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REVEALING THE GOTHIC NARRATIVE TRADITION IN EUDORA WELTY'S *DELTA WEDDING* AND JANE AUSTEN'S *NORTHANGER ABBEY*: A STUDY OF THE
TRANSATLANTIC NOVEL

by

RACHEL ADORNATO

Under the Direction of Tanya Caldwell, PhD.

ABSTRACT

The aesthetic principles of the Gothic lexicon were first legitimized by popular eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels such as *The Monk* and *The Castle of Otranto*. The male authors of these novels promote a fascination with the supernatural. As scholars studied this period in the history of the novel, two subgenres of the Gothic emerged: the masculine and feminine. This feminine subgenre includes Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Eudora Welty's *Delta Wedding*. Jane Austen, and later Eudora Welty, remediate the Gothic narrative tradition of eighteenth-century novelists. The goal of this new feminine subgenre is to satirize the masculine subgenre's phantasmagoric means of presentation. Furthermore, the fundamental aesthetics of the Gothic were taken up by Jane Austen during first-wave feminism and Eudora Welty just before second-wave feminism. Each used the novel's aesthetic relationship with the Gothic as a medium for expressing inherently feminist perspectives.

INDEX WORDS: Gothic novel, Remediation, Feminism, Aestheticism

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RACHEL ADORNATO

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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DEDICATION

To my mother and grandmother, whose devotion to education nurtured my young mind and instilled in me a passion for reading and writing. Upon the passing of my Nana in 2015, I inherited her large collection of volumes and first editions. Over the years, she procured many scientific journals and textbooks from her nearly forty-year career as a biology teacher in Jasper County, Georgia. My mother, who has been a mathematics teacher in Coweta County for twenty-five years, instilled in me a habit of setting goals through journaling and working hard to attain them. It is in thanks to these strong, resourceful, compassionate women that I had the interest in graduate study. I am humbled to dedicate my life to the education of the next generation in their honor.

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CHAPTER ONE: DEFINING THE GOTHIC NARRATIVE TRADITION

By its oldest definition, “Gothic” denotes the language and culture of the Goths, the people who migrated across Europe during the third through the fifth centuries. The migration of this group destabilized the Roman Empire and ushered in what we would call “the Dark Ages.” The Goths’ culture spread over the continent after Rome fell and dominated Europe until the Northern and Southern Renaissances. Although the culture that the Renaissance was born out of is not the same that befell Rome, for many generations separated these two peoples, it was, however, the people of this Renaissance generation that built mammoth feats of Gothic architecture, such as Nôtre Dame Cathedral and Sainte-Chapelle, from the mid-twelfth to the mid-sixteenth century. It is this architectural style that features tented arches, flying buttresses, and gargoyle statuary; however, this style was not described as “Gothic” until the Enlightenment era thinkers required a term to designate these archaic structures as “other.” Just as Gothic architecture has its own set of patterns and characteristics, so does Gothic fiction. The outcast, the grotesque, and the lame denote Gothic aesthetics in literature. These literary markers associate fictional characters with the “relapse into the old delusions of a benighted age, nostalgically glamorizing the worst features of a past from which we have thankfully escaped” (Baldick, xiii). Or have we? Some works by Jane Austen and Eudora Welty suggest not.

Under the guise of feminine domesticity, in other words, narratives concerning the highly polarized gender roles of females in society, Jane Austen and later Eudora Welty, remediate the Gothic narrative tradition of eighteenth-century British novelists Matthew Gregory Lewis, Horace Walpole, and Ann Radcliffe by utilizing similar character tropes and exotic settings. This remediation hinges on Austen’s and Welty’s commitments to things as they appear in real life.

The elements that Walpole's and Radcliffe's fictions popularize— the castle, the Catholicism, the exotic, far-away places— were ripened by both the highly polarized gendered roles of the eighteenth and nineteenth century and the advent of first-wave feminism.¹ These fundamental aesthetics of the Gothic were then taken up by Jane Austen, and later by Eudora Welty during second-wave feminism,² and used as a medium for expressing their concerns for women's plight. Jane Austen and Eudora Welty remediated the popularized format of the sensational, supernatural Gothic. In other words these authors' respective novels *Northanger Abbey* and *Delta Wedding* offer similar aesthetic information regarding setting, characters and plot in a new media format. The overall affect achieved through this feminine remediation of the masculine Gothic can be described as ironic or dark humor. This is achieved simply by undermining, often to a humorous affect, the masculine Gothic. Indeed, the Gothic as a genre had already been remediated by feminine writers in the British tradition by the time Austen wrote her novels. The women writers who participated in the first wave of Gothic remediation include Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte Smith, and, of course, Austen.

Remediation is simply the representation of existent information in a new format. Remediation is distinguishable from, although related to, reiteration (mere repetition of data) in that remediation implies innovation of some sort. For instance, when students in the classroom need more instruction to master curriculum, they are sent to a "remedial" class. In this setting, students are exposed to the same curriculum that they were in the original classroom setting, but this time the material is introduced to them in a new format, an alternate medium. The delivery of curriculum in an alternate format is a prime example of remediation in action. Most often, this is the definition of remediation that people are familiar with, and for the purposes of this thesis, it means essentially the same thing. The novel, which was a new media format in the eighteenth

century, articulates British folklore, mythologies, poems, songs, and other forms of literary culture in a new and more accessible format when compared with preceding centuries. Many esteemed critics and writers of the time, including Samuel Johnson, were uncertain about the legitimacy of the novel as a new genre, and even challenged its decency/morality, an idea hotly debated to this day.³ The novel as a genre lands on rather more solid ground by the time Jane Austen begins writing *Northanger Abbey* in the 1790s, and is even more firmly established as a literary genre in the Americas when Eudora Welty writes *Delta Wedding*. First, Austen issues a clever remediation of the Gothic literary tradition, and playfully satirizes the novel's (the British novel, in general) critics by undermining her heroine's naïve assumptions about reality and the Gothic. Catherine's ability to ontologically reason her way out of the Gothic, phantasmagoric mind-set is a tribute to Austen's faith in the realistic novel to reveal significant, meaningful Truths about real life. Similarly, Eudora Welty as novelist assumes the mantle of Nathaniel Hawthorne and William Faulkner to perform another remediation of the Gothic, this time in the American Gothic tradition. By presenting the same material (domestic settings in agrarian America) Welty effectively achieves a remediated version of the Gothic narrative tradition with her novel *Delta Wedding*.

The complex web of the Gothic genre spans an ocean, thousands of miles, and over two hundred years, so I will now take care to establish a working chronology. The first novel that scholars tend to recognize as "Gothic" is Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* published in 1764, which was subtitled "A Gothic Story" in its second printed edition. Then, in 1818, at just nineteen years old, Mary Shelley published what is regarded by many in pop culture and academia alike to be one of the greatest horror stories of all time, *Frankenstein*. Shelley's novel blurs the line between man and monster: is it Victor Frankenstein? Or is that which he creates

truly monstrous? These questions of humanity, monstrosity and creation are raised by Shelley, but left unresolved by the novel's ambiguous, characteristically Romantic ending nestled in the sublime and beautiful setting of the arctic ocean. Several years after Shelley publishes her monument to the Gothic tradition, a French Gothic novel under the title *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* popularizes the grotesque in the form of the protagonist Quasimodo (1831). Like Shelley's novel, Hugo's Gothic narrative has been the subject of countless adaptations to film, including children's cartoons, and as the title suggests, the subject of the novel denotes intrinsically Gothic aestheticism. It becomes clear that the Gothic novel is interested in that which hinges on "intuitive suggestion rather than by any agreed precision of reference," according to Christopher Baldick, editor of the 1992 *Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*. It is concerned with the aesthetic suggestion of the setting, images, and narrative voice. The sum of these monuments to Gothic heritage mentioned above is the dark, subterranean, mysterious catacombs of human consciousness manifested in the form of narrative. The subgenre of the feminine Gothic novel developed something not quite so evident in their predecessors: sardonic humor. Of course, the components of the Gothic in Austen's and Welty's fiction are not the same as in the work of Ann Radcliffe, Horace Walpole, or Victor Hugo; however, these "strange shadows," as Ruth D. Weston calls them in her study *Gothic Traditions and Narrative Techniques in the Fiction of Eudora Welty*, haunt the texts, often to a humorous effect, upsetting the reader's expectations and highlighting the "aesthetic potential for the sense of life's mystery..." (Weston 16).

Nearly a century and a half after Jane Austen published six monuments to British literary heritage, Eudora Welty composed archly similar novels concerning daring and inexplicably true-to-life heroines. In both cases, the female novelists create characters who reflect human flaws

and passions rather than Romantic fantasy. Welty writes in her essay “The Radiance of Jane Austen” that Austen pursues a “precise destination” that demonstrates a “formidable engine of strategy” (*Eye of the Story* 5). I argue that this so-called “strategy” Welty refers to is at work not only in her own fiction and that of Jane Austen but is also a strategy that connects the two seemingly unrelated authors across time and space. The evolution of the Gothic novel, as it migrated across the Atlantic, became entangled in the dialogues of first- and second-wave feminism. The resurgence of Gothic tropes and gothic aestheticism is linked to female authorship, particularly novelists like Austen and Welty who took up the literary heritage of their predecessors and engaged, on some level, in the transgressive act of novel-writing.

Weston’s study is where I first became acquainted with the notion of the Gothic Narrative Tradition in Welty’s fiction, but Rebecca Mark’s study, *The Dragon’s Blood: Feminist Intertextuality in Eudora Welty’s The Golden Apples*, as it is where my interest in intertextuality peaked. Mark’s theories about Classical literary heritage in modern texts such as Welty’s fiction was incredibly convincing and well-defended. Mark proposes feminist intertextuality as a reading strategy for a study of Welty. After familiarizing myself with the concept, I arrived at the inspiration for this thesis. Referencing myth cycles is an allusion to Classical literary tradition that Welty evokes (this is what Mark’s study focuses on), and with Weston’s study in my mind as well, I could not deny the presence of the Gothic in Welty’s fiction too. In a way, Mark’s feminist intertextuality theory is what wedded Austen and Welty in my mind. I was thinking: what could possibly be connecting these women across generations, time, geography, history? This is when I began considering the waves of feminism as the factor connecting the two, and feminism specifically in the form of novel-writing. This thesis discusses female authorship and the “female Gothic” subgenre as it exists in conversation with the originally male-dominated

Gothic archetype that Ruth Weston examines in her study (Weston 2). As the Gothic novel evolved and was taken up by the new generations of novelists, it was remediated to suit the purposes of Austen's generation amidst first-wave feminism, then Welty's generation as the second wave was initiated. Austen's remediation is to Walpole's archetype as Welty's remediation is to William Faulkner's, or the so-called Southern Gothic,⁴ archetype. If Austen's remediation of the Gothic with *Northanger Abbey* has been declared social satire, is *Delta Wedding* equally satirical of the American South? Welty engages in an ironic, nearly disdainful sort of dark humor in her novel. Sardonic humor, I posit, is the crux of the female subgenre Gothic.

Embedded in the marriage plots of each of the authors' works studied in this thesis are notes of what Weston legitimized as the "Gothic narrative tradition" (Weston 5). While both Welty and Austen employ literary fundamentals typically associated with Gothic literature—setting, imagery, and style of narration—the rather slippery literary term "Gothic" demands to be clearly structured for the purposes of my study. In *Northanger Abbey* and *Delta Wedding*, descriptive language, particularly language that pertains to architecture and setting, associates the narratives with the Gothic lexicon. While Weston looks mainly at the male-dominated archetype with respect to Gothic traditions in the evolution of the novel, here I explore female authorship as an avenue for social change. In addition, the presence of fundamentally Gothic elements in Austen's and Welty's fiction suggests not only the novelists' mutual interest in their Gothic predecessors, but also indicates their willingness to critique through satire the society in which they lived. By employing Gothic aesthetics in their choices of setting and descriptive language, these women simultaneously remediate and parody the "old Gothic" (Weston 21).

Austen artfully employs the traditions of the British Gothic narrative without writing a story of fantasy at all. The same goes for Welty. Their prose is laden with stunning realism that renders clear, unembellished stories about human consciousness; however, both Austen and Welty attempt to distance their novels from expectations of fantasy while continuing to employ Gothic images in their settings and characters. Their novels exhibit realistic plots, the root of which is on the “aesthetic potential” for the inexplicable nature of life and fate (Weston 16). Welty and Austen transform male Gothic narratives into artifacts of the truly Gothic: aestheticized domestic literature revolving around female characters. Devoney Looser proposes five general positions which defend Austen’s feminism as a writer;⁵ I tend to agree most wholly with number five: “...her central focus on women characters—and intelligent, strong women at that—proved her feminism. Any author who could create an Elizabeth Bennet or an Emma Woodhouse must be promoting a feminist cause” (*Jane Austen and the Discourses of Feminism* 6). Furthermore, Welty recreates the feminine authorial figure in Shelley Fairchild with her “fountain pen on a chain” and her travel to Europe (*Delta Wedding* 94). Furthermore, both Austen’s and Welty’s fiction revolves around the unvarnished, imperfect, complex lives of women in their respective time-periods. Yet, the fictional spaces that surround their heroines are imbued in the aesthetics of a history-haunted England and American South. Centuries of revolution, uncertainty, religious persecution, and political unrest ultimately lead to a renewed, profound interest in the past. Perhaps this action of looking back evident in the literary record speaks to the larger truth about humanity, in times of uncertainty, looking to the past to understand where we might be in the future and how to prepare. On a fundamental level, this is one way that fiction, novels specifically, can reveal certain Truths when, by nature, they are falsities. These novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Delta Wedding*, pay homage to the Gothic

narrative tradition while simultaneously rebranding that tradition with distinctly feminine satire; however, only one of these novels, *Northanger Abbey*, has been explicitly labeled a parody by scholars.

In the mid-1790s, Jane Austen began writing her full-length novel *Northanger Abbey* after a prolific decade of juvenile writing. *Northanger Abbey* is a transgressive text that, unfortunately, Austen did not publish during her lifetime. It was not until after her death in 1817 that the novel was given its final name by her brother Henry Austen and John Murray's publishing house in 1817. Austen's *Northanger Abbey* demonstrates a sardonic wit that not only subverts the novel's traditionally Gothic assumptions but saturates the marriage plot in what some have called dark humor. Claudia Johnson proclaims the young Jane Austen "a committed artist" and argues that the most "salient quality" of her artistry is her ability to induce "laughter" (307). My argument concerning Austen focusses on moments in the text that are sprinkled with Gothic aesthetics, especially moments where Austen's narrator criticizes the characters of the story or the world in which they live.

Austen defends the legitimacy of novels as a genre against eighteenth-century critics' belittling by privileging such works as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* to the readership of her heroine, Catherine Morland, but she does this to a sardonic effect. It was not merely critics who were criticizing the novel as a genre; it was a popular opinion that novels were not academic reading, or a legitimate genre. It is noteworthy that Austen particularly praised her fellow women's novels such as those of Ann Radcliffe and Charlotte Smith. While elevating novels and featuring them so directly in her own fiction, Austen also parodies the novel reader's expectations by satirizing the methods of her predecessors. Thus, Catherine Morland is the product of Austen's joke, or perhaps more accurately, she is the vehicle through which the

novel arrives at satire. It is well understood that Ann Radcliffe, who is mentioned directly several times in *Northanger Abbey*, was influenced and inspired by the methods of Horace Walpole in his novel *The Castle of Otranto*. The abbey for which Austen's novel is named, with its "sliding panels and tapestry," embodies the Catholic remnants of pre-Tudor England, and therefore, comes with a set of assumptions that govern the heroine's movements while she visits the Tilney estate (NA 107). Catherine's naïve behavior in Bath is made more extreme when she stays with the Tilneys. While defending the novel as a literary genre, Austen simultaneously criticizes the phantasmagoria⁶ of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel by undermining the quintessentially Gothic space (the abbey) with a convincing story about reality for a marrying-age woman in the Regency⁷ period. By focusing on relationships between women in *Northanger Abbey*, particularly women who read novels, Austen legitimizes the novel as a reputable genre of British literature by taking part in the process herself.

Northanger Abbey's transition from the tourist destination of Bath to the Tilney's abbey exemplifies Austen's parody. The journey is emphasized by juxtaposition: Henry, the young, Anglican parson as love-interest for Catherine, in proximity with the decaying, Catholic past of England. The situational irony is astounding as Catherine arrives in the hall expecting chains, dungeons, antiquated furniture. Instead, the renovated abbey is perfectly in keeping with contemporary style and standards. However, revealed in that journey between Bath and Northanger Abbey is the marriage plot between Catherine and Henry Tilney. What was revealed in volume one is set to be resolved by the events of volume two. For instance, the grotesque, Gothic "monsters" that the heroine and her companion Isabella fantasize over in volume I is undermined by the heroine's realization in volume II that "monsters" in real life take a different form than in novels, and they are more opportunistic and cunning (i.e. the uncouth, arguably

nasty, Thorpes). The pair share a carriage for the journey to the abbey, during which time Henry enjoys teasing Catherine about her expectations and toys with her obsession with Gothic novels. Despite the abbey's Gothic architecture and the storm that ravages the countryside on Catherine's first night there, the aesthetic expectations set up by the narrative tradition she loves are undermined by the novel's realism.⁸ Hoping to have found an archaic manuscript in the drawers of the guest quarters (as Henry had teasingly suggested during their carriage ride), our heroine is greeted by none other than a literal laundry list. The heroine's social faux pas along with her obsessive expectations for Northanger Abbey that she harbors nearly jeopardize her reputation and chances for social advancement through matrimony. The sardonic author plays with antiquated Catholic superstitions by inserting such obsessive tendencies in her heroine's personality. In addition, Austen uses free indirect discourse⁸ at several points in *Northanger Abbey* both to criticize the superstition and phantasmagoria of the so-called "old Gothic" and to defend the legitimacy of the British novel-reading culture (Weston 20).

Delta Wedding as an example in the American novelistic tradition reflects the memories of the Tudor-haunted, British Gothic novel. Austen plucks the images of the aesthetically Gothic amid the first wave of feminism: setting, images, and architecture all combine to produce an aestheticized remediation of the truly Gothic. *Delta Wedding* is the Mississippi-born author's second published novel; it appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* before being published as a full-length novel in 1946. Years before, the author published her first novel *The Robber Bridegroom*,⁹ which owes its heritage to Classical mythology. Amid the second wave of feminism, Welty depicts the Mississippi Delta in 1923 through the eyes of a motherless nine-year-old child, Laura McRaven. The wide-eyed narrative focal point who brings us into the narrative visits her Fairchild relatives in the Delta for the wedding of her seventeen-year-old cousin, Dabney Fairchild, to Troy Flavin,

the thirty-four-year-old family plantation manager. Void of much other plot, the novel revolves around the customs, secrets, loyalties, social expectations and eccentricities of the American South in 1923. The same can be said of Austen's parody, except that it deals with the customs, secrets, loyalties, social expectations and eccentricities of British society in the 1790s. As the title would suggest, Welty's novel revolves around a wedding and is primarily concerned with a moralism¹⁰ not unlike that which prevailed during the Regency period. Troy Flavin, the match *chosen* by Dabney Fairchild, is surrounded by dark imagery and suspicion. Troy's lower status as an overseer makes forces members of the Fairchild family deem him unworthy of their Dabney. The union, despite Troy's being nearly twice the age of his bride, is reminiscent of Victorian/Regency matrimonial standards however, the match appears transgressive when the transcendence of social class at the liberty of a *woman* is taken into consideration. My research strives to answer the question of why Welty would imagine such a character around whom the whole story revolves. Is it to take up the reins of satirical humor and drive to the "precise destination" that she references in "The Radiance of Jane Austen"?

According to Liza Kramer, the marriage plot, also known as novelistic heterosexual coupling, of course, is read as an apparatus of the patriarchy to insure its longevity. Marmion "becomes the key to understanding what Welty means to convey about the desire for white privilege in perpetuity—" as it is focalized through the eyes of Laura McRaven and appears impossibly huge and daunting, much like Northanger Abbey appears to the young Catherine Morland (Kramer 145). Reine Dugas Bouton's edited collection of essays on *Delta Wedding*, where Kramer's essay appears, is highly influential to this thesis. Bouton's book, published in 2008, offers ample scholarship on Welty's novel. Appearing in the chapter "Outsiders and Insiders," Kramer defends a compelling and pertinent argument, that Marmion, the largest of the

houses at Shellmound plantation, and the future that the mansion represents, is a monument to white wealth and privilege via the marriage plot.

Marmion is one such example of incorporating the Gothic tradition into the landscape. While the house's appearance as a plantation house is completely different from flying buttresses and gargoyles the imagery that Welty uses to paint its portrait is imbued with the Gothic: "the magnificent temple-like, castle-like house, with the pillars springing naked from the ground, and the lookout tower, and twenty-five rooms, and inside, the wonderful free-standing stair—the chandelier..." (*Delta Wedding* 211). Welty's description of the building is inspired by an 1852 mansion just outside of Columbus, Mississippi, abandoned when she visited as a student the Mississippi State University for Women (MUW). Dabney reaches out for Marmion and all that the building promises as she transitions from girlhood into womanhood much the same as our heroine in *Northanger Abbey* reaches out for the promise and excitement that the Abbey extends to her. Both women are concerned with and reaching out for the culmination of the marriage plot: their successful transition into womanhood. I suggest that this specific manipulation in setting and the description thereof are Gothic aesthetics, purposefully imposed by the author, perhaps incidentally producing a remediated format of the Gothic. Dabney Fairchild as one of the main feminine focal points of the novel is the most "Gothically" infused/associated character. Her at times defiant agency in establishing her own marital destiny by choosing Troy Flavin is a direct and explicit blow to both patriarchal norms in reality and characteristics of the Gothic in literary fiction. It is of no small consequence that books and reading are everywhere in *Delta Wedding*.

Troy and Dabney's wedding ceremony is the event around which the entire novel unfolds, but Laura McRaven, whose mother has died earlier that year, focalizes some of the

narrative. In addition to exploring what Dabney and Troy's wedding says about Welty's gothic aestheticism via the marriage plot, I explore family dynamics concerning the respective narrative focal points of *Northanger Abbey* and *Delta Wedding*: Catherine Morland and Laura McRaven. While Catherine's mother is not dead, the heroine spends the entire novel away from her countryside home and away from her mother's guidance; Catherine's naïveté is made apparent more than a few times in the novel, and frequently to her embarrassment. Similarly, Laura travels alone to the Mississippi Delta, and is without either parental figure for the entire novel. Laura McRaven, interestingly enough, is forbidden from participation in the marriage ceremony due to her mother's death. Inherent in my thesis is the discussion of family dynamics, and how the paternal and maternal roles of the central families of each of my primary texts embody the aristocratic crisis that the Gothic seeks to convey. Welty and Austen each posit women as the problem, using dark humor, and the solution, using feminist discourse, to a society collapsing in on itself.

Weston thoroughly and convincingly explores Eudora Welty's "use of gothic convention" in the "aspect of place" in Welty's novels, but Weston does not directly discuss *Delta Wedding* (Weston 4). While her study of Welty's fiction as a whole delves into many of the author's short stories and novels ranging all throughout her career, *Delta Wedding* is left largely untouched by Weston. Reading *Delta Wedding* through the lens of the Gothic tradition remediated by Austen in *Northanger Abbey* reveals the gap in and where there is need for additional scholarship regarding the evolution of the Gothic novel. Austen "sandbagged" the old Gothic novel when she wrote *Northanger Abbey* and pursued "a fiction that has come to deal in psychological realism." This is why Weston calls Austen's particular brand of Gothic in *Northanger Abbey* the "new Gothic." When asked by Alice Walker if she felt that she could be

called a Gothic writer, Welty replied, “they better not call me that!” It is clear that Welty had an authorial aversion to being lumped in with stories that have “nothing to do with real life”; however, her extensive manipulations of Gothic conventions solidify her transatlantic connection to Jane Austen’s “new Gothic.” (21). My study both vindicates Welty’s point of view that her work is too realistic to be considered “old Gothic” and also legitimizes her connection to the “new Gothic” via imagery and setting.

This thesis consists of an introduction, two chapters, and a conclusion. In the first chapter I will discuss textual evidence in *Northanger Abbey* and consult the discourses of feminism concerning Austen and her texts. I relate existing scholarship to instances in the novel where Austen uses Gothic aesthetics and free indirect discourse to legitimize her own “brand” of the Gothic while also defending novel-reading, novel-writing and female authorship. Similarly, in chapter two, I will examine Welty’s contributions to this “new Gothic” which Austen posits, with Welty’s novel *Delta Wedding*. Chapter three will expand on both the female novelists’ influence on the transatlantic evolution of the Gothic novel and the transgression inherent in the act of feminine authorship. My study defends that first-wave and second-wave feminist awakenings are still useful to look at despite their lack of inclusivity and intersectionality. Following the second chapter is a brief defense of Austen and Welty as Gothic novelists in the feminine sub-genre. I conclude with evidence in other works by Austen and Welty that concern Gothic aestheticism to offer an idea of where this work might take me in the future.

CHAPTER TWO: REVEALING THE GOTHIC IN *NORTHANGER ABBEY*

In 1792, an early work in feminist philosophy was published, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. It has been established for some time in academia that Austen read this lengthy, prodigious essay, and it seems to have profoundly influenced the way that the then-juvenile writer perceived the world from her countryside home in Hampshire, England.¹² Austen's sister Cassandra shared with the public after the author's death that her sister wrote *Northanger Abbey* around 1798-1799, just before the Austens uprooted and moved to Bath. This move was also just a few years after Wollstonecraft's publishing of the *Vindication*. *Northanger Abbey* is a novel delivered in two parts, and it is haunted by a Gothic structure reminiscent of a deceased Catholic England, as the name suggests: the abbey itself. The architecture and structure of the building is a reminder of Revolutionary¹³ England embedded in the landscape, refurbished by General Tilney, who had a career in His Majesty King George III's armed forces, and who comes into Catherine's world with Gothic assumptions and stereotypes. *Northanger Abbey* is a "castle," and possesses a whole host of expectations to be grotesque with its passages and tapestries of an older England; however, to the surprise of our heroine, the halls are refurbished in a most modern style (*Northanger Abbey* 110). Instead of the damsel finding herself in the Gothic "castle" not fully expecting to meet with anything grotesque or unseemly, our heroine arrives in the hall of the abbey with a mind full of experiences lived out through books: "Oh! Mr. Tilney, how frightful! —This is just like a book!" (108). However, moments later, the heroine's expectations are satirically undermined: "and she was actually under the abbey walls... without feeling one awful foreboding of future misery to herself, or one moment's suspicion of any past scenes of horror being acted within the solemn edifice" (110). Austen's remediation of the truly Gothic, her representation of old tropes (old data) in a slightly different

format, serves satirical purposes: she utilizes the narrative tradition's existing character tropes and setting to tell a different kind of story which is still imbued in the Gothic tradition of her predecessors. She uses more than just existing literary traditions, though; Austen's characters and locations are in conjunction with real events in history, but she utilizes Gothic aesthetics for the purposes of characterization, for instance with General Tilney as a Gothic "monster."

In volume I of the novel when Catherine arrives in Bath, it is due to mistaken name association that General Tilney sets his eyes on Catherine Morland as a marriage prospect for his son Henry. Janine Barchas discusses this example mistaken identity in *Matters of Fact in Jane Austen* by demonstrating a historical connection that Austen makes to the real world. In *Northanger Abbey* volume I, the reader is aware that Mr. Allen is owner of "the chief of property about Fullerton," where the heroine's father is a clergyman (NA 8). Because the heroine arrives in Bath under the protection of Mr. and Mrs. Allen, she is assumed by both the "buffoonish" John Thorpe and the stern General Tilney to be Mr. Allen's goddaughter and the heiress to his estate (Barchas 57). Austen carefully leaves Mr. and Mrs. Allen without first names. Barchas suggests that just before the Austens moved to Bath from their family home in Hampshire at the turn of the century, a well-known individual by the name Ralph Allen was in the process of becoming Bath's most famous historical figure. Ralph Allen was a "nationally recognized figure and [was] often referred to simply as 'the man of Bath'" (57). He notably commissioned the building of Prior Park and its renowned landscape gardens in 1742. He is closely associated with the heyday of trade and glamour that Bath came to be known for in Georgian¹³ and Regency society. Austen must have heard much of this historical figure of Bath and modeled her imagined, invented narrative around his wealth.

Barchas suggests that Catherine's mistaken identity as heiress to the Allen fortune acts as the catalyst of the entire narrative: her supposed inheritance is bait to both the General and Thorpe. The mistaken identity is what initiates John Thorpe's courtship (if one can call his interest in Catherine "courtship") and General Tilney's invitation to visit Northanger Abbey. These advances were, no doubt, made on behalf of preserving the patriarchy. Although "buffoonish" and tyrannical these men might be, they are "like Wickham and Willoughby... rakish member[s] of the predatory species *homo economicus*" (Barchas 59). Essentially what Barchas asserts is that these opportunistic endeavors were committed by both the gentry and middle classes to further their own economic advancement. When General Tilney is first misled by Thorpe's bragging of wooing the heiress of "*the* Allen fortune," he takes it upon himself to hijack Catherine's interests by inviting her to Northanger Abbey, thereby securing the presumed fortune for his son (59, my emphasis). Because the story is focalized through the eyes of the young, naïve Catherine, her admiration and good opinion of Henry overshadows the predatory behavior exhibited by his father and the Thorpes. This instance firmly posits General Tilney as a Gothic character trope, mostly thanks to the air of mystery, suspicion, and impending doom that lurks around him in the text. Austen's characterization and careful use of dialogue as a narrative tool classifies the General not just as the stern patriarch of Northanger Abbey, but as a Gothic monster as well. Take for example the way that Catherine Morland responds to being the object of male attention in volume I: "while talking to each other, she observed with some surprise, that John Thorpe, was engaged with General Tilney; and she felt something more than surprise, when she thought she could perceive herself the object of their attention and discourse. What could they have to say of her? She *feared* General Tilney did not like her appearance...." (*Northanger Abbey* 64, my emphasis). Although a superficial fear, Catherine's anxiety about

entering social life and all the expectations that go with it are apparent as she navigates the town of Bath in volume I. There are several other moments in volume I where Catherine finds herself in the immediate presence of General Tilney, in a drawing room or a parlor, and is perceptibly uncomfortable. For these reasons, I believe what Janine Barchas argues about John Thorpe extends to General Tilney. The heroine's social/sexual naiveté coupled with her delight in Gothic narrative invention forbids her from understanding the reality that she is coming of age in a world where men such as General Tilney might endeavor, from an economic standpoint, to possess her. Furthermore, investing herself in her invented narrative about Mrs. Tilney's true demise and the General's moral identity can be seen as an act of self-preservation. It is also important to note that Catherine *was* right to be suspicious about General Tilney's motivations for inviting her out to the abbey, but not for the reasons she invented. Perhaps Austen's novelistic experiment with the female psyche sheds light on what we colloquially refer to as "woman's intuition." Let us not forget that it was General Tilney who suggested Catherine take his place in the curicle with his son, and in this time in history, an unchaperoned ride with a man could spell disaster for a young woman's reputation.

According to John A. Dussinger, Austen's portrayal of General Tilney as a force of Gothic horror is perceptible although implicit. Austen "parodies and imitates not only Radcliffe's villain Montoni in *Udolpho* but more generally the parent-child relationship in the Gothic romance, beginning with the pioneering work in that genre—Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*" (Dussinger 166). The "genre" referred to here is the Gothic novel. Catherine's anxiety about navigating social life and marital prospects safely, with reputation intact, manifests in an obsession with the Gothic stereotypes and narrative mechanisms with which she has familiarized herself as a form of entertainment. Catherine Morland and Isabella Thorpe's mutual fascination

with the Gothic can be interpreted not only as parody but also as an imitation of the social life of women during the English Regency period. In the novel, of course, the characters do not see it that way, but Austen allows the reader to be in on the joke, so to speak. Perhaps Catherine's Gothic fantasies are merged with realistic anxieties of marriage and motherhood. We take away from the novel that we should not perceive these intermingling notions of phantasmagoria versus reality as mutually exclusive, but rather, as the parody and realism of *Northanger Abbey* working together to demonstrate the precarious status of the woman in society: a vindication of the rights of woman in itself.

Gothic father-figures hover in the background of *Northanger Abbey*, and it is no wonder why Catherine imagines the worst of General Tilney. Manfred,¹⁴ the father-figure in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, proposes marriage to his son's bride (to her horror) upon his son's untimely death. Judith Wilt's study, *Ghosts of the Gothic*, offers new insights expanding on the traditionally acclaimed critical point of view that *Northanger Abbey* caricatures the romances of Radcliffe and Walpole in favor of common sense and Enlightenment.¹⁵ This is certainly a foundational basis for my study. In modern criticism, that tradition seems a superficial, a rather rudimentary argument at best. Early criticism of *Northanger Abbey* tends to overlook the similarly salacious, and, I posit, Gothic love interest that General Tilney demonstrates for Catherine, and her subsequent blushes in return when she feels his gaze upon her. In striking contrast, Henry does not excite her in this way: it is his mind and interests that attract the heroine to her suitor, and it is his "penetration of her mind" that enchants her. Yet, she cannot help but notice the capability and strength of the General (Dussinger 167). Catherine and Henry share a carriage ride to Northanger Abbey when his father forfeits his seat. On the remainder of their journey to the abbey, Henry deliberately arouses Catherine's already firmly rooted conventions

about the abbey. He wields her obsession to curtail his own libido, and Catherine is equally eager: “Oh! No, no –do not say so. Well, go on” (*Northanger Abbey* 109). It would be out of character, as an Anglican clergyman, for Henry to demonstrate the same physical prowess that his father does, but nonetheless, he demonstrates his interest in Miss Morland by sharing in his own kind of remediation of the Gothic in their curricula. Although the ghosts of the Gothic lurk within the text, the events of the narrative, i.e. Henry’s explicit flirtation with Catherine by way of the Gothic Narrative Tradition, has a vaguely sexual connotation.

Despite their flirtation via the Gothic tradition, Catherine is met with her harshest rebuke yet by none other than her love interest. This address is received most harshly by our heroine perhaps because it is from her love interest. Henry finds Catherine sneaking around his mother’s chamber in search for some clue to confirm her phantasmagoric theory that his father had murdered her years ago. He is politely surprised by her presence in his area of the abbey, and at first, her presence is odd but not disagreeable to him. As they walk back to Catherine’s wing of the abbey, they begin discussing the circumstances of Mrs. Tilney’s very sudden illness and death. It is this conversation that reveals Catherine’s fantastical assumptions about Mrs. Tilney’s abuse and murder at the hands of her husband, the General. Henry discredits her thoughtlessness and reminds her to “Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you” (*Northanger Abbey* 136). Completely embarrassed by her silliness, Catherine runs through the gallery and into her chamber with tears of shame streaming down her cheeks: “The visions of romance were over. Catherine was completely awakened” (136). Perhaps this scene is both a satire of the Gothic and a friendly reminder from Austen that women *can* participate in the fantasies of men but when we

take our fantasies into our own hands, we are usually met with rejection and scrutiny. Take for example, the manner in which Henry teases Catherine about her expectations of the abbey:

“How fearfully will you examine the furniture of your apartment!—and what will you discern?—Not tables, toilettes, wardrobes, or drawers, but on one side perhaps the remains of a broken lute, on the other a ponderous chest which no efforts can open....” (108). Catherine responds in equal parts trepidation and desire and “grew ashamed of her eagerness” (109).

Austen, then, relates this heroine’s humiliation to the humiliation of women at large in what Susan Fraiman establishes as the “debt nexus,” or the patriarchy’s system for exchanging women and wealth (Fraiman 256). Furthermore, the characterization of General Tilney as a Gothic monster and the gothic aesthetics of the abbey solidify this realistic narrative’s relationship with the Gothic narrative technique.

Austen wraps the horrors of Regency reality in the guise of the Gothic by positing that women are but pawns in the grand scheme of both transferring wealth and the proliferation of future generations. The original masculine Gothic is transformed by Austen’s fiction into a record of the aristocratic/social crisis of which women are the center as the matrimonial object: they embody the future of landholding families by producing heirs. Crumbling aristocracy and the uncertainty of years at war drives the predatory behavior of Barchas’s *homo economicus* taking the form of the Thorpes and General Tilney in this novel. There is enough danger and horror with no need for actual ghosts and castles and murder. It is enough that Manfred’s tyrannical ghost lurks behind the character of General Tilney. Both Manfred and General Tilney are explicitly shown to be capable of replacing their sons’ sexual roles in the marriage plot: but what does this suggest about the “new Gothic” and the “old Gothic,” or the “feminine Gothic” and the masculine Gothic,” respectively? For one, Austen sardonically subverts the old Gothic

for its misogyny, even though she would not have had that particular language for it. The silliness of the “damsel in distress” and other Gothic phantasmagoria is demonstrated plainly enough in the *Northanger Abbey*, to the embarrassment of our naïve heroine.

Northanger Abbey is a book about reading books. As such, it reflects a certain cultural phenomenon characteristic of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England: the circulating library.¹⁶ This story would not be the story that it is without the notion of the circulating library. Borrowing books has been going on since the Medieval era in university towns, but the circulating library as a separate entity run by a bookseller or an entrepreneur did not come to fruition until the early eighteenth century. We may recall the hilarious scene in Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. Mr. Collins finds himself sheepish in front of the Bennet sisters when asked to read a novel that is obviously from a circulating library; he eventually decides to read from a book of sermons instead, citing that he “never read novels” (*Pride and Prejudice* 50). This scene highlights a nomenclature which defines novel-readers and novels themselves: that they are most read by young ladies of the gentry and nobility,¹⁷ simply to keep their minds occupied. The general view of the era was that novel-reading was a luxurious waste of time and that few outside the landed classes could afford to practice it. Books were remarkably expensive in preceding centuries, but circulating libraries made reading accessible and immensely more fashionable to the gentry and middle classes.

Lee Erickson references a moment in *Northanger Abbey* when Henry Tilney declares his adoration for novels, particularly for the Gothic novels that our heroine so adores, in his article “The Economy of Novel Reading” (Erickson 578). Henry claims to read “all Ms. Radcliffe’s works,” and states that people who find no pleasure in novels “must be intolerably stupid”

(*Northanger Abbey* 72). In a chapter preceding this scene, however, John Thorpe places himself in the opposite school of thought. Perhaps this is another one of Austen's real-world adaptations, like that which Barchas posits with the Allens. In his famed *Biographia Literaria*, published in 1815, Samuel T. Coleridge states that he "never read novels," citing that he has "something better to do" (751). Coleridge, a contemporary of Austen, declares that novel-reading merges "indulgence of sloth and hatred of vacancy"; furthermore, he declares novel-reading as no better than gambling, fooling around for no reason at all, an altogether time-wasting hobby. Coleridge was not alone in this opinion. Many famed writers of the British tradition did not take kindly to the new genre of the novel when it was first developed; however, Austen continually emphasizes the importance and legitimacy of novel-reading with her fiction, especially *Northanger Abbey*. Catherine Morland's entire understanding of the world at the beginning of Austen's novel was born out of novel-reading, and the aftermath of putting fantasy to the test of reality is the resultant parody. Austen realized that by the time her generation began writing literature the novel had been established in the English tradition: her famous defense of novels, "Yes novels," as sources of truth and guidance about navigating the human experience is delivered in free indirect discourse. Furthermore, Austen recognized the innovation and revolution that the novel represented for the English tradition and sought to stake women's rightful share in that literary heritage.

In general, people were concerned about the effects that the new realistic novel would have on young people, especially those which were more risqué, such as Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*. Samuel Johnson expresses his reservations and apprehensions about the novel in his famous *Rambler* no. 4: "They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily following the current of fancy; not informed

by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account.” From a modern standpoint, John Tinnon Taylor addresses the manifestation of the patriarchy’s resistance to the novel in his study *Early Opposition to the English Novel: The Popular Reaction from 1760-1830*. It was the view of most influential members of the patriarchy that a well-read woman was a dangerous, unbecoming thing. George Colman the Elder playfully explores the effects of novel-reading on various members of eighteenth-century English society in his satirical play *Polly Honeycombe*, published in 1760. Polly, like Catherine Moreland, is an avid reader of a circulating library, and her expectations and aspirations are shaped by the novels she reads. Honeycombe, Polly’s father, exclaims in act three that “a man might as well turn his Daughter loose in Covent-garden, as trust the cultivation of her mind to a circulating library” (Erickson 336). Austen and George Colman the Elder have in common both their comedic approach as well as their concluding event: the marriage. Austen, as an avid reader of both British comedy and Gothic novels, depicts with startling realism both the age’s great social ambivalence toward reading novels and its suspicion of any person finding pleasure in the act of reading, particularly women.

The waves of feminism and the waves of neo-Gothic aestheticism in literary studies are without a doubt connected. With the first wave of feminism came Jane Austen’s satirical remediation of Walpole and Radcliffe, and in the wake of the second wave of feminism, Eudora Welty continues Austen’s tradition of remediation through psychological portraiture which reveals deep revelations about gender, ego and power. Under the pretense of feminine domesticity, in other words, narratives concerning the highly polarized gender roles of females in society, Jane Austen remediates the Gothic tradition of Walpole, Johnson and Radcliffe for implicitly feminist purposes. The evolution of the Gothic novel could hardly stop here; its

American counterpart was founded by the writers Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and William Faulkner. Similar to its initial manifestation in the British Isles, the American Gothic began as a movement of male poets and fiction writers whose aesthetics correspond to the more masculine tropes of the Gothic narrative tradition. It is no wonder, then, that the female progeny of such distinctly American Gothic writers would take up the narrative tradition and again, feminize the genre as Eudora Welty does in her novel *Delta Wedding*.

CHAPTER THREE: REVEALING THE GOTHIC IN *DELTA WEDDING*

The Mississippi Delta culture of 1923 is the transplanted progeny of British aristocratic society from the eighteenth-nineteenth century. More English colonists settled in the North, and the South was settled largely by the Scotch/Irish. Each of these respective cultures, the Jim Crow South and the Regency Period, boasted an air of idle elegance and sophistication amid changing times and an increasingly politically powerful proletariat. While Jane Austen's fiction focuses on the rise of the middle class, providing a notable voice for women of the gentry, she does create with striking clarity and expertise a psychological portraiture of the rich, too (*Emma*). Similarly, Eudora Welty writes from the perspective of many different women from all sorts of backgrounds, which perhaps lends itself to the socio-economic makeup of Mississippi in the past and present. The Jackson born author remarks in her introduction to *One Time, One Place* that the citizens of Mississippi did not notice the Great Depression so much as the rest of the United States; it simply "was not a noticeable phenomenon" in the poorest state in the union (*One Time, One Place* 3). Welty is interested in the ways that politics and the economy affect the lives of women, and this much is certainly true of Austen's fiction. Each author takes note of the evolving expectations and the effects that those social/marital expectations have on women's lives and minds. The past, as Faulkner puts it, is never really past, and the renewed interest in cultural history and cultural artifacts that stand the test of time, such as plantation houses and abbeys, remind us that the past resurfaces again and again.

Representations of the past were hardly a new advent when either Welty or Austen were writing novels. In fact, both authors discuss and assume an understanding of Romanticism and Classicism in their readers. Furthermore, it is of interest that these novelists each pay homage to Sir Walter Scott for their Romanticizing of the past. The British Gothic of Ann Radcliffe, Horace

Walpole, Charlotte Smith are all predecessors or contemporaries of the school of thought that lead Jane Austen, and later Eudora Welty, to take up the means and methods of the Gothics and the Romantics and use those tools to a comedic end that upsets the readers expectations for the narrative arc. The gender twist that Welty uses in the main love-story of *Delta Wedding* is meant to directly echo the rigid gender roles inherent in Gothic fiction. The anticipated gender dynamic is that the older, male match for the female protagonist will uplift the damsel's reputation; however, Welty sets up a narrative wherein the heroine's social standing far outranks that of the masculine side of the match. In no small way, this authorial endeavor satirizes both the customs of the American South and the traditions of Regency England before her. Even though the Mississippi region of the United States is separate from the Regency period in England by a century and over two thousand miles, the Old South's decorum and rigid social structure resemble that of the British at the turn of the nineteenth century. Both cultures were subverted and shaped by wars, which is a significant part of Austen's history-haunted *Northanger Abbey*, with echoes of violent seizures of church property during the dissolution movement of the Tudors. *Delta Wedding* corresponds accordingly to the American Civil War and the continuation of Jim Crow in the South in 1923; because of the foundational relationship each novel has with the uncertainty of women's place in society and history, an anxiety hovers over each text. This prevalent tone, I argue, is evidence of what Weston calls the Gothic literary tradition.

To set up a discussion about the Mississippi Delta and how it relates to the evolution of the Gothic novel, the author's upbringing should be reviewed. Eudora Welty was the daughter of well-to-do progressives, Christian Webb Welty and Chestina Andrews Welty who were married in 1904. In 1907, the Welty's first child died at just fifteen months old, then in 1909 Eudora was born in Jackson, Mississippi. Eudora Welty graduated from Jackson's Central High School in

1925, so she would have been a teenager at the time she sets *Delta Wedding*. When Welty returned to Mississippi after attending a few years of college from 1925 to 1931, she found her home state encumbered with even more economic despair than when she left it. Much as in her photography collected in *One Time One Place*, Welty takes an extraordinary perspective in various settings throughout the state of Mississippi and represents it in intuitive, austere narratives about the domestic lives of women. The realistic (as in without supernatural forces or phantasmagoria) portrayal of the unique struggles faced by women in life are embedded in ironic humor: this is the quintessential mark of the female Gothic subgenre. The parody of the male Gothic (*Northanger Abbey*) is taken up by Welty and adapted yet again, in what is essentially a transplanted, gender-swapped version of the same narrative. A country, naïve girl journeys far from home and falls for the well-to-do man (*Northanger Abbey*). A simple man from the hill country journeys far from home to find work and falls for the well-to-do girl (*Delta Wedding*).

The setting of *Delta Wedding* is a world the author knew well and one that she avidly sought to portray in a visceral likeness. Welty describes herself as an amateur photographer in her introduction to *One Time One Place*: “A better and less ignorant photographer would certainly have come up with better pictures, but not these pictures; for he could hardly have been as well positioned as I was, moving through the scene openly and yet invisibly because I was part of it, born into it, taken for granted” (9). This observation applies to Welty as a novelist, too. Her innate privilege as a white woman allows her to enter spaces of all walks of life and attempt to document, portray, mythologize Mississippi from many different perspectives. What I am most concerned with is perhaps what Welty does best (because it is her most familiar subject): portraying the psychological transition from white girlhood to white womanhood.

Delta Wedding is a narrative about insiders and outsiders, old generations and new generations, and above all, it is a narrative about family dynamics. As a meaning-laden trope of the Gothic, family dynamics and genealogy are of particular interest when matrimony, the ceremony through which inheritance is passed and alliances are made, is involved in the plot. Such narratives echo back to those prototypical first Gothic novels *The Castle of Otranto* or even Anne Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance*. What is first represented as an aristocratic crisis by the male Gothic genre becomes a social crisis with women at the center in both Austen and Welty. So, when we talk about Gothic stereotypes in Southern fiction, I think it is reasonable that family the dynamics *Delta Wedding* can be a meaningful part of that discussion. If nothing else, Welty's novel is entirely composed of family dynamics in the form of direct discourse, although she employs indirect and free indirect discourse as well. While concerning herself less with castles and ghosts and the supernatural, Welty focuses her lens on a different sort of drama that is no less interesting and exciting. The eccentricities and stories of the Fairchild family are equal parts mundane and humorous, much like the social life of Austen's novels. I argue that Eudora Welty engages in the same sort of feminine psychological portraiture that Austen engages in when she writes *Northanger Abbey*, but Welty does so as she remediates her American Gothic predecessors, not the British influences of Austen. Thus, Welty remediates the prototypically male American Gothic by producing a female-driven, female-focalized narrative structure as did Austen, but with intrinsically American subject-matter, vernacular, and cultural practices. The Gothic light in which these women are portrayed is, I venture, identical to the tone Austen uses.

What struck me most upon my first reading of *Delta Wedding* was Welty's use of distinctly Gothic vocabulary to describe the old plantation houses at the Fairchild estate. In particular, Marmion, the house that Dabney Fairchild (the bride) inherits is described in

stunningly picturesque, yet archaic images. Welty utilizes the same sort of descriptions to talk about Marmion that Jane Austen does to conceptualize Catherine Moreland's expectations for the Tilney estate of Northanger Abbey. Each respective architectural description is laden with words straight out of the Gothic lexicon. Each estate represents more than mere wealth; it represents the family hub as the social network through which they navigate the world, and on a larger level, the power of the Fairchild family name. The Fairchild estate is not merely the narrative backdrop, it is the central focus of the family organism that stretches and extends far past the physical house itself. The Tilney estate as a former Catholic landmark has a similar sort of interrelated, far-reaching meaning associated with it, especially for the well-read Catherine. The various portraits of Confederate heroes hanging in the parlor at Shellmound bespeak the importance of genealogy and inheritance to the novel. How else are future generations (legitimately) achieved if not through matrimony? Therefore, even the title itself of Welty's novel is quite meaning-laden in itself. Memories of the past are the consistent reminder that the past is never truly gone; it lives on, all around us, in artifacts and places. This notion is true of novels, and it is especially true of Gothic novels, which boast an air of fascination with the history.

Although my argument about Austen being so closely tied to the literary Gothic is not unfounded academically speaking, my claim that Welty is an equal participant is a rather new territory. Among the relatively few studies on Welty's fiction is a book by Rebecca Mark. In *The Dragon's Blood: Feminist Intertextuality in Eudora Welty's The Golden Apples*. Mark takes a noteworthy, Classical perspective on Eudora Welty's short stories. In particular, the scholar examines Welty's cycle of stories, *The Golden Apples*, which is a series of interrelated, feminist narratives that should be read through the lens of myth and Classical literature, according to

Mark. But, Mark looks beyond the mythical dimensions that critics have voiced since Welty first published the collection in 1949. She finds allusions that are far more pervasive. She deems these allusions to be a direct challenge to the dominant cultural voices of literary tradition, as I also claim of Welty as a writer of the female subgenre of Gothic fiction. Mark argues that the expansive intertextuality in Welty's *The Golden Apples* reveals a communal, resonant, metaphoric narrative that transforms such masculine elements as rape, domination, and victimization of the feminine into narratives of engagement, battle, confrontation, fertility, and sexual exchange between the masculine and the feminine. I believe that the same exact argument can be made about Welty's modification of the Gothic narrative tradition.

Delta Wedding is a novel about outsiders and otherness, which is certainly a characteristic of the literary Gothic. The disdain which the Fairchild family members feel for Troy Flavin as the chosen match for "their girl" is overtly classist, and it is of a similar breed to Janine Barchas's assessment of John and Isabella Thorpe: *homo economicus*. This time, instead of Catherine Morland as a(n) (mistaken) heiress to latch onto, Troy Flavin is the hard-working overseer on the family's extensive plantation whom Dabney Fairchild latches onto. The Fairchild clan vehemently rejects him as Dabney's marital prospect, but they only do so *implicitly*. As citizens in a changing South, they choose, in the end, to value Troy for his hard work and welcome him: a sort of merit-based entry-fee into the Fairchild clan. No one is rude to him. No one is remotely unkind when he enters Welty's narrative lens; however, each of the boy children makes it a point to spit outside of Troy's cabin at the very beginning of the narrative on the car ride into Shellmound. Troy keeps his head low after speaking his mind about Dr. Murdoch in front of the Fairchilds: "... it was Troy's words that hung in the parlor air... Troy, who stood with his feet apart on the hearth rug, with his eyes a little cast up, was capable of calling the

Fairchilds some name or other too, without much trouble, the way he spoke up” (*Delta Wedding* 241). Much like motherless Laura McRaven, Troy may be “in,” but he is still an outsider to the intimate and eccentric Fairchilds. Despite the fact that the novel is entitled the way it is, very little attention is devoted to portraying the wedding ceremony itself. The entirety of the plot is composed of the household milieus and family values that construct the Fairchilds as representatives of Mississippi Delta culture. Like Catherine Moreland’s transformation from a naïve country girl to a wiser young woman, Welty is less concerned with the marriage prospect *itself* and more concerned with the *psychological transformation* of the heroine in the wake of the marriage prospect. The natural tensions associated with the wedding of two families is heightened by the notion of outsiders and insiders.

The author’s willingness to engage in the free indirect style of narration is yet another narrative characteristic that connects her with Jane Austen. Welty shifts in focalization from woman to woman in seamless narration; as a reader of Austen, I find it appears that Welty took note and employed this in her own writing as a useful tool for characterization. When narration is focalized through the character, a writer provides the reader with that character’s interiority or their inner voice. This is an apparatus that Austen readily employs in all of her novels, including *Northanger Abbey*, although the authorial skill is clearly perfected as the novelist progresses and gains experience. Welty also uses this type of narrative discourse in *Delta Wedding*. Both authors use free indirect discourse to the same end: to reveal the inner workings of the minds of female characters. The narrator simply allows the character’s voice to take over “without any quotation marks or other indicators like the usual ‘he said/she said’” (Abbott 77). For example, Dabney Fairchild reflects on her newly wedded husband: “How quickly she had known she loved [him]! Only she had not known how she could reach the love she felt already in her knowledge. In

catching sight of love, she had seen both banks of a river and the river rushing between—she saw everything but the way down.” (*Delta Wedding* 334). It is possible that free indirect discourse is a characteristic particular to the feminine technique of novel-writing. Like Austen, some of Welty’s most beautiful and profound prose occurs in these moments when the narrator allows the character to take over their authorial voice. This perspective on the narrative focal point lends the reader an incredibly close, intimate view of the character’s psyche. Welty deliberately narrates *close* to her characters instead of maintaining the masculine Gothic author’s *distance* from the psyche of their characters. This psychologically revealing style of narration is one of the essential factors that solidifies Welty’s relationship with the feminine Gothic subgenre.

The largest house at the Fairchild family hub can be interpreted as a prototypical dictionary image for the Southern Gothic. When encountering its vivid description in chapter five of the novel for the first time, an aura of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables* came to the forefront of my mind. The characters of Hepzibah and Phoebe as ghosts of the American Gothic encouraged the connection between Welty’s fiction and that of her predecessors. Hawthorne’s concern with New England’s dark past laden with Puritan hypocrisy and witch-trials can be compared to Welty’s apparent interest in writing about the Civil War- and slavery- haunted Natchez-Trace in Mississippi. By drawing our attention to the mundane, domestic life of the Southern plantation, Welty refines the American Gothic fiction of Poe and Hawthorne by constructing narratives that push away shades of the supernatural and pursue something more real and far more threatening: the systematic oppression of women. By portraying women in three dimensions via the intimate narrative of the free indirect style, Welty dedicates this novel to the full and completeness of women in and of themselves. One important personal detail that Welty and Austen have in common is that neither of them ever married.

Delta Wedding does not merely focus on the wedding of Dabney and Troy, but it is a prism of family exchanges and traditions steeped in matrimony. Aunt Ellen, pregnant, although not quite barefoot, in the kitchen, embodies the promise of future generations of Fairchilds. The marriage of Ellen and Battle appears in stark contrast to the marriage-gone-awry between George Fairchild and his bride Robbie. Robbie is one woman who might agree that the family is a vibrant and unique sort of people. She who “slept by him [George Fairchild] as if in the shadow of a mountain of being” and marveled that “any moon and stars there were could rise and set over his enfolding, unemanating length” (*Delta Wedding* 237). Nothing could be worthy of the Fairchilds but “pure gold” (238). There is a certain level of possessiveness that comes with being a Fairchild, and it is considered a tragedy that George and Robbie live far away from the family hub, all the way in Memphis. Troy, as a Delta outsider from the hill country of Mississippi and a poor white man, is an example of how the South after Reconstruction, in spite of its pretensions and inert classism, can be flexible enough to open its ranks to those who were once considered outsiders, as long as they are good laborers and trustworthy leaders. The “tragedy” of Dabney marrying so far below her means is second to the looming tragedy of her moving far away from her roots, and so the Fairchild clan reluctantly witnesses her union to the overseer after seven chapters of conversational digestion. The teasing Fairchilds with their peculiar traditions and expectations are a caricature of the South and its steadfast resistance to change, but its willingness to engage in nuanced change over time in order to ensure its own survival. Welty constructs a narrative that emphasizes her work as psychological portraiture, as she depicts the lives of Southern women.

Even though the novel is centered upon marriage, and in other words, participation in the Southern patriarchy’s insurance policy for its longevity, Dabney Fairchild exerts her agency. She

refuses to settle. Welty writes that Dabney “Sometimes was not so sure she was a Fairchild—sometimes she did not care, that was it. There were moments when it did not matter who she was.... It would kill her father.... And she would not take anything for the relentless way he was acting, not wanting to let her go. The caprices of his restraining power over his daughters filled her with delight now that she had declared what she could do” (*Delta Wedding* 120-121). This is less a novel about falling in love and more a novel that hinges on the agency of the bride. The women involved in the preparations for the wedding event itself serve as the narrative focal points of the novel. As Dabney prepares for the wedding rehearsal in chapter five, she wakes before everyone in the house and takes her filly on a ride to Marmion. Here, nestled in the dense and tactile forest imagery, Dabney admires the structure that will be *her* marital home. Dabney gets to have her “own” property by appeasing the patriarchal plot to marry, make a home, and produce children. In choosing a match so close to home, even if this match is incredibly ill-suited for her class wise, she still appeases the Fairchild family plot to keep all its precious members as close as possible to the family hub.

After admiring what will soon be her marital home, Dabney considers riding back to the rest of her family just hours before the wedding rehearsal, but she stops at a place of tremendously Gothic significance before leaving Marmion. She knew the next time she returned she would be a married woman, and therefore would have transitioned from white-girlhood into white-womanhood, thereby avoiding the precipice of fallen-womanhood successfully. Welty offers a small, but vaguely supernatural window into the heroine’s mind:

...Something made her get off her horse and creep to the bank and look in—she almost never did, it was so creepy and scary. This was the last chance to look before her wedding. She parted the thronged vines of the wild grapes, thick as legs, and looked in.

There it was. She gazed feasting her fear on the dark, vaguely stirring water. There were more eyes than hers here... she saw how snakes were turning and moving in the water, passing across each other... The vines and the cypress roots twisted and grew together on the shore and in the water more thickly than any roots should grow, gray and red, and some roots too moved and floated like hair... And the whirlpool itself — could you doubt it? Doubt all the stories since childhood of people white and black who had been drowned there, people that were dared to swim in this place, and of boats that would venture to the center of the pool and begin to go around, and everybody fall out and go to the bottom, the boat to disappear? A beginning of vertigo seized her, until she felt herself leaning, leaning toward the whirlpool.” (*Delta Wedding* 213)

If this had been a masculine Gothic novel, it is likely that Dabney would have fallen into the whirlpool on the eve of her wedding and returned as a ghost. Instead, Eudora Welty was influenced by the feminized version of the Gothic genre which is steeped in realism instead of fantasy. The visceral quality of the water is almost hallucinatory. What is more indicative is that Welty is careful to mention that Dabney “was never as frightened of it as the boys were” (212). I think that this particular moment is where Welty reveals her most feminist truths about women everywhere and how we *look at* and *endure* what men choose to look away from. It is interesting to consider in this context Dabney’s reflections on how she fell in love with Troy, and the image of her love as a river: “She had seen both banks of a river and the river rushing between—she saw everything but the way down” (122) . Wet images and water are associated, in literature and reality, with childbirth. Becoming a mother is the end-result for most young women who wish to successfully navigate the precipice between little girlhood and grown womanhood. Needless to say, childbirth and child-rearing are both dangerous processes that often lead to the

psychological turmoil of the mother. Dabney is drawn to the swirling of the whirlpool as she reflects on the stage of life that she will be entering in matrimony to Troy and the stage of life that she will leave behind along with her maidenhood. Here, we have the presumably virgin heroine contemplating the impact of the choices she has made of the course of the novel and preceding its scope.

Embedded in the whirlpool scene is a meaningful theoretical moment that reveals the inner workings of the female protagonist's psyche. The hypnotic quality of the whirlpool as Dabney gazes into its depths mirrors her psychological unease as she weds a man with whom her family vehemently disagrees. Water in Gothic literature like water in all literature has implicitly sexual quality to it. The Oceanic¹⁸ "thingness" of being human is something that Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan legitimize in their essays on the human condition. As Dabney comprehends her transition into white-womanhood and her wifely duties, she explores the man-made architecture of Marmion with all of its splendor and majesty, but she also makes it a point to stop and explore this "something," this natural "thingness" that pulls her in. It is not a mystery why a vaguely supernatural/sublime encounter would be in order from a narrative stand-point since Dabney is about to go through with probably the most meaningful ceremony of her life to date. She looks at herself in the blackness of the water's surface as an unmarried woman for the last time. It seems as though many Fairchild women and their ancestors before them may have gazed into this whirlpool and contemplated exactly what is on Dabney's mind. This notion of genealogy and the dynamics associated with transitioning successfully from girlhood to womanhood is central to the plot of *Delta Wedding* no matter which feminine focal point is being utilized. In this scene, the unique inheritance of women everywhere that stems from an understanding of the sublime and the beautiful is demonstrated in the way that water "pulls"

Dabney in. As far as psychological transitions go, this scene speaks volumes in the language of the Gothic, and I argue that it is the distinctly female subgenre that Welty emulates here. I cannot help but be reminded of Catherine Morland's sublime fascination with the dark, antique chest that spoke to her of the past as Dabney is captivated by the swirling darkness of the water.

**CONCLUDING MATTERS: A DEFENSE OF JANE AUSTEN AND EUDORA WELTY
AS GOTHIC NOVELISTS**

The rhetoric surrounding a woman's reputation in Western society is inherently misogynistic in its means. After centuries of misconception and superstition, the Enlightenment¹⁹ movement swept over the British Isles and reflected itself in the literature of the era. From this era emerged a more refined, pragmatic version of the fantasy novels popularized in the eighteenth century. This thesis legitimizes the authors Jane Austen and Eudora Welty as remediators of the original, male Gothic novel. While these women writers were not the first to feminize the archetypically masculine genre of Gothic fiction, they were the first to achieve such remediation to a comedic effect. Both authors' fictions hinge on the assumption that the reader is familiar with and understands the references made to the Gothic lexicon. Both Welty and Austen share a fascination with the antiquated past, genealogy, and artifacts not of their time such as the portraits and heirlooms that populate both the Fairchild family hub and the Tilney's abbey estate.

In Devoney Looser's study *Jane Austen and the Discourses of Feminism*, the scholar describes the unlikely relationships that transcend space and time through the intertextuality of feminist discourse: "Second-wave feminist literary criticism of the 1970s and 80s devised litmus tests for discerning feminist authors in centuries past. As we reassess this work, we can't help but notice that those women who have been dubbed 'feminists' may have had precious little in common. Strange and unlikely sisterhoods have been devised within and across generations" (Looser 2). The intertextual relationship shared by Jane Austen and Eudora Welty is one example of exactly what Looser refers to in the above quote. Scholarship that deals with Austen in particular must come to terms with contemporary literary theoretical innovations concerning authorship, class, complicity, gender, genre, history, etc. This is where Welty, informed by

second-wave feminism ideology, comes in. The innovation of the woman writer in the twentieth century and the unearthing of the feminine Gothic novel, therefore, allows us a more sophisticated understanding of Austen's novels in a critical frame. If you recall the use of free indirect discourse in *Northanger Abbey*, it seems that the authorial voice of Jane Austen shining through the text to deliver the message that women, the chief readers of novels at the turn of the eighteenth century, *must* take up the pen to encourage the impending paradigm shift toward egalitarian advancement of the sexes.

As far as the historical and political context of Austen's fiction is concerned, Gary Kelly claims that "civil society was also portrayed as the transformation of feudalism in the 'progress of civilization,' or economic, social, and cultural modernization" (Kelly 20). Near and dear to the heart of the marriage plot is indeed the promise of social and economic advancement. This is certainly a plot device we see at work in both *Delta Wedding* and *Northanger Abbey*. The culture of sensibility, the era of social civility which originated in British society and which the Delta culture emulates with its customs, was a transmuted and disguised form of courtly, aristocratic culture. By taking up the pen and proceeding to undermine and subvert this prototypically male genre of literature, Welty and Austen remediate the Gothic novel and its components to satirize the societies that disenfranchised, stole ideas from, and persecuted women for hundreds of years. For instance, Austen uses "narratorial irony, a device considered antithetical both to 'sentimental' and 'romantic' modes of writing." The authors share a "muted protest against the social, legal, and economic injustice of male primogeniture, restriction of women's property rights, and female economic dependence" (23). This notion of the "debt nexus" wherein women find themselves ensnared is that same idea legitimized by Susan Fraiman in her essay "The Humiliation of Elizabeth Bennet." Therefore, Kelly and Fraiman agree that Austen greatly

furthered the cultural, aesthetic, and ideological reclamation of what had been considered a sub-literary genre. My unique contribution is that she did so by reproducing the Gothic novel in a new, less fantastical format. By informing scholarly opinions with the influence of Ruth Weston's study on Eudora Welty's contribution to the Gothic narrative tradition, the feminist reading of the remediated Gothic extends to Welty's *Delta Wedding*, as well as some of her other works of fiction.

Bridging the gap between Jane Austen and Eudora Welty was not whim or an arbitrary choice of mine; I observed the aesthetic connection between the two, and began questioning why these authors, across two centuries, an ocean, and thousands of miles, appeared to be associated if not subject to one another. Ruth D. Weston's study is where I first became acquainted with this notion of the Gothic Narrative Tradition in those specific terms. While taking a course on Eudora Welty, I became familiar with the study by Rebecca Mark, *The Dragon's Blood: Feminist Intertextuality in Eudora Welty's The Golden Apples*, as it was a recommended reading for the course. My interest in intertextuality already peaked, even in the first semester of graduate study, Mark's theories about Classical¹⁹ literary heritage in modern texts such as Welty's fiction was incredibly convincing. Mark proposes feminist intertextuality as a reading strategy for critically studying Welty, and after familiarizing myself with the concept, I arrived at the inspiration for this thesis. Referencing Hellenistic myth cycles is an allusion to Classical literary tradition that Welty evokes, and with Weston study also bolstering my argument, the Gothic must be embedded in Welty's fiction as well. The unique endeavor of this thesis is that it analyzes with specificity the Gothic literary tradition in the examples of *Northanger Abbey* and *Delta Wedding* as they pertain to the idea of feminist intertextuality. It would be pretty to draw a line between Welty's short stories and her novels and say that each genre has its own respective Classical and

Gothic influences, but this is not the organic truth of Welty's storytelling, and the research I performed thus far has proven as much. I found that "Death of a Traveling Salesman" has its share of grotesque, Gothic images, and *Losing Battles* certainly has an episodic, mythical quality to it. There are ample articles defending both Gothic and Classical influences in Welty's fiction, so more research is needed to ascertain more definitively the nature of this relationship, this web of feminist intertextuality, Gothic aestheticism, and mythologizing.

Some novels not directly concerned with the supernatural can be considered Gothic in aesthetic principle. One post-modern female novelist that comes to mind is Toni Morrison. In her collection of essays on the imagination, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*,²⁰ Morrison discusses brilliantly the presence of the "Africanist" in the fiction of Poe, Melville, Cather, among others. Morrison reappraises what are considered the essential characteristics of our western literary tradition. Not just as authors, but as literary scholars and well-educated women, Welty and Austen participate in a similar critique of Western literary norms. In conclusion, this thesis unfolds the literary heritage of the Gothic novel that is evident in the fiction of both Jane Austen and Eudora Welty, specifically *Northanger Abbey* and *Delta Wedding*. On a more implicit level, the authors' narratives remediate the masculine Gothic genre through a feminine lens and did so in the interest of social justice for their gender; however, in light of the first and second waves' lack of gender, identity, and racial inclusivity, it would prove rewarding to further this study through the lens of the third and fourth waves of feminism.

NOTES

¹ First-wave feminism, among other texts, was greatly influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* wherein she advocated for the social and moral equality of the sexes. Vexed and inspired to respond to Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Enlightenment movement, Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* paved the way for the British suffragists in the early twentieth century. The concerns and successes of first-wave feminism are centered around legal obstacles to gender equality, such as suffrage and property rights.

² Second-wave feminism began in about the 1960s and focused more on social and de facto obstacles that impede the equality of the sexes. Second-wave feminism effectively broadened the debate to include issues in the workplace, marital rape, reproductive rights, and domestic violence. Eudora Welty's 1946 novel *Delta Wedding* instigates an investigation of the female psyche and the role of women in society as she puts the domestic feminine of the Mississippi Delta under a microscope, so to speak. *Delta Wedding* actually helps to initiate the second wave of feminism beginning in the early 1960s for its interest in what some would consider the mundane technicalities of social life in the agrarian South.

³ Realism as it pertains to the novel genre refers to the ongoing, scholastically fruitful discussion involving scholars and studies such as Ian Watt's 1957 *The Rise of the Novel*, Michael McKeon's *New Origins of the Novel*, and Margaret Ann Doody's *The True Story of the Novel*. The argument centers around what the novel is designed to do and how it has evolved over centuries and over the Atlantic via colonialism.

⁴ The Southern Gothic is a subgenre of American fiction that takes place in the South. It is usually inclusive of decaying, derelict imagery and eccentric, flawed characters. Unlike its parent genre, it employs apparatus of the Gothic not exclusively for the purposes of suspense and drama, but to explore social issues and reveal the cultural character of the American South.

⁵ The first of these theories is that any young woman writing in early modern England and at the time of the French Revolution must of course "be" a feminist. The second version is that Austen's attitude toward the Revolution going on in France and the Napoleonic Wars, whatever her position, cannot be called feminist. Such a categorization would be blatantly anachronistic. (This version has attracted little support because most scholars choose to refer to Enlightenment feminisms with relative complacency. A third theory regarding Austen's feminism is interesting in that it sees the author as engaging in "sneaky" gender politics, using traditional romance plots to soften her ironic and perhaps more radical feminist messages. The third theory is fascinating, and it informs this thesis in some ways. The fourth feminist paradigm that Looser discusses gives Austen to us as a Tory advocate and preserver of the status quo. This view does not read Austen as a particularly liberating force to women, as she tends to marry off and domesticate her heroines in the end of each novel. This novelistic imperative of heterosexual coupling is seen as inherently patriarchal, and Susan Fraiman (refer to works cited page for this author's entry) would agree with this theory. The fifth and final version of Austen's feminism that Looser discusses, and the point of view with which I most agree and that informs this thesis the most, emerged with the notion that Austen's central focus on women characters who are intelligent, strong women proves her feminism. Any author who could paint such rich, telling, psychological portraits of women must be encouraging a feminist paradigm shift, even if it is anachronistic to label it as such. Of course, Austen and the others around her would not have known to call themselves "feminists." The *OED* has the first entry for "feminism" in 1851, and "feminist" does not arise until the 1880s.

⁶ Phantasmagoria is essentially synonymous with fantasy; some define it as hallucination, but in this thesis, it is more along the lines of sensationalizing.

⁷ Quite literally, the Regency period indicates the time in British history when King George III was found unfit to rule due to illness, and his son stepped in to rule as his proxy as Prince Regent in 1811. In 1820, King George III died, and the Prince Regent became king. At this time, he embraced his regnal name of George IV. Austen's six novels were published during this brief period of English history.

⁸ Free indirect discourse is a special style of third-person narration that filters first-person speech through the third-person narrator. In other words, the author imposes their voice between the reader and the character's thoughts and feelings.

⁹ Welty's first published novel is *The Robber Bridegroom*. It is an incredibly ironic narrative laden with many meaningful symbols. The novel utilizes the Classical narrative arch popularized by the myth of Cupid and Psyche.

¹⁰ Moralism in this case is meant to signify the philosophical movement that arose during the nineteenth century which centers around imbuing society with a strict set of standards and guidelines for behavior. These social guidelines are based on a rigid hierarchy through which ascension is quite improbable.

¹¹ This term is sometimes used to describe the events leading up to the Glorious Revolution in 1688 when James II replaced William III and Mary II as monarch. This is when England became a Constitutional Monarchy after years of Civil War.

¹² Refer to Devoney Looser's introduction to *Jane Austen and the Discourses of Feminism*.

¹³ The Georgian era of British history refers to the successive reigns of the Hanoverians (George I, George II, George III, George IV and William IV) which concluded when both of George III's sons died without any surviving legitimate children, thus leaving the throne to the Duke of Kent's only legitimate child, Victoria. Queen Victoria surpassed her grandfather in both length of life and the length of her reign, which was surpassed by Queen Elizabeth II in 2015.

¹⁴ "Parents Against Children: General Tilney as Gothic Monster," *Persuasions*, no. 20, 1998.

¹⁵ The Enlightenment refers to the period of intellectual, philosophical, and educational breakthroughs characterized by a renewed interest in the sciences and mathematics. This era, also known as the Age of Reason, dominated Western thought from the late seventeenth to the nineteenth century. Among the philosophers who influenced this movement are Voltaire, John Locke, David Hume, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

¹⁶ The circulating library refers to the separate disbursement of books, particularly novels, via booksellers and entrepreneurs beginning in the early eighteenth century when printed texts were very costly. These networks of information served as a means of liberation for women, and Austen is keenly aware of that social phenomena in each of her novels.

¹⁷ In an aristocracy, the gentry is a term typically ascribed to the class of landed individuals of higher rank than the working/servant class, but not so highly ranked as the noble class. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as people of gentle birth and good breeding. This group of people is generally described as the "middle class" of the aristocratic system. The highest class of aristocrats is the nobility. This term implies that individuals in the category are both landed and have a title associated with their birthright.

¹⁸ The Oceanic feeling is a coined term from one of Sigmund Freud's letters exchanged with Romain Rolland in 1927. It essentially refers to the undifferentiated reality that all human beings experience prior to Lacan's "Mirror Stage." The Oceanic feeling is associated with the unconscious human psyche in that it is self-gratifying, polymorphous, undifferentiated reception

of pleasure, pleasure simply meaning the reduction of tension in this case; however, it can be sexually charged/interpreted when encountered in works of fiction.

¹⁹ Classical in this context is the opposite of the Gothic. Culturally speaking, Classical antiquity ended around the fall of the Roman empire when the Goths' culture took over the European continent. When we refer to the "Classics" in literature, it is ubiquitously known to bring the likes of Homer, Ovid, Aristotle, and other great minds of the Hellenistic world.

²⁰ Toni Morrison as master novelist embarks on a personal inquiry into the significance of African Americans to the American literary tradition. The author claims her goal is to "put forth an argument for extending the study of American literature... draw a map, so to speak, of a critical geography and use that map to open as much space for discovery, intellectual adventure, and close exploration as did the original charting of the New World—without the mandate for conquest." Morrison turns to Poe, Melville, and Hawthorne to examine the force of darkness that figures so significantly in the literature of early America. In my opinion, this is a fairly explicit discussion of the Gothic, and I feel compelled to include Morrison's contributions to studying Gothic fiction in the American tradition, not only to make the reader aware of the importance of her inquiry but also to express where future research might take me.

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