

The Annotated
**NORTHANGER
ABBEY**

JANE AUSTEN



ANNOTATED AND EDITED BY DAVID M. SHAPARD

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DAVID M. SHAPARD



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“Tales of Wonder!”: a contemporary satire on horror novel reading.

[From *Works of James Gillray* (London, 1849), Figure 514]

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Annotations to the Front Cover

1. The house in this painting, called Oriel Lodge, was built in the early nineteenth century in Gothic Revival style, as indicated by, among other things, the pointed arches and heavy stone walls that were features of medieval Gothic buildings. Gothic Revival style began in the late eighteenth century and became increasingly popular; it reflected the same fascination with the Middle Ages that spurred the tremendous popularity of Gothic horror novels, which were usually set in actual medieval buildings. Catherine, the heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, is a devoted reader of these novels, and her naïve belief that the horrors they depict are a normal part of life lead her into a series of embarrassing delusions when she visits Northanger Abbey.
2. Villas such as Oriel Lodge were usually built in or near towns and, while elegant and highly adorned, were not as large as grand country houses such as Northanger Abbey (in this case, the picture shows most of the house's front). Catherine's friend Isabella at one point fantasizes about living in a villa near Richmond, a highly affluent suburb of London. Oriel Lodge is in Cheltenham, a popular spa town of the time; much of the novel is set in the even more popular spa town of Bath. Cheltenham also happens to be in Gloucestershire, the same county in which the fictional Northanger Abbey lies.
3. The turrets and castellated roof seen on this house were basic elements of medieval castles, created for practical purposes of defense, though here, as in other Gothic Revival buildings, they are purely decorative. They are also prominent features of an imitation medieval structure of the eighteenth century, Blaise Castle, that figures in an important episode in the novel. The prospect of visiting Blaise Castle, which Catherine is told is a genuine medieval edifice, tempts her into committing a serious breach of etiquette.
4. The windows of the house are heavily latticed. This was standard in medieval buildings, since the poor quality of glass at that time precluded larger panes, and Gothic Revival structures often imitate this feature. When she arrives at Northanger Abbey, Catherine is disappointed to discover that its windows, while still Gothic in their external outline, have been modernized, and thus that "every pane was so large, so clear."

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They are added here by the editor to assist the reader.)

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