It may be remembered, that, in a chamber of Udolpho, hung a black veil, whose singular situation had excited Emily's curiosity, and which afterwards disclosed an object, that had overwhelmed her with horror; for, on lifting it, there appeared, instead of the picture she had expected, within a recess of the wall, a human figure of ghastly paleness, stretched at its length, and dressed in the habiliments of the grave. What added to the horror of the spectacle, was, that the face appeared partly decayed and disfigured by worms, which were visible on the features and hands. On such an object, it will be readily believed, that no person could endure to look twice. Emily, it may be recollected, had, after the first glance, let the veil drop, and her terror had prevented her from ever after provoking a renewal of such suffering, as she had then experienced. Had she dared to look again, her delusion and her fears would have vanished together, and she would have perceived, that the figure before her was not human, but formed of wax. The history of it is somewhat extraordinary, though not without example in the records of that fierce severity, which monkish superstition has sometimes inflicted on mankind. A member of the house of Udolpho, having committed some offence against the prerogative of the church, had been condemned to the penance of contemplating, during certain hours of the day, a waxen image, made to resemble a human body in the state, to which it is reduced after death. This penance, serving as a memento of the condition at which he must himself arrive, had been designed to reprove the pride of the Marquis of Udolpho, which had formerly so much exasperated that of the Romish church; and he had not only superstitiously observed this penance himself, which, he had believed, was to obtain a pardon for all his sins, but had made it a condition in his will, that his descendants should preserve the image, on pain of forfeiting to the church a certain part of his domain, that they also might profit by the humiliating moral it conveyed. The figure, therefore, had been suffered to retain its station in the wall of the chamber, but his descendants excused themselves from observing the penance, to which he had been enjoined.

This image was so horribly natural, that it is not surprising Emily should have mistaken it for the object it resembled, nor, since she had heard such an extraordinary account, concerning the disappearing of the late lady of the castle, and had such experience of the character of Montoni, that she should have believed this to be the murdered body of the lady Laurentini, and that he had been the contriver of her death.

The situation, in which she had discovered it, occasioned her, at first, much surprise and perplexity; but the vigilance, with which the doors of the chamber, where it was deposited, were afterwards secured, had compelled her to believe, that Montoni, not daring to confide the secret of her death to any person, had suffered her remains to decay in this obscure chamber. The ceremony of the veil, however, and the circumstance of the doors having been left open, even for a moment, had occasioned her much wonder and some doubts; but these were not sufficient to overcome her suspicion of Montoni; and it was the dread of his terrible vengeance, that had sealed her lips in silence, concerning what she had seen in the west chamber.

“…fancy though it had trespassed lately once or twice could not mislead her here…” *Northanger Abbey*

Beard’s Handy Guide to Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*

This early novel of Austen’s could be considered a farce, parody or burlesque trading off the thrill of so-called Gothic novels of her time. Written in 1803 but not published until after Austen’s death, the novel deals with the deconstruction of texts such as those of Mrs.Radcliffe who always put heroines in the severest of dangers, in the most unlikely of settings (Italian forests, French wilderness). The heroines were always orphaned at an early age, if not birth, and suffered the unwelcome attentions of older men often acting as their guardians. The young women were always extremely beautiful and unbelievably moral, paragons of learning and modesty. Reverse all the descriptors of Catherine Morland in the first chapter and one begins to see the perfect Gothic or Richardson heroine. Catherine is very ordinary, natural, and only ordinary things happen to her. However, because of the reading of the novels in vogue at that time, she begins to live the fantasy of heroines, believing something sinister has happened at Northanger Abbey. The reader soon learns that the fancied sinister happenings are based on real-life vices: greed and pride. The dangers of making friends too rapidly are evident; the villainy of a money-grasping father involves not whisking her off to Italy but throwing her out of Northanger Abbey to fend for herself in a public coach to cross the country to return home. Those might have been very real dangers for Catherine….

First begun as an epistolary novel, the work soon shifts to the omniscient narrator whose voice early on betrays the parody of the Gothic novel and the moralistic sermonizing of Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*, and *Clarissa*, and Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones,* the most popular novels of the day.

Pointers to look for:

Character development as opposed to the flat characters of Moll Flanders (except perhaps for Moll herself according to E.M. Forster).

The distancing of the love scenes and engagement proposal.

The reverse of the Gothic/Richardson moralizing:

The opening chapter and the Morlands…all described in terms of NOT.

Henry Tilney and muslin; Henry Tilney and the novel; Thorpe and the novel; Catherine and History; Mrs.Allen and her dereliction of duty to Catherine (the Pump Room and the carriage “abduction”). General Tilney and his rejection of Catherine. Isabella Thorpe and her hyperbole.