircase?" (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. III)

His use of the same excuse for every situation is comical, and it satirises Romanticism's attempts to find answers to everything wrong happening in the world by using different beliefs and mainly religion. The satirical elements in Mr Toobad's character also lie in how he is portrayed as being disconnected from reality, unable to find any joy or happiness in life because of his constant preoccupation with doomsday scenarios and the downfall of humanity. As soon as something happens, Mt Toobad right away uses his beliefs to create a clarification of the situation: "That is, because the devil is come among us, and finds it for his interest to destroy all our perceptions of the distinctions of right and wrong." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. V) His pessimistic view of the world is also foreshadowed by his name, 'Toobad'.

6.2.5 Famous writers of the time

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, Peacock incorporated several notable authors of his time into *Nightmare Abbey*. Namely Samuel Taylor Coleridge, George Gordon Byron

and even one of his close friends, Percy Bysshe Shelley. ("Thomas Love Peacock") Shelley is portrayed through the character of Scythrop. Scythrop shares opinions and literary tastes with Shelley. Scythrop is a mild mockery, as Shelley and Peacock were friends, but Coleridge and Byron are portrayed with a bigger distaste.

Mr Flosky is a satirical depiction of a renowned writer, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. One of the more apparent allusions to Coleridge occurs when Mr Flosky recounts his last night:

> "Last night I fell asleep as usual over my book, and had a vision of pure reason. I composed five hundred lines in my sleep; so that, having had a dream of a ballad, I am now officiating as my own Peter Quince, and making a ballad of my dream, and it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it has no bottom." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. VIII)

Similarly to Mr Flosky, Coleridge is said to have written his greatest poem, *Kubla Khan* (1816), based on a dream, in Coleridge's well-known case it was an opium-influenced dream. Peacock seizes several opportunities throughout the novella to playfully mock Coleridge and his idiosyncrasies. Peacock often criticises Coleridge for not making sense very often through the character of Mr Flosky:

> "The blue are, indeed, the staple commodity; but as they will not always be commanded, the black, red, and grey may be admitted as substitutes. Tea, late dinners, and the French Revolution, have played the devil, Mr Listless, and brought the devil into play." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. V)

When Mr Listless tells Mr Flosky that he is unable to understand the connection of his words, which was often the case with Coleridge's poetry as well, Mr Flosky replies to him by saying:

> "I should be sorry if you could; I pity the man who can see the connection of his own ideas. Still more do I pity him, the connection of whose ideas any other person can see. Sir, the great evil is, that there is too much common-place light in our moral and political literature; and light is a great enemy to mystery, and mystery is a great friend to enthusiasm." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. V)

This statement helps the idea that Mr Flosky wants to be a very mysterious man and exaggerates his need to use nonsensical connections to impress others. The fact that he is mainly concerned with maintaining his reputation is very clear in the following quote, where he talks to Marionetta and is unable to answer her simple question and even admits to being concerned with maintaining his reputation.

> "My dear Miss O'Carroll, it would have given me great pleasure to have said any thing that would have given you pleasure; but if any person living could make report of having obtained any information on any subject from Ferdinando Flosky, my transcendental reputation would be ruined for ever." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. VIII)

Through Mr Flosky, Peacock criticises all of the characteristics of Coleridge that he did not like.

George Gordon Byron, a renowned writer, is another example of a writer incorporated by Peacock into his work, *Nightmare Abbey*. He is embodied in Scythrop's friend from college Mr Cypress. Despite appearing in only one chapter, Peacock manages to satirise him quite a lot. The author frequently extracts passages from Byron's notable work *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1818), particularly from the fourth canto. An instance of this can be found in the line "the wind and reaps the whirlwind" (Byron In *Nightmare Abbey*), which is incorporated into the following passage by Peacock: "There is no worth nor beauty but in the mind's idea. Love sows the wind and reaps the whirlwind." (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. XI)

6.2.6 Criticism of the rich

In Mr Listless, a satirisation of rich people of Peacock's time can be found. He is an exaggerated version of a man who does nothing for himself, as he has his French servant doing everything he needs for him. Fatout does so many things for Mr Listless that he hardly even thinks for himself anymore. As soon as he forgets something, he immediately calls on his servant, who remembers everything for him and tells him what he wants to know.

> THE HONOURABLE MR LISTLESS
>
> I do not know when I have been equal to such an effort. (He rang the bell for his valet. Fatout entered.) Fatout! when did I play at billiards last?

FATOUT

De fourteen December de last year, Monsieur. (Fatout bowed and retired.)

THE HONOURABLE MR LISTLESS

So it was. Seven months ago. (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. V)

Fatout essentially works as Mr Listless's brain. Mr Listeless does that quite often; for example, only a moment after Fatout leaves, he calls on him again:

THE HONOURABLE MR LISTLESS

The best piece of logic I ever heard, Mr Larynx; the very best, I assure you. I have thought very seriously of Cheltenham: very seriously and profoundly. I thought of it—let me see—when did I think of it? (He rang again, and Fatout reappeared.) Fatout! when did I think of going to Cheltenham, and did not go?

FATOUT

De Juillet twenty-von, de last summer, Monsieur. (Fatout retired.)

THE HONOURABLE MR LISTLESS

So it was. An invaluable fellow that, Mr Larynx—invaluable, Miss O'Carroll. (*Nightmare Abbey*, ch. V)

This behaviour is typical for rich people of that time who had a servant for everything and did not have to do anything themselves.

Through all of the aforementioned satirical elements, *Nightmare Abbey* pokes fun at the Romantic and Gothic movements, the excesses of the intellectual elite, and societal norms of the time, offering a witty and critical commentary on the culture and ideas of the early 19th century.

6.3 Comparison

Northanger Abbey and *Nightmare Abbey* are two classic works of literature that employ the use of satire to criticise and mock the Gothic genre and various aspects of society. While both works use satire to expose the follies and hypocrisies of their time, they differ in their targets and approaches.

In *Northanger Abbey*, written by Jane Austen, satire is primarily directed towards the Gothic novel genre and the romanticised notions of love prevalent in Austen's era. The novel follows the journey of Catherine Morland, a young, naive girl who immerses herself in the sensational world of Gothic novels, eventually leading to comical misunderstandings and misadventures. Austen uses satire to expose the absurdity and unreality of the Gothic genre, poking fun at the exaggerated settings, melodramatic plotlines and characters. By doing so, she also criticises society's obsession with fictionalised love stories and unrealistic expectations based on literature.

On the other hand, *Nightmare Abbey*, written by Thomas Love Peacock, takes a broader approach to satire. This novella is a satirical parody of the Romantic movement and its intellectual, social, and political aspects. Peacock uses his characters to represent various stereotypes prevalent during the Romantic era, such as the melancholic poet, the sceptical philosopher, and the politically ambitious reformer. Through witty dialogue and humorous situations, Peacock satirises the Romantic ideals of emotional excess, irrationality, and a rejection of reason. He also mocks the intellectual pretensions of the characters and highlights the inconsistencies and contradictions in their beliefs.

While both works employ satire, they differ in tone and purpose. *Northanger Abbey*'s satire is more gentle and lighthearted, aiming to amuse and entertain the readers while gently mocking the Gothic novel genre. On the other hand, *Nightmare Abbey*'s satire is more biting and caustic, directly attacking the ideologies and movements of the Romantic era. Peacock's satire is often more overt and exaggerated, using caricatures and absurd situations to expose the flaws and absurdities of Romanticism. That is why sometimes it is harder to find the aspects of satire in *Northanger Abbey*.

In conclusion, both *Northanger Abbey* and *Nightmare Abbey* effectively utilise satire to criticise and mock various aspects of their respective societies. However, while Austen's satire focuses on the Gothic novel genre and romanticised notions of love, Peacock's satire takes a broader approach, targeting the Romantic movement as a whole. Despite their differences, both works succeed in using satire as a powerful tool to expose the follies and hypocrisies of their time.

Conclusion

The art of satire within the Gothic novel parodies of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Thomas Love Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* reveals the authors' motivations and the contexts in which these novels were written. By considering the impact of societal expectations, literary trends, and the authors' personal experiences, it becomes evident that satire played a crucial role in their narrative development.

Both Austen and Peacock were influenced by the cultural and intellectual background of their time, which was characterised by societal conventions and literary trends. They used satire as a tool to critique and challenge these established norms, exposing the follies and absurdities of their respective eras. In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen mainly sought to satirise the sensational and melodramatic elements of Gothic novels popular during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Peacock, in *Nightmare Abbey*, targeted the Romantic movement and its stereotypes.

The techniques employed by Austen and Peacock to achieve their satirical goals are multifaceted. Austen skilfully combines parody, irony, and wit to dismantle the conventions of the Gothic genre, juxtaposing the imagined horrors of Catherine Morland's overactive imagination with the everyday realities of society. Peacock, on the other hand, employs a more overt and exaggerated form of satire, using caricature and hyperbole to caricature Romantic ideals and its proponents.

By challenging and subverting established norms, Austen and Peacock not only entertained readers but also provided incisive social commentary. They exposed the artificiality and hypocrisy of their societies, highlighting the discrepancy between appearance and reality. Through satire, they revealed the absurdity of certain cultural practices and the dangers of unchecked imagination or blind adherence to prevailing literary trends.

The importance of satire within these Gothic novel parodies cannot be overstated. It serves as a vehicle for social critique, offering a nuanced perspective on the flaws and weaknesses of society. Satire enables Austen and Peacock to address serious topics in a playful and engaging manner, inviting readers to question prevailing beliefs and norms.

Furthermore, these works hold significance beyond their immediate contexts. Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* stand as enduring literary achievements that continue to resonate with readers today. They not only provide insightful commentary on the social and literary trends of their time but also offer timeless observations on human nature, societal expectations, and the power of satire itself. As such, these works contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding the importance of literature in illuminating and critiquing the world.

As mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, Austen's satire is more on the Horatian end of the satirical spectrum, which is more playful and lighthearted than its counterpart, Juvenalian satire. Peacock uses Menippean satire, which is more on the Juvenalian side of the spectrum. With this type of satire, he mainly criticises Romanticism and everything associated with it. His satire is more biting than Austen's, and the way that Peacock mocks the targets of his criticism are usually more evident than Austen's.

To conclude, Austen and Peacock's satirical portrayals in *Northanger Abbey* and *Nightmare Abbey* showcase the authors' motivations and the contexts in which they wrote. Satire emerges as a vital tool for these authors to challenge societal expectations, subvert established norms, and provide incisive social commentary. The techniques employed by Austen and Peacock demonstrate their skill in dismantling prevailing literary trends and revealing the inherent flaws and absurdities of their respective eras. As enduring literary achievements, these works remain important for their insights into human nature and contributions to the ongoing literary discourse.

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