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THE MUTUAL DEVELOPMENT IN JAMES, HENRY, AND JANE AUSTEN'S
EARLY WRITINGS

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ABSTRACT

Critics have long debated over whether or not Jane Austen contributed to her brother's literary periodical *The Loiterer*, specifically with the Sophia Sentiment letter. Observing Jane Austen's early writings in her juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey*, strong similarities are found in the writing styles of Jane, Henry, and James Austen. Taking into consideration the close relationship of the Austen siblings, this paper examines the recurring themes and the similarity in Jane Austen's early writing style to that of her siblings' periodical and the strong likelihood that she did contribute to *The Loiterer*. This study also asserts that the style of *Northanger Abbey*, usually noted for its differences from her later novels, has more in common with the writing of *The Loiterer* and the juvenilia as a result of the Austen siblings' interlocking literary development, demonstrating that *Northanger Abbey* is not an "immature" novel, as has long been thought, but that it stands alone with its own distinctive style. The skills that Austen developed from working with her brothers eventually led from the burlesque of her juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey* to the superior irony and distinctive prose narrative that she is famous for.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen's brothers James and Henry Austen, along with friend Benjamin Portal at St. John's College at Oxford, worked on *The Loiterer*, which appeared every Saturday after January 31, 1789 and early 1790. It was printed and sold by C.S. Rann at Oxford, in Birmingham by Pearson and Rollason, and in London by Egerton, who would subsequently publish Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*. James and Henry Austen published the periodical at the same time that Jane Austen began writing her juvenilia in 1787 (Doody xlv).

Walton Litz's 1961 essay "*The Loiterer: A Reflection of Jane Austen's Early Environment*," was one of the first critical investigations of *The Loiterer*. In his article Litz argues that *The Loiterer* is not only a direct influence on Austen's later writing, but also "a record of the ideas and opinions which prevailed in Jane Austen's early environment" (252). While it is true that similar themes in *The Loiterer* also appeared in Austen's writing, it seems that Litz struggles to prove his argument, and more often than not, his many comparisons rather highlight how *The Loiterer* probably was indeed an

influence on Austen's writing. Moreover, as I will show, she may have influenced her brothers as much as they influenced her.

Forty years later, in "*The Loiterer* and Jane Austen's Literary Identity" (2001), Li-Peng Geng argues that *The Loiterer* was a direct influence on Austen's work, not only on her juvenilia and early writing, but on her later novels, as well. I should note that for my purposes, I use the term "juvenilia" in this paper to refer to any of Austen's writings before she began work on her major novels, and in no way use it to imply that because these writings are more juvenile, immature, or not as developed as her later writings, that they are not as worthy of study or analysis. Geng observes that "[Henry and James'] *Loiterer* essays offer the earliest inspiration to Jane as a precocious and aspiring writer of fiction, and... helped her to develop a set of unique literary principles and techniques which came to dominate not only her early writings but also her later compositions" (580). Geng cites many similarities, at least one from every novel and her juvenilia, excluding *Persuasion*. Geng also adds that there was "an apparent social, intellectual, and even philosophical bond between the writing of James and Henry and that of Jane" (590). Geng explains, "Whereas Jane's juvenilia may suggest that her art had, at the time, more in common with that of her favourite brother, Henry, her completed novels show that she shared much of her subtlety and complexity with her eldest brother, James, whose essays have clearly the advantage of age, education, and experience" (590).

While Litz and Geng agree that both Henry and James Austen seem to have influenced their sister Jane, neither of them discusses the possibility that Austen herself might have contributed to *The Loiterer*. It should be noted, however, that while biographers such as David Nokes believe she contributed, "It cannot be asserted as a

certainty that Jane Austen was the ‘Sophia Sentiment’ who offered her opinions to *The Loiterer*. However, most recent authorities agree in attributing the letter to her, and the tone of the piece is consistent with her many juvenile essays in the style of her literary parody” (536). Litz and Geng both mention the similarities of Jane Austen’s juvenilia to her brothers’ writing and cite some instances of similarity between the publications, but neither mentions how close the style of *The Loiterer* is to the style of *Northanger Abbey*, which was probably drafted at the same time. The similarities between *The Loiterer* and *Northanger Abbey* should not be passed over as critics have done in the past, because they are representative of the mutual influence and possible collaboration between the Austen siblings that further resulted in the style of Jane Austen’s later novels.

Both *The Loiterer* and *Northanger Abbey* share the elements of burlesque, satire, and irony that the Austens used to lampoon similar subjects to lampoon; furthermore, similarities can also be seen in the layout. For instance, James Austen begins and ends *The Loiterer* with essays that act as a prologue and epilogue to the publication. The first three chapters of *Northanger Abbey* could be said to lay out a purpose for the novel, much as James Austen does in the first issue of his periodical. Another matter is the style of both works. Not only is there similarity in satire and irony, but also in narrative method, which is much different from that of her later novels. Jane Austen's narrator in *Northanger Abbey* is more controlling and didactic with its readers, resembling a teacher, much like James and Henry Austen did at points in *The Loiterer*. The Austens’ family traditions of reading together and performing plays probably aided in the development of these characteristics – found in periodicals and works in their family library – in their works. Neither Litz nor Geng discuss the likelihood that Austen contributed her own

writing to *The Loiterer* as previous critics and biographers have suggested, particularly a letter in Issue #9, from a reader called Sophia Sentiment. More recent critics, such as Peter Sabor, tend to believe that Austen was Sophia Sentiment. Sabor states, “the letter, has the characteristic verve and inventiveness of her youthful writings. The young Austen, who read contemporary fiction and drama voraciously, would have known *The Mausoleum* (1785), a comedy by William Hayley in which a character named Lady Sophia Sentiment appears” (xxx).

While Litz laid the groundwork for readers to notice the social, political and literary subjects contemporary to *The Loiterer* and Austen’s juvenilia that are apparent in their prose, he is not persuasive in his claim that *The Loiterer* was not an influential source for Austen after her juvenilia, or vice versa. Geng furthers Litz’s argument, pointing out essential similarities between *The Loiterer* and Austen’s novels, without going into very specific detail to back up his claims. In contrast to Litz and Geng, I will demonstrate that Austen's and her brothers’ writing styles developed in tandem while they were writing *The Loiterer* and the juvenilia; moreover, this interlocked development was therefore a particular influence on *Northanger Abbey* above Austen’s other work. I will also suggest that this involvement and influence may help explain why the narrative style of that novel is so distinct from Austen’s later novels, setting it apart from her later works as a representation of an adolescent writing style in the Austen family. I will show that along with a striking similarity in their narrative styles, there are also similarities in subject matter and form that clearly reflects the interlocking development of Jane, James, and Henry Austen’s writing. Moreover, the close relationship between the siblings suggests that they probably read each other’s writings, swapped ideas, and perhaps

contributed to each other's work (either directly or indirectly) when the brothers were home together during the brothers' on holidays from university or through drafts enclosed in letters. Henry Austen's high opinion of his sister's writing is made clear in the Biographical Notice he penned for the publication of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* after her death:

Her reading was very extensive in history and belles lettres; and her memory extremely tenacious. Her favourite moral writers were Johnson in prose, and Cowper in verse. It is difficult to say at what age she was not intimately acquainted with the merits and defects of the best essays and novels in the English language...her power of inventing characters seems to have been intuitive, and almost unlimited. She drew from nature; but, whatever may have been surmised to the contrary, never from individuals. (Henry Austen 195)

Henry Austen's praise indicates the close relationship that he and Austen shared, and his knowledge of her favorite writers and comments on her craft illustrate a keen interest in his part on the details of her writing and the development they shared only after she became famous. From working together, Austen developed her skills and continued to hone them long after *Northanger Abbey* – becoming more proficient with the burlesque style, which eventually led to her superior irony and more distinctive prose narrative than her brothers.

When we consider the probable interlocking development, collaboration, and mutual influence of the writing style of the Austen siblings, we perceive *Northanger Abbey* in a new light. Scholars have traditionally either grouped *Northanger Abbey* with Austen's other early novels (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*), or kept it separate from the canon of Austen's major works. This tendency needs to be reconsidered in light of the probable literary relationship of the Austen siblings. Because

Northanger Abbey is so similar to the periodical style of *The Loiterer*, and its nature as a straightforward satire and the influence of Austen's past use of burlesque in other early writings, *Northanger Abbey* should be grouped apart from her other novels, to be considered as distinct in its style, but as an important step in Austen's development from the family's adolescent writing style, to the ironic prose for which her later novels are celebrated.

CHAPTER II

THE LOITERER AND THE WRITING STYLE OF THE AUSTEN SIBLINGS

It is no secret that the Reverend George Austen had an extensive library and that his family was well read. In *Jane Austen: A Life*, David Nokes points out that for the two summers before James and Henry started *The Loiterer*, Jane Austen had worked her way through bound copies of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Perhaps she read and discussed them with her brothers while they were home in Hertfordshire from Oxford for the summer. Nokes points out that when Austen was a young girl, her aunt Philadelphia Walter found “Jane’s whimsical manner of pronouncing opinions in the august tones of a female Addison...so very disconcerting” (102). Nokes also believes that Austen and her brothers would have also been familiar with popular periodicals such as Henry Fielding’s *The Champion* and *The Jacobite’s Journal*, among others.

Austen and her siblings were exposed to the literary world at a very early age. From their father’s library they became familiar with the great writers of the eighteenth century, guided by their father and mother. Encouraged to both read and write, and also to read their work aloud and to stage their own plays, it is no surprise that James, Henry,

and Jane Austen would leave lasting impressions on each other with their projects. Her brothers started writing *The Loiterer* in 1789 and finished in 1790, while Austen wrote her juvenilia between 1786 and 1793 (Sabor xviii, xxx). So it is conceivable that during vacations from Oxford when they were home in Hertfordshire together the siblings shared their ideas with one another, critiqued each others' work, and the young Austen even contributed to her brothers' literary venture.

The periodicals that the Austens read, such as *The Jacobite's Journal* and *The Tatler*, had a straightforward style of satire that is echoed in *The Loiterer's* delivery, a style also evident in Austen's juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey*. Austen's straightforwardness in *Northanger Abbey* is noted in how her narrator addresses the reader. The narrator writes in the first person numerous times and also refers to the reader directly. For example, Austen writes, "...it may be stated, for the reader's more certain information..." (9), and "I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity" (172). Examples such as these can be found throughout the novel, and passages such as her defense of the novel come across as a kind of lecture for the reader.

James Austen, Austen's eldest brother, was the editor and chief contributor of the periodical, a position fitting his reputation as scholar of the family. He wrote poetry, staged plays at the family home at Steventon, and wrote his own prologues and epilogues for those plays. His mother was noted as saying that James had "Classical knowledge, Literary Taste, and the power of Elegant Composition...in the highest degree" (qtd. in Geng 12). In fact, the praise given for his work in *The Loiterer* was quite similar to that given to his sister's novels – praise for their faithful descriptions of life and honest

depictions of characters. Like Jane Austen's work to come, as Geng has pointed out, *The Loiterer* contained "predominant humour in the essays as well as the letters, featuring irony, mockery, satire, even burlesque, and the relaxed style in general neutralize the seriousness of the subject matter" (11). I would add that Austen's juvenilia, written during the same years that *The Loiterer* was produced, develops the same style of mockery, satire, and burlesque style. Of Austen's novels, *Northanger Abbey* also demonstrates most of these qualities, though they are rendered much more subtly. Characteristics similar to both the juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey* can be traced throughout *The Loiterer*, which suggests that Austen and her brothers were at the very least observing each other's work while they wrote *The Loiterer* and juvenilia, sharing ideas and drafts, learning from each other's work.

CHAPTER III

JANE AUSTEN AS SOPHIA SENTIMENT

Scholars and biographers have argued that Austen may have had her own written contribution to *The Loiterer* with the letter in No. 9 from the fictitious “Sophia Sentiment.” It is the most intriguing and striking piece of evidence connecting her to the publication, and also of the hand-in-hand development between her and her brothers, as it is full of her style and voice during the period of her juvenilia, of which she would be working on the first volume at the time. In his Introduction to the facsimile reproduction of *The Loiterer*, Geng observes that the Sophia Sentiment letter is full of the “kind of family jokes which the Austen’s were known to enjoy among themselves” (18). What Sophia urges *The Loiterer* to focus on – popular Gothic stories and sentimentalism – is exactly what Austen satirizes in both her juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey*. More specifically, Sophia begins by declaring her love for periodicals:

I...have, in the two last summers, actually got through all the entertaining papers of our most celebrated periodical writers, from the Tatler and Spectator to the Microcosm and the Olla Podrida. Indeed I love a periodical work beyond any thing, especially those in which one meets

with a great many stories, and where the papers are not too long. (*Loiterer* 4)

Northanger Abbey also praises periodical writers through the words of Miss Tilney, who mentions to Catherine that if they are not careful with their language when talking to her brother Henry, they will be “overpowered with Johnson and Blair” for the rest of their walk (Austen 73). Dr. Johnson is also specifically mentioned in No. 56 of *The Loiterer* as “the great Dr. Johnson” (*The Loiterer* 9).

The themes in the letter could also be compared to the themes in Catherine Morland’s preferred genre of fiction, the gothic, particularly the line in which Sophia writes, “Only conceive, in eight papers, not one sentimental story about love and honour, and all that” (5). The “and all that” which ends the sentence is naïve in tone, and invokes the writer as a young person who is easily carried away by those sentimental stories, such as Catherine is in Austen’s novel. Also striking are the suggestions that Sophia gives *The Loiterer* for new subject matter:

Instead of retiring to Yorkshire, he might have fled into France, and there, you know, you might have made him fall in love with a French *Paysanne*, who might have turned out to be some great person. Or you might have let him set fire to a convent, and carry off a nun, whom he might afterwards have converted, or any thing of that kind, just to have created a little bustle, and made the story more interesting. (5-6)

Either Catherine Morland or Isabella Thorpe in *Northanger Abbey* could have stated this passage as they discussed the novels they were reading together, which is why some scholars want to attribute the letter to Austen. Austen could easily have transferred aspects of this character to *Northanger Abbey* whether she wrote it or not, but she more than likely developed a satirical periodical style in the same family circle that she adopted

in her later works and further developed into the ironic style of her later novels.

Another element that strengthens the case of Austen as the writer of Sophia Sentiment is her juvenilia. First, there is a recurrence of the name Sophia, or the alternate Sophy, in her stories. A Sophia or Sophy exists in *The Visit*, *The Three Sisters*, *Love and Freindship* [sic], and *A Collection of Letters*. The comedic Sophy of *The Visit* loves to drink and accepts a spur of the moment proposal from Lord Fitzgerald (Austen 51-52); in *The Three Sisters*, Sophia is the sister and rival in marriage to the main character Mary Stanhope; the Sophia of *Love and Freindship*, full of “Sensibility and Feeling” (83), becomes a close friend of the main character Laura, both of whom are prone to fainting fits; and the Sophia from the second letter of *A Collection of Letters* cannot get over a lover that jilted her to marry someone else, and finds joy in hearing the sad story of an acquaintance, because “when one is unhappy nothing is so delightful to one’s sensations as to hear of equal misery” (150). All of those Sophia’s or Sophy’s can be compared to Sophia Sentiment in that they are all part of stories that satirize sentimental novels in one way or another. Random engagements, sisters fighting over a suitor, extravagant fainting fits and jilted lovers were all fodder for the mass-produced sentimental novel of the late eighteenth century, and were just the novels and the type of subject matter that Sophia Sentiment was requesting the authors of *The Loiterer* include in their periodical. Austen’s juvenilia contained just what Sophia Sentiment described and what her character satirized – itself a satire of sentimental novels, making it just the thing a young Jane Austen would contribute to her brothers’ publication.

Frequent use of the name Sophia aside, Austen’s attacks on sentimental novels in the juvenilia are quite obvious and many. *Love and Freindship* and *Frederic and Elfrida*

(both written between 1787 and 1790) are full of elopements, fainting women, suicides, and slapstick. *Frederic and Elfrida* has plenty of moments that ridicule sentimental novels, such as when Miss Fitzroy elopes with the Coachman (Doody 5), and the suicide of Charlotte Drummond, who, upon recalling that she had entered into two engagements the day before without realizing it, “threw herself into a deep stream which ran thro’ her Aunt’s pleasure Grounds in Portland Place” (7-8). The story ends with Elfrida’s familiar sequence of fainting fits: “This answer distressed her too much for her delicate Constitution. She accordingly fainted and was in such a hurry to have a succession of fainting fits, that she had scarcely patience enough to recover from one before she fell into another” (10). Such passages as these satirize gothic writers from that period such as Ann Radcliffe. Radcliffe’s heroine in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) goes through countless fainting fits when in distress. Austen clearly realized that the figure of the delicate female was not only unrealistic in novels, but also unrealistic as an expectation for females in reality, and toys with this idea in her juvenilia, as her brothers toyed with the popularity of such literary figures in *The Loiterer*.

In *Jane Austen: A Life*, Claire Tomalin describes Sophia’s request, stating that she was “complaining that [*The Loiterer*] did not cater for women readers, and recommending that they should run ‘some nice, affecting stories’ about lovers with ‘very pretty names’ who are separated, or lost at sea, or involved in duels, or run mad” (Tomalin 66). Like Tomalin, Nokes assumes that Jane Austen wrote the Sophia piece, but he does not even mentioning the possibility that it could have been James or Henry (102-103). He claims that Austen wrote the piece because she “was both shocked and disappointed when she read the first issues” due to its “laboured facetiousness, its well-

worn formulas and self-important Oxford jokes” (107). Tomalin, like other critics, is careful not to assume *Sophia Sentiment* is Jane Austen. She states that “the trouble with attributing this to her is that the letter is not an encouragement to *The Loiterer* to address women readers so much as a mockery of women’s poor taste in literature” (66). Nokes has the stronger argument here, since Tomalin’s comment seems to overlook how much Austen’s juvenilia already mocks such literature. Almost every piece in *The Loiterer* is written with an aim to lampoon popular fiction during Austen’s time, and like *Northanger Abbey*, does not try to hide it. Though there is no hard evidence to prove it, taking into account the satirical nature of her early writing and her well-known sense of humor, and the similarities between her independent work and the rest of *The Loiterer*, Austen is the most likely author of the *Sophia Sentiment* piece, which further points to the probability of the Austen siblings’ interlocking development.

In the response that Henry Austen wrote to Sophia’s letter, there are some lines about novels and female readers that are relevant to Austen’s work. For instance, Henry mentions that while some parts of *The Loiterer* may have bored some readers, it was only their intention to entertain, and that it “has at least been free from the sententious gravity of the adviser, or the solemn dullness of the pedant” (8). Austen’s use of irony and satire to get her message across in her writing could be seen as a lighthearted attempt to send a message without sounding like a preacher to her readers. For example, Catherine Morland endures a lecture from Henry Tilney about her assumption that his mother was the victim of abuse and murder at the hands of his father, yet in the end, General Tilney turns out to be the villain when he turns Catherine out of his house without an explanation or an escort: “Catherine, at any rate, heard enough to feel, that in suspecting

General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarcely sinned against his character, or magnified his cruelty” (Austen 170). Austen is able to prove that there are villainous men do exist, just not in the same way as in a gothic novel, and she is able to do so without the condescension that Henry Austen refers to in the above passage.

The response also goes on to contradict Sophia, arguing that not all women will universally accept her choice of subject matter. Henry writes, “we... must doubt whether the generality of our female readers would be much amused with Novels, Eastern Tales, and Dreams” (9). Henry then goes on to point out why he objects to each of these subjects – “Novels, Eastern Tales, and Dreams.” Henry argues that the novel “has of late years increased so much, as to render the necessity, or even the propriety of adding to the number rather doubtful, and which might perhaps be considerably lessened without any great diminution of our knowledge, wit or taste” (9). While Henry puts down the novel in *The Loiterer* and Austen defends it in *Northanger Abbey*, Austen is still playing with the same outlook. Novels were quite popular and many were being produced, such as the Gothic novels that Catherine and Isabella were reading. Henry points out that there were so many novels coming out, but few of those were worth reading. While Austen is essentially agreeing with him her novel indicates that those that are worth reading are important if considered in the right way. Though it seems that when considering their novels the siblings would not agree on this subject – the way in which Henry and Jane Austen undertake the matter in *The Loiterer* and *Northanger Abbey* is similar in their writing style.

CHAPTER IV
FURTHER EXAMPLES OF MUTUAL INFLUENCE & COLLABORATION
BETWEEN THE AUSTEN SIBLINGS

Like *Northanger Abbey*, *The Loiterer* is self-referential and discusses other periodicals. James and Henry Austen wrote *The Loiterer* anonymously, the title page simply referring to “The Author.” Aimed mainly at the population of Oxford University, they refer back to the name of the publication to suggest who their essays on “learned pursuits” and “the best modern Classics, both in History and Poetry” to “make such extracts, remarks, and criticisms as occasionally occurred from the subjects before [them]” is intended for (12). The narrator states, “The circumstances I allude to, are the name of our Work and the time of its publication” (13). They refer many of their fellow students as loiterers, defined in the OED as “One who loiters (see senses of the vb.); a vagabond, ‘sturdy beggar’” and indicate that they chose to send the paper out at nine o’clock in the morning because “it is the only hour, out of the twenty-four, in which there is a probable chance of finding some of our Brother Loiterers at home, and the only one in which any of them read” (14). It also refers to the authors of other periodicals, just as

Northanger Abbey refers to authors of other novels. The Austen siblings probably took this self-referential style from popular periodicals that they had read previously. Addison and Steele's *The Tatler* has a first issue that is comparable to *The Loiterer's*. It also begins by stating the paper's intentions, using the same self-referential language:

It is both a Charitable and Necessary Work to offer something, whereby such worthy and well-affected Members of the Commonwealth may be instructed, after their Reading, *what to think*: Which shall be the End and Purpose of this my Paper, wherein I shall from Time to Time Report and Consider all Matters of what Kind soever that shall occur to me" (Ross 65)

Both *The Loiterer* and *The Tatler* refer to themselves and their work – “We, the Authors of the LOITERER” and “this my Paper” – and also refer to their audiences. Knowing that the Austens read *The Tatler* and other similar periodicals, it becomes obvious that they borrowed from the writing style and structure of such well-known publications.

The Loiterer also refers to historical and philosophical writers and their subject limitations. James Austen writes, “The Historic and Philosophic Writers have, in the commencement of their Works, greatly the advantage over us; being exempted from the necessity, or debarred the privilege, of choice by the very nature of their subjects” (4). Jane Austen refers to novelists in a similar way in *Northanger Abbey*, particularly when she satirically mentions the importance of the “900th abridger of the History of England.” She states, “while the abilities of the nine-hundredth abridger of the History of England...[are] eulogized by a thousand pens, - there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them” (Austen 22). Even more significant is Austen's *The History of England*, which she completed in 1791,

one year after the completion of *The Loiterer*. In her *History*, Austen makes fun of herself and historical writers by stating in a note at the beginning of the piece, “N.B. There will be very few Dates in this History”, and declaring that it is by “a partial, prejudiced, and ignorant historian” (Doody 134). Austen clearly attacks the strict writing of historians by only noting incidents of interest to her and sharing her opinions. In her paragraph about Henry VI she states:

I suppose you know all about the Wars between him and The Duke of York who was of the right side; If you do not, you had better read some other History, for I shall not be very diffuse in this, meaning by it only to vent my Spleen *against*, and shew my Hatred *to* all those people whose parties or principles do not suit with mine, and not to give information. (Doody 135)

Austen likely began working on *The History of England* around the time that her brothers were finishing *The Loiterer*. Sabor notes in his Appendix on the marginalia of *The History of England* that “All four volumes bear the signature of her brother, 'James Austen Steventon,' on the paste-down or front free endpaper,” which shows us that the siblings likely discussed this subject amongst each other, and their sister's mockery could have influenced her brother's piece in *The Loiterer* as much as they could have influenced *The History of England* (Sabor 316).

While James Austen claimed historical writers had the advantage over periodical writers and novelists because they did not have such a vast amount of subject matter to write about, Jane Austen pokes fun at how historical writers are considered so important, when they only have facts to work with, inherently rewriting the work of historians before them, thus causing their work to lack creativity. James Austen's approach could be seen as reverse psychology in a way, in effect doing the same thing as his sister. He

claims the historical writers have an advantage because they do not have to worry about creativity, but it seems that he in fact highlights their lack of creativity and variety, as will his sister in *Northanger Abbey*. He also writes, “But I know not what rule can be laid down for the Periodical Writer, the variety of whose subjects preclude all attempts at connection; who is eccentric by principle, and irregular by system” (4). It seems that James Austen is attempting something like a “Defense of the Periodical,” quite similar to Austen’s “Defense of the Novel.”

James Austen also discusses the “danger of writers” (5) and how, like novel writers, authors of periodicals are “anxious to conciliate the good opinion of the Public” (4). This is similar to the struggle of authors of sentimental and gothic novels, since their work was not taken seriously by much of the public. The article “Terrorist Novel Writing,” written anonymously (signed by “A Jacobin Novelist”) for the *Monthly Magazine* in August 1797, satirized popular novels, specifically focusing on “terrorist novels,” more popularly known as Gothic novels. The author complains that modern novels carry “the young reader’s imagination into such a confusion of terrors, as must be hurtful,” and states that novels should “be a representation of human life and manners, with a view to direct the conduct in the most important duties of life, and to correct its follies” (qtd. in Clery 184). This article coincides with Austen’s writing of *Northanger Abbey*, which satirizes gothic novels yet defends them as well. When Austen’s narrator admits that her heroine and her good friend spend time together reading novels, she states:

Yes, novels; - - for I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel writers, of degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances, to the number of which they are themselves

adding – joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. (22)

James Austen's commentary on the struggle of writers, with the influence of other periodical writers such as the one that wrote "Terrorist Novel Writing," influenced the young Jane Austen's writing style and choice of subject matter, which comes through in her juvenilia and a few years later in *Northanger Abbey*.

Finally, the narrator of the first issue makes many references to authors and readers. In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen also mentions readers and authors of novels, and even addresses her reader directly. Austen first mentions readers and the book itself in the first sentence of Chapter 2, where she writes, "it may be stated, for the *reader's* more certain information, lest the *following pages* should otherwise fail of giving any idea of what her character is meant to be; that her heart was affectionate, her disposition cheerful and open, without conceit or affectation of any kind [*italics added*]" (9).

Acknowledgment of her readers and references to the book are dispersed throughout the novel, along with Austen addressing her readers as the author. Austen does this for the first time in *Northanger Abbey's* defense of the novel (see quotation above), and again such addresses are dispersed throughout. At another instance, she even mentions herself and Ann Radcliffe, another popular contemporary author, bringing her reader to the "present" world around the creation of her novel, stating, "The advantages of natural folly in a beautiful girl have been already set forth by the capital pen of a sister author; - and to her treatment of the subject I will only add in justice to men, that though to the larger and more trifling part of the sex, imbecility in females is a great

enhancement of their personal charms” (76). Though she is satirizing her “sister author,” she is doing this to bring the reader outside of the novel briefly and into the author’s world by noting the truths that the gothic highlights. Of all her novels, Austen reaches outside of the story this directly and this frequently only in *Northanger Abbey*. This style is also found in *The Loiterer*, where her brothers constantly refer to their periodical in their articles, and mention their readers and themselves. In issue 32, the end of Rusticus’ letter states:

My friend Rusticus’s case is undoubtedly a very hard one, and when I reflect on it, I bless my Stars that I have no maiden Cousins on the verge of 40. But as something must be done, and very soon too, I would submit it to his Judgment whether or no, it would not be better for him to fly the Country at once.” (Austen 15)

Here, the personal “I” refers to the character of Rusticus as his friend, as if he is discussing the character’s problems and sharing his opinion with the reader. This narrative style is also discernible throughout Jane Austen’s juvenilia, such as in *Frederic and Elfrida* when Austen comments on an Epitaph: “These sweet lines, as pathetic as beautifull were never read by any one who passed that way, without a shower of tears, which if they should fail of exciting in you, Reader, your mind must be unworthy to peruse them” (Jane Austen 8). This same address to her readers is also seen in *Jack and Alice*, when Austen describes Charles Adams: “But as it may appear strange to my Readers, that so much worth and Excellence as he possessed should have conquered only hers” (13); and when Austen begins the fourth chapter: “My Readers may perhaps imagine...” (17). It should be noted, however, that unlike her brothers and other periodical authors, Austen’s narrative voice remains ambiguous. While she refers to herself as the author at certain points, she never declares that she is speaking as Jane

Austen. Henry and James Austen are obviously writing as the authors of *The Loiterer*, but also made it clear that they represented themselves or whichever specific persona they represented in a piece, as Fielding did with John Trott-Plaid – the authorial voice in *The Jacobite's Journal*. Despite this distinction, Austen retains the same direct addresses in her narrative style, suggesting that the periodical style was indeed an influence. However, Fielding's style is different from the Austens' in that he maintains the same persona and is focused on the same political subject matter throughout the publication. Such stylistic qualities addressing the contemporary reader of eighteenth-century novels as a sort of confidant suggest that Austen and her siblings developed their satiric periodical style in *The Loiterer*, and that their mutual influence and development played a more prominent role in her development as a writer than has previously been thought.

References to readers, authors, and the criticisms of both were an integral part of literary periodicals in the eighteenth century. Examples of this can be found in Henry Fielding's political satire *The Jacobite's Journal* (1747). Similar to *The Loiterer*, *The Jacobite's Journal* often featured letters from "readers" that either criticize or praise the contents of the periodical. One such reader declares that having "run through all the Books (for they are not numberless) which ancient or modern Authors have produced," he is, "charmed...when I meet with a new Production in the Region of Fancy, capable of giving me the same Delight which I have received from my most favourite Authors at my first Acquaintance with them" (Fielding 119). Another female reader complains to the author, "John Trott-Plaid," that he has "facetiously ridiculed the News-Writers for troubling the Public with the Marriages and Deaths of People of no manner of Consequence; but there is a worse Custom than this, and that is the publishing of Treaties

of Marriage between Persons of the first Rank, often with little or no Foundation” (159). But perhaps the best examples of literary criticism are in the weekly feature of the paper called “Proceedings at the Court of Criticism,” where the “author” and his contemporaries would put pamphlets, poetry, and prose on trial for “the utmost Abuse, Disgrace, and Discouragement of Literature, and...to the great Scandal of this Nation” (128). Not only did Austen and her brothers borrow these stylistic aspects from periodicals such as *The Jacobite’s Journal*, but also may have pulled the idea of responding to letters from readers – such as *Sophia Sentiment* – from periodicals as well. They were all likely to have read these periodicals, and as these aspects have been observed in their writing they likely discussed and borrowed them from these papers.

The similarity between Austen’s and her brothers’ writing styles do not end with the first issue of *The Loiterer*. In Issue #4, there is a piece titled “Diary of a Modern Oxford Man,” in which the main character has a striking resemblance to *Northanger Abbey*’s John Thorpe. The Oxford Man states: “Saturday. Found a letter from my father, no money and a great deal of advice – wants to know how my last quarter’s allowance went – how the devil should I know? He knows I keep no accounts. Do think fathers are the greatest *boreds* in nature...” (15-16). James’ caricature of a young man who cares more for money than morals is like Austen’s John Thorpe in *Northanger Abbey*: a young man at college who cares more for horses, carriages, and appearances than for books, knowledge, or matters of the heart. When the heroine, Catherine Morland, meets John she is immediately struck by these qualities when he declares a novel that he had only “took up the first volume once” as “the horridest nonsense you can imagine,” and when he coldly greets his mother by asking her where she got “that quiz of a hat” and his sisters

by observing “that they both looked very ugly” (Austen 32). The Oxford Man’s obsession with horses and hunting becomes strikingly similar to John Thorpe in the instance where he bets another student that he could race his pony from Benson to Oxford in under an hour, being sure of a win, since he “did it the other day in fifty minutes” (14). While the Oxford Man proves that his horse can make it in under an hour, John Thorpe’s horse turns out to not be very fast after all. Similar caricatures and satire written by the Austens that comments upon everyday life link *The Loiterer* and *Northanger Abbey*, and stresses the Austens’ mutual influence.

While Geng first pointed to the similarity between John Thorpe and the Oxford Man, there is another interesting aspect of this article that is similar to *Northanger Abbey*. At one point, the Oxford Man states, “Ten, breakfast – attempted to read the Loiterer, but it was too stupid; flung it down and took up Bartlet’s Farriery,” (15). In this statement, *The Loiterer* references itself, but does negatively for comical purposes. The same can be said for *Northanger Abbey*. While it contains a now famous “defense of the novel,” it also at many points ridicules the gothic and sentimental qualities and novels in general. Austen demonstrates how ridiculous the expectations of a gothic novel are in the real world in the beginning of the novel, when Catherine is departing on her journey to Bath:

Everything indeed relative to this important journey was done...with a degree of moderation and composure, which seemed rather consistent with the common feelings of common life, than with the refined susceptibilities, the tender emotions which the first separation of a heroine from her family ought always to excite. (Austen 90)

Both *The Loiterer* and *Northanger Abbey* satirize themselves in order to make a point that perhaps some literature takes itself too seriously. This common interest indicates the siblings shared such an opinion, and illustrates their mutual development through these

ties between *Northanger Abbey* and *The Loiterer*.

The publications also share character similarities in *Sir William Montague* and *Memoirs of Mr. Clifford*, both written between 1787 and 1790. In *Sir William Montague*, Sir William becomes engaged to Lady Percival, who decides that the wedding will be on the first of September, which was traditionally the start of the partridge hunting season. Austen writes, “Sir William was a Shot and could not support the idea of losing such a Day, even for such a Cause. He begged her to delay the Wedding a short time. Lady Percival was enraged and returned to London the next Morning” (39). Like the Oxford Man who cares more for his own interests than his studies, Sir William loses his fiancé because he cared more about the first day of the hunting season, and was even happy about it, because “he knew that he should have been much more grieved by the Loss of the 1st of September” (39). In *The Memoirs of Mr. Clifford*, another short piece, Mr. Clifford resembles John Thorpe and the Oxford Man with his interest in carriages and horses, of which Austen lists half: “I can only remember that he had a Coach, a Chariot, a Chaise, a Landeau, a Landeaulet, a Phaeton, a Gig, a Whisky, an Italian Chair, a Buggy, a Curricule & a wheelbarrow. He had likewise an amazing fine stud of Horses. To my knowledge he had six Greys, 4 Bays, eight Blacks and a poney” (40). These pieces of Austen’s juvenilia connect the similarities found between *Northanger Abbey* and *The Loiterer*’s Oxford Man piece, and therefore provide an example of the strong possibility that Austen and her brothers wrote and developed their works in tandem, with the ideas that were exchanged during the early 1790s.

Another part of *The Loiterer* that provides evidence for the mutual influence and collaboration between the Austen siblings is the focus on the subject of marriages of

interest. According to Geng, Henry's attacks on "sentimentalism and marriages of interest" in *The Loiterer* would become a prime subject of Austen's in her juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey* (17). Geng comes to this conclusion because of the plethora of similarities between situations in *The Loiterer* to those in Austen's novels. Henry attests that marriages made with "prudential motives" (6) tend to be more successful, since there are more "sorrows, cares, and vexations, which are (from their own confession) attendant on people who marry from Affection" (5). There are many instances of this argument in Austen's juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey*, one of which is General Tilney's rejection of Catherine as a possible daughter-in-law when he realizes her family is not rich; or Isabella Thorpe's eventual desertion of Catherine's brother because he does not have enough money. Shortly after Isabella is engaged to James Morland, she begins a flirtation with Captain Tilney, Henry Tilney's brother, and does not endeavor to hide it from anyone. Eventually Catherine comes to understand Isabella's true intentions when she notices a change in her personality:

She wished Isabella had talked more like her usual self, and not so much about money, and had not looked so well pleased at the sight of Captain Tilney. How strange that she should not perceive his admiration! Catherine longed to give her a hint of it, to put her on her guard, and prevent all the pain which her too lively behaviour might otherwise create both for him and her brother. (Austen 100-101)

Austen more frequently focuses on the emotional toll of greed before love, illustrated by the stress Isabella puts on Catherine by her flirtations, which in turn causes anxiety and eventual heartbreak for her brother James. Although Henry's theme differentiates from Austen's theme of love before money, the ironic tone of Henry's writing is similar to Austen's style in *Northanger Abbey*. The way Austen praises love before money in

Northanger Abbey and her following novels may be similar to Henry's essay only in style while disagreeing with his argument, but the more satiric eye in her juvenilia allowed for characters that agree with his argument. In *Jack and Alice* (1787-90), the character of Caroline Simpson is described as ambitious stating that "her unbounded ambition was her only fault" (Austen 11). Miss Simpson's ambition "was centered in a titled Husband" (13), whom she found at the end of the story in a duke. Austen writes, "[the Duke] gratified the ambition of Caroline Simpson by raising her to the rank of a Dutchess. Thus was she at length rendered compleatly [sic] happy in the gratification of her favourite passion" (26). Again, there is a pattern to the similarity of the style and subject matter in the Austen siblings' writing from the late 1780s. Henry's satirical look at marriages of interest crosses over into Austen's juvenilia, and the same subject is dealt with again in her novels, though from a different point of view. This is once again an example of how the Austen's writing style was developed hand-in-hand between the siblings.

Henry Austen's article on marriages of interest is made even more interesting when looking at Issue 261 of *The Spectator* (1711). This issue contains an article on Courtship written by Joseph Addison. Addison comments on both sides of the marriage argument, and pushes for an equal balance of love and wealth or consequence. Addison states:

There is Nothing of so great Importance to us, as the good Qualities of one to whom we join our selves for Life; they do not only make our present State agreeable, but often determine our Happiness to all Eternity. Where the Choice is left to Friends, the chief Point under Consideration is an Estate: Where the Parties chuse for themselves, their Thoughts turn most upon the Person. They both have their Reasons. (Addison 261)

Addison focuses on choosing a spouse based on character above all else, but in the end,

states, “A Marriage of Love is pleasant; a Marriage of Interest easie; and a Marriage, where both meet, happy” (262). While Addison stresses that people should find spouses they get along with above all else, he still slips in that the marriage should be agreeable financially. This is perhaps where Henry Austen derives with his satirical piece on marriages of interest. Knowing that he read *The Spectator*, Austen perhaps took Addison’s article and wrote his own humorous and up-front version, skipping over the niceties that Addison suggested and getting to the point that a marriage of interest is what people really want, if they are honest with themselves. In her novels, Austen would seem to agree with Addison that an equality of love and stability should be present in a marriage, but she also pulls from Henry’s side and does not hesitate to point out the ridiculous aspects of focusing sole on money before love, or vice versa. *The Spectator’s* article on courtship is a good example of how what the Austen children read fed into their writing styles in *The Loiterer*, and how their exchange of ideas worked its way into Austen’s novels.

Issues 47 and 48 of *The Loiterer* discuss excesses of sentiment, another theme that Jane Austen discusses in her writings. Thus, these issues become important links in the development of the sibling’s periodical style. The two issues make up a letter from the fictional Aurelius, who uses his story to relate to *The Loiterer* how an excess of sentiment can damage one’s life. Aurelius describes it as “that excess of sentiment and susceptibility, which the works of Rousseau chiefly introduced, which every subsequent Novel has since foster’d, and which the voluptuous manners of the present age but too eagerly embrace” (4). Aurelius mentions sentiment and susceptibility together, which describe Catherine in *Northanger Abbey*. Catherine does not realize how interested Mr.

Thorpe is in her, and is overcome when he excuses her from plans with the Tilneys to take a trip to Clifton with him and his sister and her brother. Upon hearing what Mr. Thorpe had done, Catherine was overwhelmed with worry that Miss Tilney would think that she was rude, and ends up hurrying all the way to the Tilney's house by herself just to apologize (Austen 68-70).

Catherine's susceptibility to her feelings causes her to go to extremes when it comes to her emotions. While it might be thought of as ridiculous to go out of the way as she did to apologize, the Tilneys find it to be endearing. Catherine is also susceptible to the influence of those around her and to what she reads, having lived a relatively sheltered life until her trip to Bath. This tendency for Catherine to allow the fantasy world of the novel to intrude on her real life is what gets her into trouble with Henry, when she assumes his late mother must have been murdered by her General Tilney (Austen 135). Aurelius claims that his good education and companions "banish[ed] abstracted and unsocial thoughts," and made him too busy for "Romances or Novels" (The Loiterer 6). Aurelius states, "I had little time to build castles in the air; I never fancied myself in love, or suspected that I was a Prince in disguise" (6).

While dismissals of fiction were not uncommon, the fact that similar arguments appear in both *The Loiterer* and *Northanger Abbey* shows that the siblings shared and commented on the same literary opinion. This swapping of opinions and ideas could have been where her brothers' work on articles such as these and her "Defense of the Novel" originated. What Austen is defending the novel from in *Northanger Abbey* is similarly stated in *The Loiterer*. In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen writes, "Let us leave it to the Reviewers to abuse such effusions of fancy at their leisure, and over every new novel

to talk in threadbare strains of the trash which the press now groans” (Austen 22).

Austen defends the “effusions of fancy” that Aurelius puts down, and in turn abuses periodicals. Using *The Spectator* as an example, Austen claims that “the substance of its papers so often consisting in the statement of improbable circumstances, unnatural characters, and topics of conversation, which no longer concern any one living; and their language, too, frequently so coarse as to give me no very favourable idea of the age that could endure it” (23). Austen turns the argument back onto the periodicals, accusing them of having the same flaws that they claim novels have. “Improbable circumstances” are likened to Aurelius’ “effusions of fancy” and “unnatural characters” which cause one to believe he is a “Prince in disguise.” Though periodicals tended to engage in real-world issues, volumes like *The Loiterer* used fictional characters – like Aurelius – as a vehicle to convey their message to the public. The arguments here, though opposite, are so alike that it indicates that the Austens developed these opinions and arguments together – writing about their opposing ideas in a very similar style.

Jane, Henry, and James Austen together developed a periodical style that included elements of burlesque and satire that Jane Austen continued to use in *Northanger Abbey*. One could say that the satire and wit found in *Northanger Abbey* – as a result of the mutual development she shared with her brothers – was what prompted her development of her ironic prose narrative. Austen’s writing style may not have contained these characteristics if she had not worked mutually with her siblings, and we may not have enjoyed her superior literary achievements she went on to create. *Northanger Abbey* in fact has a satirical complexity superior to *The Loiterer* in the way that Austen deals with the gothic. While *The Loiterer* satirizes the gothic and treats it as a lower form of

literature, *Northanger Abbey* both satirizes and embraces gothic literary elements within its framework, which will be discussed in more detail below.

CHAPTER V

GOTHIC INFLUENCE IN THE LOITERER AND AUSTEN'S EARLY WORKS

The Loiterer, juvenilia, and *Northanger Abbey* at some point all discuss novels and their subject matter, particularly sentimental and gothic novels. *The Loiterer's* discussions and references to the gothic and popular novel, and Austen's satire of them in her juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey* are the most extensive link between the siblings' work in that it is the most developed of the subjects and styles that they share.

It must be noted that *Northanger Abbey* as a whole satirizes the gothic novel, which her Sophia Sentiment character suggested that the editors of *The Loiterer* include in their publication. Ann Radcliffe's gothic storytelling elements are the basis for her satire, and Austen also uses Radcliffe's popular *The Mysteries of Udolpho* as the book Catherine and Isabella spend time reading together. In *Gothic*, Fred Botting states: "dark subterranean vaults, decaying abbeys, gloomy forests, jagged mountains and wild scenery inhabited by bandits, persecuted heroines, orphans, and malevolent aristocrats...Shocks, supernatural incidents, and superstitious beliefs set out to promote a sense of sublime awe and wonder which entwined with fear and elevated imaginations" (44). In "'To live the

life of hopeless recollection': Mourning and Melancholia in Female Gothic," Angela Wright describes the use of these elements referring to the piece "The Terrorist System of Novel-Writing," (1797) stating, "A concern with fashion, an anxiety about the security of the domestic space, an attempt to regulate the circulation of new literary tropes: what the writer [of "The Terrorist System of Novel-Writing"] marks is an emergent concern with elements of what must surely constitute (in Ellen Moers' tempting phrase) 'the Female Gothic'" (19). Wright focuses on female aspects of the Gothic, or the "Female Gothic" as a "half-acknowledged standard of criticism of the time and a straightforward truth in the matters of authorial attribution" (19). The "Female Gothic" is what Austen and many other women read and enjoyed yet criticized in her novel and with her brothers in *The Loiterer*. Yet Austen also subjects this form to comment.

Johnson, in *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, comments on the truth to the gothic that Austen displays through characters such as General Tilney. Johnson states that, "It has seemed too many readers that Austen's parody in *Northanger Abbey* debunks gothic conventions out of an allegiance to the commonsense world of the ordinary" (34). However, while Austen does this with certain conventions, she comments on how there is truth to Catherine's suspicions as well. General Tilney may not have murdered his wife, but he does throw Catherine out of his home to find her way back to her family by herself because she does not prove to be as good a marriage prospect for his son as he originally believed. Johnson further observes, "*Northanger Abbey* does not refute, but rather clarifies and reclaims, gothic conventions...Austen's parody here, as in the juvenilia, 'makes strange' a fictional style in order better to determine what it really accomplishes, and in the process it does not ridicule gothic

novels nearly as much as their readers” (34). While Austen may parody some aspects of gothic literary conventions, she also celebrates the truths found in it.

What is also interesting about “The Terrorist System of Novel-Writing,” is how it has nearly the same satirical argument as *Northanger Abbey*. The author complains that “a Novelist blushes to bring about a marriage by ordinary means, but conducts the happy pair through long and dangerous galleries, where the light turns blue, the thunder rattles, and the great window at the end presents the hideous visage of a murdered man, uttering piercing groans, and developing shocking mysteries” (Clery 183). The author also adds that novels “ought to be a representation of human life and manners, with a view to...correct its follies,” but that the gothic novel distracts female readers from learning necessary life lessons (184). What the author of “The Terrorist System of Novel-Writing” describes as characteristics of the ideal novel is more along the lines of Austen’s later works with realistic settings and characters that can set examples for readers.

What makes *Northanger Abbey* interesting when considering this piece is that Austen takes a story with a realistic setting and characters and places it in a gothic framework, with a heroine that is representative of what the anonymous author of the article states could go wrong with a young lady that immerses herself too far into these novels. For example, Austen begins the first chapter by announcing that the protagonist, Catherine Morland, is not a heroine by the usual standards. Nothing about her or her family is spectacular. Her father is “not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters” and her mother, “instead of dying in bringing [Catherine] into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on” (Austen 5). Catherine begins her life as a very plain-looking girl, only to later become “almost pretty” (7). She enjoys boy’s games, is noisy,

and doesn't mind being dirty (6).

Catherine is also not “accomplished” as a young lady should be according to the ideals of the eighteenth century. She “could not bear” learning music, her drawing “was not superior” and her proficiency in writing and languages “was not remarkable” (6). Even Austen’s narrator goes so far as to exclaim at this point: “What a strange, unaccountable character!” (6) Catherine does not just merely fall short of meeting the requirements for a heroine, she is quite the opposite, representing more of an anti-heroine. Even her journey to Bath and experiences there fall short of gothic excitement. Mrs. Morland does not give her daughter the expected advice to stay away from violent noblemen, and there is nothing dramatic about her departure (9). Nothing exciting occurs on their journey – “Neither robbers nor tempests befriended them, nor one lucky overturn to introduce them to the hero” (10). Nor does Catherine’s escort, Mrs. Allen, turn out to be one of Gothic literature’s prototypical evil matrons. She does not “reduce poor Catherine to all the desperate wretchedness of which a last volume is capable – whether by her imprudence, vulgarity, or jealousy – whether by intercepting her letters, ruining her character, or turning her out of doors” (10). Finally, even when the reader is introduced to the hero, Henry Tilney, they are disappointed to learn that he is “not quite handsome” (14). With all of these elements going against gothic writing, it exposes how unrealistic those stories can be when compared to more believable characters and settings. When comparing the two texts, we see how Austen uses these elements to illustrate how the gothic does not indeed fit into reality when an overzealous reader tries to make it so, and the consequences that can ensue (though her novel also clarifies the gothic in other ways). *Northanger Abbey* and the character of Catherine could therefore

be an extension of Austen's Sophia Sentiment from *The Loiterer*, fleshing out her ideas for such a character into a novel.

Austen is parodying the gothic in order to establish a more realistic storyline. This is a bit different from what Austen did in the juvenilia. Instead of making everything over-the-top, she puts normal, realistic characters in typical situations, and uses her main character's vivid imagination to lay a gothic framework over the story, which highlights both how improbable that framework can be, while demonstrating how these elements do work in reality. Susan Fraiman, in her Introduction to *Northanger Abbey*, touches on this, stating, "Northanger Abbey finds danger for girls not in spooky ruins but in fashionable resorts, slow-moving carriages, and comfortable, middle-class homes; and it finds the abuse of authority not in exotic, disorderly places but in the very desire to impose order in England following the French Revolution" (ix). Austen was obviously not alone in recognizing the elements of the ridiculous in gothic writing, evident by her satire of the Female Gothic in *The Loiterer*, and also by various stories and similar elements in her juvenilia. *Northanger Abbey* is her culminating piece of satire and its style is a bridge that ties her back to her early influences and work, beginning with the work she began with her brothers. This, along with Austen's smaller jabs at the gothic in her juvenilia and her more sophisticated turn with the gothic in *Northanger Abbey* is the largest example of how the Austen children's adolescent writing style developed together and the resulting style and work that became the end result.

CHAPTER VI
THE CRITICS' REACTION TO NORTHANGER ABBEY

The Austen critics of the 1950s and 1960s tended to include *Northanger Abbey*, and sometimes the juvenilia, in the “canon” of Austen’s major works. Some of them would either separate Austen’s six novels into two groups, separating the first three and the last three as distinct in their development and style. Others would group *Northanger Abbey* with Austen’s juvenilia, designating it as an early work or novel, and not ascribing it as much significance as her later novels, most likely because of the differences in style and its posthumous publication date. Most critics have ignored the mutual development and influence between Austen and her siblings and their work on *The Loiterer* until recently. According to Sabor, it wasn't until the end of the 1980s that “Austen's early writings were seen as a fruitful field of enquiry” (lvi). While earlier critics seemed to focus more on Austen’s development when it comes to her later work, but less on her influences and early development, later critics investigated her influences a bit further. Overall there seems to be a blind eye turned toward her brothers and *The Loiterer*, despite repeated reaffirmation of the close-knit nature of her family and their love for literature.

Therefore, when critics began to observe Austen from a more historical point of view, they still ignore this influence on her early work, and her early influences were focused on as little as they were decades ago. As a result, Austen's juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey* were still considered immature works, and *Northanger Abbey* was still effectively left out of Austen's "canon." Considering the tendencies of scholars in the past, it seems that they could not agree as to how to categorize *Northanger Abbey* in comparison to Austen's later novels because of its differences and distinct style. However, this does not necessarily mean that what they have to say does not illustrate how she and her brothers influenced each other and developed their writing skills together. Observing the way that the following critics have categorized *Northanger Abbey* is necessary in order to demonstrate that it is an important stepping stone in Austen's development from the family's periodical style to the more ironical tones of her later works, and also in illustrating how the Austen siblings influenced each other and worked together.

In *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (1952), for example, Marvin Mudrick points out the importance of *Northanger Abbey* to Austen's development, but separated her works into two sets. He groups the juvenilia, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Sense and Sensibility* together, "as a progression of her use of irony" (36), and grouped the final four novels as her more mature works. While his separation makes sense, Mudrick overlooks the role of *The Loiterer* and Austen's brothers aiding in the development of her style and voice, particularly in her early works. The style of *Northanger Abbey* is more like a periodical in some ways, which makes it similar to her juvenilia, yet its ironical and more novelistic elements place it stylistically somewhere in between those works.

Published little more than a decade after Mudrick's work, Henrietta Harmsel's

Jane Austen: A Study in Fictional Conventions (1964) grouped Austen's novels in a similar fashion. She claims the earlier novels were different because they used literary conventions popular in fiction of the late eighteenth century. Citing the poor quality of most of the mass-produced, contemporary popular fiction, Harmsel states this was what led to Austen's burlesque in her early work, which led her style to develop into her trademark irony. Also like Mudrick, Harmsel does not mention Austen's brothers or *The Loiterer*.

In 1971, Alistair Duckworth published *The Improvement of the Estate*, which seemed to be at a transitional point for Austen criticism. Like his predecessors, Duckworth notes the importance of *Northanger Abbey* and includes it as canon, but in a different sense. He says that *Northanger Abbey* is different from Austen's later novels in "tone and texture," but not in "social and moral assumptions" (ix). But his main argument focuses on the later novels, ultimately somewhat excluding *Northanger Abbey* and Austen's development. Although Duckworth does not go into detail, he does note *Northanger Abbey*'s difference in style from the later novels; however, with his argument's focus on Austen's later works, exactly how *Northanger Abbey* came to be so different remains untouched, with no mention of *The Loiterer*. Although *Northanger Abbey* is considered a step in Austen's development, Austen's influences or early development did not seem to play a large part in Duckworth's criticism.

In 1979's *Jane Austen and the French Revolution*, Warren Roberts separates *Northanger Abbey* from Austen's later novels. He does this because he argues that the French Revolution had an impact on Austen's later novels that it did not on *Northanger Abbey*. He states that war is more of a theme in her later novels, while *Northanger Abbey*

and the juvenilia largely ignore the subject. In his discussion of influences, Roberts does discuss *The Loiterer* as an influence on Austen's writing. However, he does not discuss this in detail, mainly because Austen's early works do not fit into his argument, in that *Northanger Abbey* and the juvenilia do not contain the same themes of "community" and "social continuity" that appear in her later works (44). According to Roberts, these themes appear as a result of the influence of the French Revolution, and are "not yet developed" in Austen's earlier works. Despite Roberts mentioning the significance of *The Loiterer* to Austen's writing, he does not go into the extent of its effect nor does he mention the mutual influence the siblings had on one another nor the possibility of their collaboration. He does not realize that *The Loiterer* was a result of the Austen's joint development, which resulted in the stylistic differences found in *Northanger Abbey*.

While Mudrick, Harmsel, Duckworth and Roberts are missing an important point when they do not discuss the writing relationship between Austen and her siblings, or how *The Loiterer* was a group effort between them that drove her style to develop in the way that it did, the fact that they grouped Austen's novels in such a manner adds to the argument that the Austen siblings did indeed influence each other and develop their writing hand-in-hand. All the critics discuss similarities between Austen's juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey*, and how they exemplified the time in which they were written. *The Loiterer* is certainly a product of its time, and its similarity to Austen's juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey* is obvious. By separating these works from those that followed, the critics are acknowledging that they were not only different, but also influenced by forces apart from those that influenced the later novels.

Later critics like Claudia Johnson, Susan Gilbert and Sandra Gubar have treated

Austen's influences in a similar way. They have acknowledged the differences of her juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey's* narratives more than earlier critics, yet they do not realize that the theories they pose add to the argument that Austen's brothers played a vital role in her development. Johnson, in *Women, Politics and the Novel*, discusses how the themes that Austen debates in her work must have a pre-revolutionary (French) context, and how her gender plays a role in her opinions. She also goes into how the juvenilia was a "workshop," for Austen, or a group of exercises that she performed before writing her more serious novels (29). Since Austen's juvenilia and *The Loiterer* were written around the same time, one could see this group of works as exercises for Jane, Henry, and James Austen that they worked on together to develop their writing styles. Johnson also mentions that in her parody of the gothic, Austen does not refute gothic conventions, just its readers. The same could be said about the Sophia Sentiment piece in *The Loiterer*, that it targeted the naïve young reader of the gothic or sentimental novel, rather than the novels themselves. In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar also strengthen this argument by discussing the often overlooked subversive strain in Austen's juvenilia and its parodic strategy (112). *The Loiterer* also contains the same parodic strategy, subversive strain, and political subtext as Austen's early works (112).

In *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s*, another of Johnson's works, she discusses how Austen's narratives are "ideologically encoded" with themes contemporary to the time they were written (19). Using her argument, one can see that the narratives of *The Loiterer* and *Northanger Abbey* are encoded with the same ideas and ideology so prevalent in late eighteenth-century sentimental fiction. Not only do they illustrate the ideology of this time, but they are so similarly encoded with the

same themes and ideas - as illustrated in the paragraphs above – that one can conclude they are the products of the same group of minds influencing one another.

Johnson also adds that Austen’s work is encoded with a more “masculine” sentimentality, which also adds credibility to the argument that she was influenced by her brothers (98). Austen’s sentimentality was both political and domestic – according to Johnson – which resulted in an “unstable femininity” in Austen’s works as a result (116). The beginnings of this can be seen in *The Loiterer*. Naturally considered a “masculine” publication, the Sophia Sentiment piece adds an unexpected domestic and feminine quality, which was likely added by Austen herself. The siblings’ collaborative efforts illustrated in the parallel drawn by the “masculine instability” caused by Sophia Sentiment and Austen’s “feminine instability” in her writing through her unabashed criticism of sentimentality and the gothic.

Austen’s interlocking development with her brothers' obliges us to observe her style as more of a group effort with her family. Austen was not the lone writer amongst her relatives; she continued with her writing allowing it to mature into the ironic style that she is known for, while her brothers simply chose not to continue their writing after *The Loiterer*.

Also, identifying the influence of the periodical on the Austens’ writing further enriches our understanding of Jane Austen’s background as a novelist. Acknowledging that she was not only influenced by the gothic and other popular novels, allows us to see *Northanger Abbey* and her juvenilia in a new light. In the past, critics have acknowledged the existence of *The Loiterer* and Austen’s possible influence or involvement with its production and vice versa, but they have not looked more closely to

clearly discern the impact it had on her writing. Nor have they acknowledged the likelihood that the Austens worked together, sharing their ideas and developing their style. As a result, it becomes obvious that *Northanger Abbey* was not simply an early, less mature work lacking in revision. It becomes more of a complex, legitimate novel in its own right.

Many critics tended to separate Austen's novels into two groups – the first three being less developed, and the last three as more mature, developed and leaning toward Romantic works. Taking into consideration the interlocking development with her brothers, and the very heavy influence of the periodical and the burlesque on *Northanger Abbey*, it should be seen as an important step the development of her prose narrative. It is not completely different from her later novels, but different enough to stand with the juvenilia as a precursor for later developments and as more of a testament to the adolescent writing of the Austen family.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Austen siblings' mutual influence, collaboration, and hand-in-hand development led to a distinct periodical style found in Austen's juvenilia and *Northanger Abbey*. Taking the siblings' mutual development into consideration forces us to reassess previous opinions about *Northanger Abbey* and its place in the Austen canon. Previous critics have deemed it a minor or underdeveloped work because of the stylistic differences from her later novels. However, this lessens the importance of the role that *Northanger Abbey* played in leading up to the development of Austen's trademark irony. From the playful banter of the Sophia Sentiment piece, to the shared themes, burlesque and satire found in both *The Loiterer* and the juvenilia, it becomes apparent from where Austen derived her style, satire, and subject influences. The similar styles that *The Loiterer*, the juvenilia, and *Northanger Abbey* share as a result of the Austens' hand-in-hand development allows us to view *Northanger Abbey* in a new light. Its distinct style that resulted from their interlocking development sets it apart, not as a lesser novel, but as a stepping stone that helped to lead her into developing her trademark irony and satire

that she is most well-known for in her later literary achievements.

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