

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL
INSTITUTO DE LETRAS

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MISS CATHERINE MORLAND MEETS THE WORLD: *NORTHANGER*
ABBEY AND THE QUEST FOR FEMALE DEVELOPMENT

Porto Alegre

2017

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Trabalho de conclusão de curso de graduação
apresentado ao Instituto de Letras da Universidade
Federal do Rio Grande do Sul como requisito para
a obtenção do título de Bacharel em Letras.

Orientadora: Profa. Dra. Sandra Sirangelo Maggio

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Isabel had seen the World. She had passed 2 years on one of the first Boarding-schools in London; had spent a fortnight in Bath & had supped one night in Southampton.”

“Alas! (exclaimed I) how am I to avoid those evils I shall never be exposed to?”

Jane Austen, **Love and Friendship**

RESUMO

O primeiro dos romances completos de Austen, *A Abadia de Northanger* lembra a Juvenília da autora, em razão de seu tom mais leve e cômico e de seus personagens estereotipados e mais superficiais. Sua narrativa, que tende a parodiar e seguir os romances góticos populares da época, pode ser lida como a jornada de uma personagem, visto que segue Catherine Morland em um caminho de autodescoberta e conhecimento do mundo e das pessoas ao seu redor. Porém, como uma personagem feminina habitando a Inglaterra ficcional do século 19, a autonomia de Catherine é restringida e sua jornada exterior e interior é moldada por sua situação social e histórica. Este trabalho visa analisar o desenvolvimento de Catherine como uma jovem mulher descobrindo o mundo, considerando a discussão de Annis Pratt (1982) sobre a impossibilidade do desenvolvimento feminino em romances desta época, além do debate feminista a respeito do *Bildungsroman* feminino e sua suposta irrealização devido ao sufocamento do desenvolvimento feminino histórica e literariamente. Deste modo, será observado que, ainda que não seja permitido a Catherine atingir a maioria de modo satisfatório para os padrões modernos, o romance retrata uma jovem mulher buscando crescimento pessoal e social de uma forma ao mesmo tempo conformista e rebelde em relação aos valores sociais da época.

Palavras-chave: *A Abadia de Northanger*; Jane Austen; *Bildungsroman* Feminino; Desenvolvimento Feminino; Literatura Gótica.

ABSTRACT

The first of Austen's main finished novels, *Northanger Abbey* resembles Austen's Juvenilia in some ways, from its lighter and more comical tone to its stereotypical, more one-dimensional characters. The story, that tends to parody and borrow from the popular Gothic novels of its time, can be read as a character-driven journey, as it follows Catherine Morland in her road of self-discovery and understanding of the world and the people around her. Yet, as a female character inhabiting fictionalized nineteenth-century England, Catherine's social and historical situation restricts her autonomy and shapes her exterior and interior journey. This work aims to analyze Catherine's development as a young woman discovering the world, considering Annis Pratt's (1982) discussion on the impossibility of female development in novels of this time, as well as the feminist discussion surrounding the Female *Bildungsroman* and its apparent unattainability due to stifled female development historically and literarily. This way, it will be observed that, although Catherine is not allowed to reach adulthood in a satisfactory way to modern standards, Austen's novel depicts a young woman striving towards personal and social growth in a way that is both conformist and rebellious in regard to social values of the time.

Keywords: *Northanger Abbey*; Jane Austen; Female *Bildungsroman*; Female Development; Gothic Literature.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen's novels were the first classical literature books I ever read, introducing me to a world of reading possibilities I did not yet know existed, and I have been fascinated with her witty voice and writing style ever since. Yet, it was only in university, when I went back to her novels, that I found myself intrigued and wishing to dig deeper into her world and work. Playing with themes of marriage and love in a socially-conscious and extremely humorous way, while harshly criticizing the society of which she was a part, Jane Austen seems to me (and to many others) like a woman far ahead of her time.

Austen is a well-known and thoroughly researched writer, who enjoys incredible popularity with readers of all ages 200 years after her works were first published. With her already great status in mind, I chose to study this author in an attempt to add to and possibly enrich the research already done on her. Ana Iris Marques Ramgrab points out the difficulties, and the possibilities, of such an undertaking by commenting that:

There comes a time when one realizes that talking about Jane Austen is like threading in over-charted territory – being well aware of the paths that have been taken before, and unsure if there still is any land to be discovered and conquered. In any such adventures, the search is part of the fun; and by paying attention to the maps of Austenland, we may discover that its borders are ever expanding – *that* is the direction one should go. (2013, p. 10)

With a difficult, but in no way impossible task before me, my focus is the complex issue of female development within one of Jane Austen's earlier novels. Considering that all of Jane Austen's protagonists are women and that they are the center of all of her stories, this theme might bring to attention issues in her work that point out her complex and socially-critical depiction of women in the nineteenth-century world she (and her characters) inhabited.

My decision was to study *Northanger Abbey* (1817), the first novel by Austen to be completed for publication. Along with *Persuasion*, *Northanger Abbey* was published posthumously. As a consequence, these two novels (which were published in December 1817, and are therefore celebrating their 200th anniversary right now) did not receive as much reworking and proofreading that the other four canon novels (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Mansfield Park*) did. Additionally, *Northanger Abbey* was written by a very young Austen, and still holds the marks and the freshness of her Juvenilia.

My goal is to analyze *Northanger Abbey* and its protagonist, Catherine Morland, presenting my reading of the novel as a depiction of female development in Jane Austen's

English universe. My focus, therefore, will be Catherine's development as a young woman in late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century England. I will discuss how Catherine develops both individually and socially by doing a close reading of her journey throughout *Northanger Abbey*, focusing on all the instances where she progresses, regresses, or shows an inclination for either. The fact that Catherine lives in a heavily restricting environment for female growth will be repeatedly brought up and supported with the use of feminist theorists such as Annis Pratt (1982), as this is an important point in discussing the limitations of her character's development and of women's development in general at the time. Ultimately, however, I intend to show that, even if Catherine's journey is one of constant restriction and her ending is a conservative, socially-accommodated one, as a character Catherine represents a meaningful portrayal of female development that possesses moments of hushed but singular subversiveness.

Northanger Abbey was chosen for this discussion of female development in Jane Austen's novels because of its incredibly ambiguous portrayal of the young protagonist's journey towards a form of maturity. There are dissenting views on this novel of Austen's, especially in regard to the way it portrays Catherine's growth, and to gain a better understanding of how this comes to be one must give up the dichotomy of 'positive' or 'negative' development and look closely at Catherine herself, so as to observe her nuanced and non-linear progression from the family home to the marital home, in a way that points that her development into wifehood is not as crystal clear as it might appear to be at first sight. Catherine's character is quite intriguing because she is, ultimately, an ordinary young woman going through the ordinary ordeals of any girl at her age and her social standing, who has only the novels she is constantly reading to rely upon when decoding the world around her. Catherine's portrayal is, in a way, a very telling depiction of young women's development, both in Jane Austen's time and in the literature of that time.

To perform this analysis of Catherine, I will firstly bring forth a discussion on female development and its problematic ramifications in eighteenth and nineteenth-century women-written novels, as critics have difficulty determining among themselves what constitutes valid female development. As 'female development' is a generic and far-reaching term, I will use the academic discussions of the *Bildungsroman* genre when applied to female characters to exemplify and clarify what critics (especially in feminist circles) have to say on female development in eighteenth and nineteenth-century novels of female protagonism. The genre of the Female *Bildungsroman* and the theoretical discussions arising from it will, thus, be applied to discuss female development.

Regarding this theoretical discussion on female development and Female *Bildungsroman*, I will focus on two particular writers: Annis Pratt and Lorna Ellis. In her book on literary criticism, Pratt, alongside Barbara White, (1982) argues that the Female *Bildungsroman* (and, consequently, positive female development) is an impossibility in itself due to socio-cultural limitations to women's psychological and emotional development. This is because, according to the Pratt and White, society does not allow women to reach adulthood (which is, in their view, the ultimate objective, or final phase, of the *Bildungsroman*). Thus, Catherine's journey, according to Pratt, is ultimately a frustrated journey of self-knowledge. Lorna Ellis (1999), on the other hand, is an important theoretical counter-point to Pratt's views on this type of female narrative, allowing for a broader and more effective consideration of Catherine's journey and its significance within the social context of *Northanger Abbey's* universe. To Lorna Ellis, the Female *Bildungsroman* of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century depicts the concessions women must make in order to find a place for themselves in society. From Ellis' perspective, Catherine's journey can be viewed from an ambiguously positive angle that stresses the delicate, restricted social and cultural position women were in during those times and the methods they found to best navigate the patriarchal world. Only a meticulous analysis of Catherine's story, however, can point out how to best define her development.

The present study, therefore, aims to analyze the trajectory of Catherine Morland, the protagonist in Jane Austen's novel *Northanger Abbey*, as a depiction of female development at the turn of the eighteenth-century in England. This will be done in order to discuss the facets of female development in a novel such as this, so as to determine if, as Pratt claims, society's rejection of female maturity leads to the impossibility of positive female growth, or if, as Ellis puts it, female development in such works is conservative and based on concessions, but nevertheless a positive portrayal of female struggles and how they were best overcome. In order to effectively discuss *Northanger Abbey* and its protagonist, I will also bring forth other critics throughout this work, and their views on the novel and on Catherine. All this will be done by analyzing the novel's narrative, as well as its protagonist, in relation to her environment and to the other characters.

This monograph is structured in five chapters. The first brings forth some facts about Jane Austen's life that I consider relevant to contextualize the age and environment in which she wrote, and to describe in general terms the themes and narratives presented in her writing. Moving on to *Northanger Abbey*, I will refer to the main characteristics of the novel and to some elements in the plot. Then, I will discuss the *Bildungsroman*, particularly the Female

Bildungsroman, as a way in which critics discuss female development, especially in eighteenth and nineteenth-century women-written novels. I will bring up and discuss Annis Pratt's views of the Female *Bildungsroman* and its socio-cultural problems, as well as Lorna Ellis', as a counterpoint to Pratt. From there, I will begin my analysis of Catherine Morland as a young woman on a journey into adulthood, while also pointing out the context of the story and Catherine's limitations as a woman in nineteenth-century England and as a female character in Jane Austen's fictionalized English setting. This analysis is spread in two chapters, according to the division of the novel itself in two volumes, with slight alterations: in chapter 3 I will discuss the narrative of Catherine's stay in Bath, while in chapter 4 I will analyze her time in Northanger Abbey. Finally, I will reach some conclusions based on my findings. From this, I hope to observe that *Northanger Abbey* depicts a subtly affirming portrayal of female development in a society that is both resentful and resistant of female growth, in a way that follows Lorna Ellis' reading of female development as nuanced and paradoxal.

2 OF NOVELS AND GENRES

This chapter has been divided into two sections. The first contextualizes the author and the novel discussed in this monograph, Austen and *Northanger Abbey*. The second section provides some information on the genre of the *Bildungsroman* and its ‘subcategory’, the Female *Bildungsroman*, describing the difficult and diverse approaches to defining female development that can be observed in this literary genre. This chapter ultimately serves to contextualize the novel and the literary discussions on eighteenth and nineteenth-century female development, as those two topics will be associated in the third chapter during the analysis of *Northanger Abbey* and its protagonist.

2.1 AUSTEN AND HER ABBEY

Jane Austen, like her protagonist Catherine Morland, belonged in a large family, by English standards. She was born in 1775, the seventh child of the Rev. George Austen. The Austens belonged into the Rural Gentry, a British class of land-owning families who lived off of rented properties. Jane Austen grew up in a small place called Steventon, where everyone was acquainted with everyone else, in a family that appreciated and encouraged her literary skills. John Sutherland observes that “Jane Austen, like the Brontës (...), cooked her fiction in the home, so to speak, domestically (...) She composed her fiction and read aloud early drafts and trial-runs of her narratives to her family” (2008). Jane Austen’s collection of notebooks, filled with short stories and parodical narratives, including “Love and Friendship” and “The History of England” (referred to, nowadays, as her “Juvenilia”), written respectively in 1790 and 1791, helps us observe that she began writing stories and creating characters from a very young age, usually to entertain her family.

Austen began working on her first full-length novel in 1795 (at the time titled *Elinor and Marianne*), a year after writing the epistolary work *Lady Susan*. In 1796, she started a draft of *First Impressions*, which would go on to become her most famous work, *Pride and Prejudice*. After the unexpected death of her father in 1805, however, Austen’s family’s situation became financially desperate, and it was only in 1809 that they would find a stable living condition. Therefore, it was only from 1811 to 1815 that Austen would finally publish some of her works, either anonymously or pseudonymously. Regarding her publications, Sutherland notes that, although Austen mostly chose to publish her novels with the authorial

signature of “By a lady”, “it was her brother who negotiated the ‘lady’s terms with the publishers. Women, we have to point out, could not sign contracts at this period. They were very much the inferior sex in everything, in authorship as much as in anything else” (2008). The fact that Austen lived in a patriarchal and limiting society for women, and chose to emulate that universe in her stories, is an important fact that will be continually stressed in the analysis of Catherine in *Northanger Abbey* further on.

The novels Austen published during her lifetime, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815), were all set in the England of her time, with the stories usually taking place in the countryside and involving the rural gentry. Her works dealt with her English society, especially women’s position as socially and economically dependent on their families and husbands, a subject she portrayed critically through the use of humor and irony. Thus, while on the surface Austen might have seemed to portray conservative and socially-acceptable values, there is a second layer to her writing that brings to light the limitations imposed by hypocritical moral codes and gender dynamics. While these novels are all thematically and structurally similar, it is possible to observe Austen’s growth as a writer in the way that her protagonists become more and more subtly and psychologically complex in their formulation. This becomes clear when one places Catherine Morland (*Northanger Abbey*) and Anne Elliot (*Persuasion*) side by side – even in terms of age, Anne constitutes the oldest and wisest Austen protagonist, while Catherine, who is ten years younger, is the youngest and most naïve.

Austen died in 1817, at the age of 41, leaving an unfinished novel behind. Her family, more particularly her brother, Henry Austen, went on to release two of her finished but unpublished novels as a set, at the end of that year. Along with this posthumous edition, Henry added a *Biographical Note* which finally shed light on the identity of the author of those works. The novels released were *Persuasion*, the last finished novel by Austen, and *Northanger Abbey*, which was in fact the first of her novels to be completed and sent for publication.

Jane Austen actually began writing *Northanger Abbey* at the end of the eighteenth-century, at a time when the Gothic novels the romance seems to parody were very popular. Yet the novel’s writing process is not very straightforward, for, as Claire Crogan observes, “*Northanger Abbey* was written and rewritten by Jane Austen for at least a period of twenty years” (2002, p. 7). In 1803, Austen sold the completed novel, then titled *Susan*, to a publisher named Crosby & Co., which failed to publish the book. According to Crogan, the rights to the novel were finally repurchased in 1816, and Austen renamed the book *Catherine*, possibly due

to the publication of a novel in 1809 also titled *Susan*. It is important to note that “this time, however, Austen herself delayed publication” (CROGAN, 2002, p. 9) and, in a letter to her niece, she made it clear that this was to be the definite fate of the novel. David Blair explains that Austen’s possible hesitancy in publishing it after recovering it from Crosby & Co. might have been because:

Of all her novels it is the one which is most closely and busily engaged with the language, styles and reading habits of the moment at which it is set and yet at the time of its appearance the world was preoccupied with different fashions and different books. (...) The scene of young women in the fashions of a previous generation (the novel is also very engaged with the details of female dress) discussing the ‘horrid novels’ of the 1790s as the latest thing must have seemed slightly passé towards the end of the second decade of the new century. (2007, p. v-vi)

The then-titled *Catherine* novel might perhaps not have seen publication until many years later if it had not been for Austen’s siblings, Cassandra and Henry, due to the author’s feelings that her novel was obsolete. However, even though its comments on fashion and women’s reading preferences were already somewhat “passé”, the novel’s discussion of a wide range of social issues was still relevant, and Catherine’s journey as a young woman into the world of Bath and Northanger Abbey was anything but outdated.

Regarding the actual heroine of *Northanger Abbey* and the external and internal journey she goes through, it is important to observe that Catherine Morland, the novel’s protagonist, is an interesting instance of a heroine who is also an avid reader and possesses great knowledge of the Gothic genre, to the point that she sometimes confuses its fantastical elements and situations with reality. Catherine’s journey can be read as a journey of growing up, of expanding her knowledge of the world and of the people around her, and of learning to carve a place for herself in it despite any disenchantment. The daughter of a clergyman, as a child Catherine used to be a tomboy, but at seventeen she is, according to the narrator, ready to be a heroine. She goes on a trip to Bath with friends of the family, where she makes new acquaintances, goes on balls and meets the oddly charming Henry Tilney, whose family (consisting of a sister, a brother and a widowed father, General Tilney) invite her to join them in their home, Northanger Abbey. A fan of the Gothic literary world, Catherine begins to dread and excitedly await the mysteries the Gothic house may reveal, going so far as to create theories about it. One of them concerns the death of Henry’s mother, who she believes could still be alive and kept in chains under the house by General Tilney, a story she creates to make sense of his cold and distant behavior. Henry soon reprimands her and corrects her thoughts when he hears of the tale, pointing out how these types of things do not happen in the real world. When the General finds out she is

not a rich woman, as he erroneously supposed her to be when he invited her into his house, he unceremoniously sends her away, and she returns home with her dignity shattered. Yet, a couple of days later, she meets Henry, who, after hearing what had happened, decided to reveal his feelings for her and asks for her hand in marriage.

Thus, in a way, the novel presents a typical journey for a young woman to make, as Blair observes:

The core of the novel (...) is the story of ‘a young woman’s entrance into the world’, to borrow the subtitle of another of Burney’s novels, *Evelina* (1778) (...) This was the essential subject of almost all the women’s novels of the period, even in their way the Gothic ones, although novelists might differ on how they defined ‘the world’ – and, for that matter, on their models of young womanhood. Austen’s model is endowed with fewer accomplishments and fewer pretensions than most, as she makes clear from the first sentence. The novelist’s interest in her, however, ends where the career of a heroine characteristically ends, in marriage, and with it her placement at a new point of status in the world. Catherine’s entrée takes her from parental home to marital home, from daughter to wife: the rest is silence. (2007, p. vii)

It’s possible to see, then, that Catherine’s path is one already trodden by a myriad of other heroines, if not quite like her, then similar enough not to warrant further discussion. However, in focusing on both these similarities and differences, peeling back the layers of *Northanger Abbey*, one can reveal increasingly more intriguing elements regarding the story and its youthful female protagonist, which are narrated and described by a voice that does not waste an opportunity to make fun of the habits and positions of the society of that time. Catherine’s journey is intriguing precisely because it is such a well-trodden one to the point of being dismissed. Clumped together with other fictional female journeys, the intriguing and dissenting aspects present in *Northanger Abbey* and its heroine’s characterization tend to get lost, and the objective of this work is to bring them to the surface as the focus of discussion.

As already established, *Northanger Abbey*’s main characteristics are also typical traits of others of Jane Austen’s novels, such as its social commentary and its use of humor (though it is much more accentuated in this first work). However, despite its sophisticated satirical portrayal of Austen’s society, *Northanger Abbey* is not as prominently discussed as her other five main novels. As David Blair points out, “*Northanger Abbey* is in some respects the Cinderella among Jane Austen’s novels. The first of her mature works to be completed, it often has had to share chapter-space with her Juvenilia in book-length studies of Austen” (2007, p. vii). For instance, in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s book *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979), there is a chapter

titled “Shut Up in Prose: Gender and Genre in Austen’s Juvenilia”, in which the authors discuss some of Jane Austen’s Juvenilia as well as *Northanger Abbey*. Marvin Mudrick, differs a little from Gilbert and Gubar in his article “Irony versus Gothicism”, as, rather than implicitly consider the novel as part of Austen’s Juvenilia, views it as a work of transition between “Jane Austen’s youthful parody and her first domestic novels, P&P and S&S – though these were in first draft earlier” (1968, p. 39). He argues that this can be observed both by external evidence, pointing out the dates of the last proved revisions made by Austen on this novel, as well as by internal evidence, where he observes the limitations of the narrative and the still maturing style of Austen. Whether or not this novel is indeed the first instance of Austen’s transition from her Juvenilia to a more mature writing, or truly her first mature novel, is a discussion that cannot be developed here, though it is an important topic to mention when characterizing the romance.

Yet it is indeed true that *Northanger Abbey* can be directly linked to Austen’s earlier works by its many instances of parody. Although it has most often been read as a parody of the Gothic romances of its time, especially those in line with Ann Radcliffe’s work, critics have also noted that it contains passages parodying narratives that taught women how to properly behave as daughters and wives. However, to interpret Austen’s first novel as a parody *only*, which is what Mudrick does, is to severely limit or simply deny its abundance of reading possibilities. After all, as Claire Crogan observes,

that *Northanger Abbey* has prompted a wide range of sophisticated and intriguing readings is evidenced by the extensive bibliography in Graham Handley’s *Jane Austen* (1992) which details reading of it as a gothic burlesque, as a sentimental parody, as a bildungsroman, as an anti-jacobin text, as notable for its feminist sympathies, for its overriding economic preoccupation, and for its socio-historical commentary. (2002, p. 22)

Considering, therefore, all the interpretative options from which to observe *Northanger Abbey*, a novel that is far more than just a well-structured parody of other genres, the objective of this monograph is not to analyze it from the perspective of a single literary genre, such as the Female *Bildungsroman*, but to use the concepts of female development present in said genre to discuss Catherine’s journey and the development undergone by her as a young woman in late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century English society.

However, before observing that, it is important to at least discuss one of the novel’s key characteristics, which is the use of the Gothic genre both in a parodical way, as well as a setting and a significant topic of conversation, and even of characterization, within the novel. As already observed, Catherine is an avid reader of the Gothic, and this literary genre helps

shape her character in ways which will be analyzed further on. Yet, for now, the Gothic, as an eighteenth-century literary fad, must be contextualized.

Ellen Moers, in her iconic 1976 essay “The Female Gothic”, presents an attempted definition of the genre with the following words:

what I mean—or anyone else means--by "the Gothic" is not so easily stated except that it has to do with fear. In Gothic writings fantasy predominates over reality, the strange over the commonplace, and the supernatural over the natural, with one definite auctorial intent: to scare. (1976, p. 90)

While that was the genre's, in its original and most basic form, intent, Moers goes on to deepen this discussion. She coins the term “Female Gothic” to classify many works written by women from the last decade of the eighteenth-century up to the nineteenth-century that held similarities among themselves and differed from the original Gothic: “As early as the 1790s, Ann Radcliffe firmly set the Gothic in one of the ways it would go ever after: a novel in which the central figure is a young woman who is simultaneously persecuted victim and courageous heroine” (MOERS, 1976, p. 91) Although Moers’ term is used to analyze famous female-written literary pieces such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), this monograph will focus on the novels of the end of the eighteenth-century which reconfigured the Gothic genre by focusing on female protagonists and essentially female struggles and apprehensions, such as Ann Radcliffe’s *oeuvre* (which is constantly mentioned and parodied throughout Austen’s book).

These novels were significant not only because they added a prominent feminine element to the Gothic genre, but because, as Annis Pratt and Barbara White point out, “Gothic fiction, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, demonstrated an ambivalence towards women’s roles in its presentation of heroes who in every other way embodied gender norms but who became involved in very “unladylike” adventures.” (1982, p. 26) This new arrangement of the Gothic meant that female heroes were allowed to maintain their femininity while at the same time going through decidedly masculine adventures involving most often than not kidnappings, ruined castles to explore and hidden dungeons to examine. They were given a physical and geographical freedom not permitted to real women, but they still worked within the social framework of gender norms; therefore, their so-called virtue was never truly threatened.

This apparent freedom of Gothic literature’s heroines might help to explain the popularity of the genre among women. Yet, that is not the only significant subversive aspect of these works, for, as Pratt and White also observe,

The woman hero's long road of trials in such exhaustive works as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788), and Fanny Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814), forces her to encounter sexism in a wide variety of forms. She may marry the one she loves in the end (an act itself rebellious in the prudent world of marriage for money), but during the course of the narrative she satirizes gender norms. (1982, p. 26)

They go on to say that "The horrific element of Gothic fiction conveys in the woman's novel the idea of women as unjustly treated by society and pictures men as agents to be feared and 'the chase' as a hardship to be endured" (p. 28). Therefore, it becomes clear that the fears which move the heroines of the Gothic novels and which they encounter in their adventures are also the fears of real women – to suffer under the hand of those with power over you, to lose your virtue and be rejected from the social circle, to be deprived of your freedom. In a caricatural way, the Female Gothic, as Moers calls it, depicts the trials and tribulations that were a common reality to women in the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries. This is helpful to explain not only the fears and feelings of the women who read these novels in those times, but also Catherine's feelings about the Gothic, and the way she will later relate it to her own experiences.

2.1 FEMALE DEVELOPMENT AND THE *BILDUNGSROMAN*

In this section, the genre of the *Bildungsroman* is briefly discussed in order to allow for a more in-depth and thorough discussion of its subgenre, the Female *Bildungsroman*. The issues inherent in the concept of the female counterpart to the *Bildungsroman* are then brought up (among them, the possibility that this genre might not actually exist), as well as the myriad of definitions and perspectives from which critics view this genre. This discussion is brought up so as to showcase the different way critics and theorists view and define female development in eighteenth and nineteenth-century women-written literary works. Although *Northanger Abbey* is not being analyzed here as a *Bildungsroman*, it is through the lens of this genre that some aspects of the novel and its protagonist's social and psychological progress might come to light. However, as this is a subject with extensive and numerous perspectives, two critics and their differing views on female development in such novels are compared and discussed in more detail: Annis Pratt and Lorna Ellis. With their definitions of Female *Bildungsroman* and female development as a foundation on which to discuss Catherine's development as a character and as a young woman, this monograph will finally focus on the analysis of Austen's novel in the next chapters.

The term *Bildungsroman* (which can be translated as ‘novel of formation’) first appeared in the late eighteenth-century. It was, however, only coined in the 1820s by German philologist Karl Morgenstern, and truly made popular in the late nineteenth-century by German historian Wilhelm Dilthey. The term, when used by Dilthey, referred to German works such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* (1795-6) and Friedrich Hölderlin’s *Hyperion* (1797-9). According to Tobias Boes, the *Bildungsroman* was to Dilthey “a product of sociological circumstances” (2006, p. 232) which could only be found in the German region, making it an exclusively-German literary production with conservative undertones, such as an almost nationalistic affirmation of the social environment in which the protagonist was inserted.

The *Bildungsroman*’s complicated history, however, also points to a lack of a definitive, agreed-upon description, and the term has been altered from its original definition to classify a wide range of literary work. Frederick Amrine summarizes one of the main paradoxical issues behind it, from its popularity in the eighteenth-century to describe Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* to the study of the genre in the twentieth century: “if one takes ‘Bildung’ in its strict and limited historical sense, then nothing is a *Bildungsroman* – not even Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre; but if one takes it in the loose sense, some like ‘development of the protagonist’, then everything is a *Bildungsroman*” (1987, p. 127, apud KONTJE, 1993, p. 19). It can be understood, then, that there are a number of currents within the area of literary studies that, having moved away from the regionally-restrictive roots of the genre, define the *Bildungsroman* in their own terms. While its original definition involved only German novels narrating the development of male protagonists in an eighteenth and nineteenth-century setting, it has since then grown to include a number of novels from all backgrounds, involving distinct protagonists. From this it can be observed that there is very little agreement among scholars on what the *Bildungsroman* is, and which literary works constitute one. Yet it is not the purpose of this work to discuss the problematic classification of this literary genre, but of only one interpretation of the *Bildungsroman*, one that takes into account the possibility of its female variation.

Todd Kontje (1993), aware of the genre’s polemical status, rather than argue for its elimination or redefinition, chooses to focus on its utility as a tool to decode literary texts and bring to light new explanations on them. From the beginning, thus, Kontje’s attitude towards the genre paves the way for a discussion on the validity of its female variation, and his arguments will later be reused by Lorna Ellis to discuss female development under a different

light from other critics of women's fiction. Kontje presents some traits of the *Bildungsroman*, as found in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century German works that led to the genre's creation, by citing literary scholar Friedrich Kittler's views on it as a "game of socialization" (*Sozialisationspiel*) to which personal development is linked (p. 222). This focus on socialization is important for this monograph's definition of the *Bildungsroman* as a genre whose primary objective is men's social insertion, with personal development as subjugated to it – in the Female *Bildungsroman*, female development is both subjugated and halted by social conformity, to the point of being considered null to many critics, which led them to see Female *Bildung* (or rather, female development) as an impossibility in such novels.

Kontje's depiction of the genre also stresses the *Bildungsroman*'s ultimately conservative aspect, something which will be brought up again in relation to the Female *Bildungsroman* and the nature of the personal development critics seem to expect from the genre. American scholar Susanne Howe, the first to bring the concept of the *Bildungsroman* to the discussion of English novels, also defined the genre in a way that pointed out its conservative portrayal of personal development as part of positive social integration:

The adolescent hero of the typical "apprentice" novel sets out on his way through the world, meets with reverses usually due to his own temperament, falls in with various guides and counselors, makes many false starts in choosing his friends, his wife, and his life work, and finally adjusts himself in some way to the demands of his time and environment by finding a sphere of female action in which he may work effectively" (1966, p. 4)

One can argue then, that it is logical that the Female *Bildungsroman*, as its male counterpart, should also be read primarily as a conservative genre.

Yet, even if the *Bildungsroman* of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries is conservative in nature, it also contains tensions within it relating to its portrayal of the individual's growth within the social fold. As Kontje observes: "personal development needs not – and rarely does – culminate in a complacent maturity in these novels, and the surrounding society is more often criticized than affirmed" (1993, p. 224-5). This element of conservativeness mingled with concealed subversiveness is an important trait of the *Bildungsroman*, because those unresolved tensions become significantly more pronounced in the women-written works that have been or can be read as Female *Bildungsroman*. The result is that the development of female characters within these novels is often paradoxal, tangled and blurred.

Yet, the female counterpart of the *Bildungsroman* is considered by many theorists and critics to be an impossibility. John H. Smith argues that the *Bildungsroman* as a genre is intrinsically tied to gender, saying that “Bildung and its narrativization in the Bildungsroman is not an ‘organic’ but a social phenomenon that leads to the construction of the male identity in our sex-gender system by granting men access to self-representation in the patriarchal Symbolic order” (2016, p. 216). Smith rejects the generic interpretation of the genre, stating instead that the Bildungsroman is a narrative of male individualization, of the creation of the male identity within society. This conception of the genre makes it so that only specific socio-historical moments could have had *Bildungsroman* produced, and all, naturally, from the male perspective. In order to make these arguments, Smith works with the concept of *Bildung* (formation) in its original, culturally-weighted form. Other critics, however, view *Bildung* as a possibly shifting concept, with different configurations depending on time and place. *Bildung* can, in a way, be a term that encompasses social and personal development, and because what constitutes such development is not definite or timeless, but varies from one socio-historical moment to another, the context of such development must be taken into account.

Cíntia Schwantes expands on this by pointing out that the shifting nature of the *Bildungsroman* throughout time is where its importance lies:

Sua grande importância, atualmente, como durante o Romantismo, reside no fato de que, sem ser um romance de tese, o Bildungsroman é um espaço privilegiado de discussão dos flutuantes valores de suas épocas, da modificação dos papéis sexuais (masculino e feminino), da culturalidade (ou não) do nosso gênero, nossa identidade, nossa humanidade. (1997, p. 37)

Schwantes presents an incredibly important panorama of feminist studies regarding the existence and characteristics of the Female *Bildungsroman* and the different way female development is read in the novels contained in this genre. While her main topic of discussion is twentieth-century novels, some of the theorists she brings forth must be mentioned.

One of those theorists is Marianne Hirsch (1983), whose essay, “Spiritual *Bildung*: the Beautiful Soul as Paradigm” attempts to reformulate the *Bildungsroman* genre in order to allow for female development, through a ‘spiritual *Bildung*’. According to Todd Kontje, “instead of stressing the possibility of the active, assertive heroine, Hirsch defines the Female *Bildungsroman* as an inversion of the male prototype” (1993, p. 226), where development occurs internally in a circular and dissolute manner, showcasing that “awakening consciousness for the female (...) is often an awakening to limitation, to a world inimical to female growth and development, and to a strategy of withdrawal culminating in death” (GOLDENSOHN,

1984, p. 339). In this formulation, the focus is on the internal space, which gives women more freedom to develop their selfhood, rather than on the smothering social one; in this way, as Kontje suggests, Hirsch manages to acknowledge “the degree of resignation and denied possibility attending female development” (1993, p. 226). However, as Cíntia Schwantes observes, Hirsch’s *corpus* includes only works where the women protagonists die; Hirsch considers this outcome positively, as their deaths represent their refusal to cave in to societal demands and the diminishment of their own selves. There are many polemical issues in this approach to the Female *Bildungsroman*, and Todd Kontje points out two of its shortcomings: firstly, that it presents a wholly negative view of female personal development in women-written German novels, characterizing them “solely in terms of suffering and decline” (p. 226); secondly, it “employs a stereotypically strong male protagonist as a straw man to define the difference of the women” (p. 226) when, male development in such novels, Kontje observes, is actually quite unstable and problematic. Thus, by ignoring the canonical male *Bildungsroman*, Hirsch seems to warp and simplify the genre’s focus, while also simplifying the way in which subtly positive female development can be portrayed in novels ranging from the eighteenth to the twentieth-century without the necessity of a martyred ending outside the social fold.

Another important work from the same period is *The Myth of the Heroine: The Female Bildungsroman in the Twentieth Century* (1986) by Esther Kleinbord Labovitz. Labovitz discusses only twentieth-century novels because, as Cíntia Schwantes observes, she does not consider eighteenth or nineteenth-century women-written novels to be Female *Bildungsroman*. This is because she considers *Bildung* (which she defines as intrinsically personal development) to be missing in such novels, where the heroine never manages to achieve self-knowledge. Labovitz believes that the Female *Bildungsroman* begins in the twentieth-century, as women gain more freedom for personal and social development through formal education and careers, and stop depending on marriage for autonomy. The internal space is still very much the focus of the female development, yet the result is still not necessarily positive, as Annis Pratt observes: “although it is their recourse to ‘inner spaces’ that empowers these heroes to seek full selfhood, that selfhood as mature women turns them into ‘exiles’ from ‘culture’” (1988, p. 205).

Therefore, it is apparent from examining both Hirsch’s and Labovitz’s views on the genre, that the women-written novels they analyze have at their core an unsolvable tension, that can mean life, death or exile for the female protagonist: personal development towards selfhood versus social development towards societal conformity. Thus, the clear difference between the eighteenth and nineteenth-century male *Bildungsroman* and novels from the same era depicting

female development is that female socialization does not necessarily entail personal development, as it does for the men. While men are meant to be productive and autonomous members of society, women's development (if it happens) is inevitably subjugated to other people's (usually men), and so would represent, to critics such as Labovitz, no development at all.

That being said, an obligatory mention in the discussion of female development in literature is Annis Pratt. She begins her discussions on the Female Bildungsroman and the novels that exemplify it in the 1972 article "Women and Nature in Modern Fiction", where she views *Bildungsroman* as a quest for self, first and foremost, relating it to Joseph Campbell's 'Hero's Journey', and already tracing some of the tensions found in the genre. Yet, it is only in 1982 that she truly develops these arguments in the book *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, where she aims to find similarities (or patterns) in the Anglophonic female fiction from the eighteenth to the twentieth-century.

From the outset, Pratt stresses that she found a 'tension' during her research, present not only in the Female *Bildungsroman*, but in women's fiction as a whole:

After close readings of more than three hundred women's novels I discovered, quite contrary to what I had expected, that even the most conservative women authors creative narratives manifesting an acute tension between what any normal human being might desire and what a woman must become. Women's fiction reflects an experience radically different from men's because our drive towards growth as persons is thwarted by our society's prescriptions concerning gender. (1982, p. 5-6)

This all points to the female experience being, even when fictionalized, a strained and paradoxical one, characteristics which seem to be exacerbated in the novels of formation, the Female *Bildungsroman*, (thus, in novels depicting female development), and which will also be observed in Catherine Morland's development. It is important to note that, from the very beginning of the book, Pratt makes clear that the aim of her work is not to compare women's fiction to its male counterpart. Like Marianne Hirsch, Pratt's views of the Female *Bildungsroman* do not take into account a deep investigation on the male *Bildungsroman*. Pratt's focus is, instead, on female development only, and the form it takes within novels of development.

Such novels are discussed in Chapter II of her book, "The Novel of Development", co-written with Barbara White. The authors call 'novels of development' the female-written works from the eighteenth and nineteenth-century which deal with female development, or, more accurately, with young women reaching some form of adulthood. These novels, as Pratt and

White observe, present a negative depiction of female development, in accordance with societal standards of female behavior, and function somewhat as failed attempts at Female *Bildungsroman*, since, rather than become adults, their protagonists learn to be dependent and passive. As Pratt and White explain,

In this most conservative branch of the women's *bildungsroman* then, we find a genre that pursues the opposite of its generic intent – it provides models for “growing down” rather than for “growing up”. This disjunction between the novel of development and the woman's *bildungsroman* generates the textual ambivalence that characterize the genre when it falls into the hands of more rebellious woman authors. (p. 14)

Pratt and White do stress the subversiveness that can be found in the genre, mentioning Jane Austen as an example, as her “wit serves to highlight the tensions inherent in the *bildungsroman* at the same time as it diverts the reader through apparently flippant ‘amusement’” (p. 15). In this way, they suggest that female writers like Austen both criticize the society they are a part of while also adjusting their protagonists to that same world, in a combination of “wit and reconciliation, rebellion and return to the social fold” (p. 15). The novel of development, therefore, “portrays a world in which the young woman hero is destined for disappointment” (p. 29), in which she must come face-to-face with her own position within society and the limited growth that she is allowed – the ultimate aim of the young woman hero's development is for her to be groomed into an adequate daughter, wife and mother. This means that, more often than not, the young woman protagonist finds herself alienated from the social world, which denies her internal growth or a meaningful social role.

Pratt and White do go back to the male *Bildungsroman* to point out that, in male development stories, the male hero can also be “alienated from his social identity” (p. 36). However, they argue that the difference between those two is that,

the [female] hero does not choose a life to one side of society after conscious deliberation on the subject; rather, she is radically alienated by gender-role norms from the very outset. Thus, although the authors attempt to accommodate their heroes' Bildung, or development, to the general pattern of the genre, the disjunctions that we have noted inevitably make the woman's initiation less a self-determined progression towards maturity than a regression from full participation in adult life. (p. 36)

They finally conclude that “in most of the novels of development, it seems clear that the authors conceive of growing up female as a choice between auxiliary or secondary personhood, sacrificial victimization, madness, and death. (p. 36)”. Therefore, in their views, the novel of development is a failed Female *Bildungsroman*, in which the heroine can either accommodate herself to society and “grow down” (become submissive and subjugated to patriarchal

judgement), or refuse to be incorporated and become a martyr for her cause through madness or death. Either way, authentic female development is negative or non-existent.

While Pratt and White do claim that the tensions present in those novels lead them to have an ambiguous attitude, it is Lorna Ellis who chooses to focus on that ambiguity as a way to analyze possible Female *Bildungsroman* from the eighteenth and nineteenth-century. Ellis argues against Pratt and White's take on the female novel of formation, while acknowledging the pervasive lack of development in women-written works of the time:

Although I disagree with Pratt's conclusion that "growing up" and "growing down" are equivalent in novels about women, I must acknowledge that the phenomenon of "growing down" is indeed evident throughout most eighteenth and nineteenth-century novels of female development. The protagonists begin as self-assured young women who question their subordinate place in society, but the endings find them less active, less assertive, and reintegrated into society through marriage. (1999, p. 16)

Ellis mentions here Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, observing that, at first glance, Elizabeth Bennet's development could be read from Pratt's perspective. However, Ellis takes Pratt's reading of female development a step further, claiming that, while the growth of female protagonists is indeed very negative when viewed from the surface, it is only a part of their development throughout the narratives. Thus, Ellis takes a critical stance against those theorists and critics that choose to ignore or erase positive (or rather, subversive) female development. As Ellis sees it, there is not such a great divide between the male and the female novel of formation as previously thought:

The concentration on split narratives and subplots tends to construct an unbridgeable gap between "growing up" and "growing down". I, however, would argue that this dichotomy, like that between the male and female *Bildungsroman*, is false – that in both versions, "growing down" paradoxically enables "growing up". These two forms of growth are part of the same process, (...) both descriptions are accurate, but neither tells the whole story. (p. 18)

She argues that, in the works she reviews, heroines grow up, in the sense that they come to become better readers of the social world around them and of their own selves, as well as learn how to manipulate that world so as to keep some level of independence. She observes, however, that "the process of learning to understand and work within the limits of society simultaneously forces the heroine to decrease her sphere of action or to 'grow down'" (p. 18). This way, the heroines mentioned by Ellis must relinquish some agency in order to integrate society effectively and *gain* sufficient agency to live.

Ellis points out that this is not a trait exclusive to the Female *Bildungsroman*, and that "although the options for continued adult growth at the end of *Bildungsroman* are more limited

for female protagonists than for male (...) the aspects of development that imply personal diminishment are remarkably similar in male and female *Bildungsroman*” (p. 19). She goes on to compare Austen’s Emma Woodhouse to Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister, finding similarities in male and female novels since in both “the protagonists eventually find a conservative niche in society (...) In both, maturation comes at the expense of adventure and some personal autonomy” (p. 19). Ellis is the first theorist observed so far to find similarities, rather than differences, in male and female development in such novels. This is because Ellis chooses to focus on the conservative aspect inherent in the depiction of the individual’s social and internal development, in the *Bildungsroman*’s tensioned depiction of the relationship between the social self and the internal self and in the portrayal of the concessions one must make in order to enter adulthood and the social fold. The narratives that depict such male and female personal and social development are, therefore, conservative in nature, portraying “a society that seems at first, and often is, hostile to [the hero and heroine’s] dreams and expectations” (p. 29). Citing Annis Pratt, Ellis argues against the negative connotations behind calling the *Bildungsroman* genre ‘conservative’, as its depiction of women learning to work within society is an important aspect of the genre’s subversiveness – and, so, a valid positive depiction of female development:

The female *Bildungsroman* does not portray a tragic view of women’s development as “sacrificial victimization, madness and death” (Pratt, 1981, 36), thus belying the frequent assumption that “conservative” implies “negative”. Instead, by showing how fictional heroines can work within “the system”, female *Bildungsromane* offer a limited possibility for female autonomy while simultaneously critiquing the societal expectations that constrict women. (p. 29)

According to Ellis, then, in novels chronicling female development, a young woman’s successful accommodation within society demands both a high level of concession and manipulation on her part. Her agency is both dependent and restricted by her social place, and, as female authors such as Austen are aware of this dilemma, the narrative inevitably takes on a provocative and subversive tone.

The goal of these eighteen and nineteen-century Female *Bildungsroman*, as Ellis sees it, is not personal fulfillment, but compromise: “these heroines (...) are manipulating appearances in order to find a compromise between self and society, to form a bridge between their views of themselves and the views of the men they love” (p. 29). One can never be sure if these heroines do succeed in gaining the agency they aspire for in the subjugated positions they ultimately find themselves in, as the endings, Ellis observes, are always ambiguous:

it is not clear which aspect of female development – that which empowers the protagonist or that which disempowers her – will predominate. After all, the marriages

that end these novels not only close the story of youth but open the story of adulthood, a story that is left largely unexplored by the novels. (p. 33)

Ellis points out that to choose to view these protagonists' endings as negative (as most feminist theorists of the female *Bildungsroman* do, to the point of not considering such novels to be *Bildungsroman* at all) or as positive depends entirely on the reader's own interpretation – yet the undeniable fact, at least to Ellis, is that those are ambiguous and paradoxical narratives.

Thus, at the end of this discussion on the history and varied definitions of the Female *Bildungsroman*, one is left with two distinct and equally valid views on the portrayal of female development in eighteenth and nineteenth-century women-written novels. Whether that portrayal is positive (with heroines growing up), negative (with heroines growing down), or something entirely ambiguous, is up to the reader's interpretation of what constitutes female development in the context in which those novels were written. In the next chapters, these theoretical discussions are used to analyze Catherine Morland's development as a young woman in late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century England, observing the struggle of Jane Austen's young heroine with the inherent tensions of social accommodation and internal growth.

3 CATHERINE MORLAND IN BATH

Before going straight into an analysis of the plot of *Northanger Abbey*, it is important to consider its title. As previously mentioned, Jane Austen's original name for the novel was "Susan", after the protagonist, but both the character and the book's name had to be changed when a novel with the same title came out before this work could be published. Once the young heroine of the story had been renamed, the second version of the manuscript was titled *Catherine*. To this day, it is not clear, as Claire Crogan observes, whether the final title of the book was Jane Austen's or her brother Henry's decision – the original titles, Crogan argues, "stress the importance of the young heroine and her entrance into society. However, the eventual title of *Northanger Abbey* (...) shifts the focus from the female protagonist to a symbol of patriarchal power" (2002, p. 16). Therefore, it might be that just like *Emma* (considered by many critics, Lorna Ellis among them, as a domestic *Bildungsroman*), *Northanger Abbey*'s title was supposed to hint at a journey that was not necessarily about a location¹, but about a young woman.

Regarding the narrative itself, the novel opens with an explanation of young Catherine's familial context. This is vital information to better understand both her character and the socio-historical position she is in as a young woman throughout her journey to the town of Bath and to the Tilneys' abode, Northanger Abbey. About Catherine's family, the narrator states that:

Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected, or poor, and a very respectable man, (...). He had a considerable independence, besides two good livings. (...) Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper (...). She had three sons before Catherine was born; and (...) lived to have six children more. (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 3)

Catherine is, therefore, the fourth child in a family of ten, and, because of that, left to fend for herself or look after her smaller siblings much of the time. The novel starts when the heroine is still a young girl of around ten, in a family physically described by the narrator to be "very plain", with Catherine being "as plain as any" (p. 3), though with a happy and kind disposition. Yet not only is the young girl not pretty, she is also a little stupid and "never could learn or understand anything before she was taught; and sometimes not even then" (p. 3). She is also a tomboy of sorts, in that she prefers playing boys' games than lady-like activities such as

¹ Either way, both titles work as nods toward the Gothic genre, as Gothic novels were usually named either after the female protagonist or the setting of the story.

“watering a rose-bush” or “feeding a canary-bird” (p. 3). As John Sutherland observes, Catherine “is by no means the most highly regarded offspring” (2008), but is rather a very mediocre sort of protagonist, to the point where the novel itself begins by forcing the reader to confront Catherine Morland’s status as heroine (or more specifically, a gothic one): “No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine” (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 3). This makes it clear from the very beginning that Austen’s protagonist is not the passive and proper lady of the gothic romances she is fond of, being neither in the typical position of the gothic protagonist (usually orphaned) nor having her usual beauty or model femininity. Rather, Catherine represents a typical young girl of her time, and her story is not one of gothic villains and horrors but of the common difficulties and strains put upon young women growing up in her circumstances, which are no less horrifying for being real than the adventures presented in the gothic tales of Ann Radcliffe. And so, *Northanger Abbey*’s narrative begins by setting up its protagonist to be a heroine, only to have the character meet with a world that is just as scary and dangerous as those of the gothic tales, but lacking the freedom, adventure and societal escape that these novels allow their protagonists.

Catherine is not exempt, however, from the power that these paragons of femininity and beauty that control the gothic heroines of eighteenth-century novels exert on young women’s behavior – and the narrator herself mentions that, though at fourteen Catherine was “noisy and wild, hated confinement and cleanliness” (p. 4) and still preferred games like cricket to more feminine hobbies, at fifteen Catherine becomes “almost pretty”. Leaving the world of dirt and greenery she loves behind, “from fifteen to sixteen she was in training for a heroine” (p. 4). And, because Catherine is not a gothic heroine but an ‘ordinary heroine’, it is not adventures and mysteries that she must train for, but a hero, that is, a gentleman her family can marry her off to. The quest for a marriageable young man is what spurs her journey from the familiar world of home.

As Catherine is not a gothic heroine, but an ordinary young woman, one must be clearly aware of the role she occupies within her family structure. Sutherland stresses Catherine’s situation as somewhat of a burden to her big family due to her gender, as her father, reverend Morland, “is more interested in his older sons, who will bear his name, than any of the girls in the family, who will become some other man’s property and responsibility very soon, and carry somebody else’s name” (2008). At seventeen, Catherine is ready not to be a heroine on a wild exotic adventure, but to be married to somebody and so leave the parental

home. The following passage introduces Catherine's convenient opportunity to do just that, through some friends of her parents:

Mr. Allen, who owned the chief of the property about Fullerton, the village in Wiltshire where the Morlands lived, was ordered to Bath for the benefit of a gouty constitution – and his lady, a good-humoured woman, fond of Miss Morland, and probably aware that if adventures will not befall a young lady in her own village, she must seek them abroad, invited her to go with them. Mr. and Mrs. Morland were all compliance, and Catherina all happiness. (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 7)

John Sutherland himself observes that Mrs. Allen and the Morlands' intentions when referring to Catherine's lack of 'adventures' are not quite as obvious as they might seem to modern readers. He points out the motivation behind Catherine's trip by explaining that Bath's significance at the time was that it "is a marriage market. And the Morland family, fond as they are of Catherine (...) won't be sorry to have at least one child off their hands" (2008). There is, therefore, a dark hint of desperation and clear female objectification beneath the deeply sarcastic narrative the reader is given, something that can only be grasped if one is aware of the gender and marriage politics of the time. This is not just a story about a young girl going on an innocent trip with friends, but of a young woman reaching a marriageable age and being shipped off to the nearest town where she might meet well-off bachelors and become one less burden to her family. Gilbert and Gubar, when discussing Austen's *Juvenilia* along with *Northanger Abbey*, observe this common trope, and the way it makes women's incredibly restricted acting space explicit:

What characterizes the excursions of all these heroines is their total dependency on the whim of wealthier family or friends. None has the power to produce her own itinerary and none knows until the very last moment whether or not she will be taken on a trip upon which her happiness often depends. (2000, p. 122)

Catherine is, like other heroines before and after her, entirely subjugated to the Allens; and, though they are rather lenient (if not disinterested) chaperones for a seventeen-year-old girl far from home for the first time, one must not forget the fact that Catherine is, at all times, quite powerless.

Be as it may, and whatever reasons are behind Catherine's innocent trip, this is her one and possibly only chance to experience life outside her parental home before (if she is lucky) being sent to the marital home. This is, therefore, the moment of greatest independence for Catherine, even if such independence is necessarily subjugated to the will of others. Her limited amount of freedom away from the familiar world of her village grants her an extremely propense time for personal development through new experiences, new acquaintances and new interactions. For Catherine, who is entirely lacking in a more formal education and "without

any experience whatsoever in the world of courtship” (LANSDOWN, 2004, p. 68), this is a moment of inevitable change, and changed she will be at the end of it, whether or not one might consider her journey as a narrative of development.

After an uneventful journey with no dangerous adventures in sight, Catherine arrives in Bath and makes an entrance in the town’s social world by going to a ball. While the evening is a disappointment because the Allens don’t seem to know anyone, Catherine has more luck in a later event, when she finally meets the hero of her story, through an unromantic introduction by the master of the ceremonies. This is Catherine’s first dance in Bath, and, as David Blair observes, Catherine ultimately marries “the first man she dances with, which is pretty good going for a heroine whose ordinariness might arguably disqualify her from being one at all” (2007, p. vii). Although the road to this marriage is still filled with many missteps and difficulties, the fact that Catherine finds her match so early on does spare her (and the reader) from having to deal with many of the agonies and frustrations of young woman searching for husbands. One inevitably wonders if perhaps it might not have been better for Catherine if she had not met him right away, or if that would have meant that her susceptible self would have been taken by a less kind instructor.

Henry Tilney, Catherine’s dance partner and future husband, is an intriguing figure in Catherine’s narrative. At the same time that he represents the final destination of the young girl’s adventure, in an indirect way keeping her from experiencing the world by herself and learning from her own experiences, mistakes and judgements for longer, his is also a positive presence in Catherine’s life. One must wonder if, without him, Catherine would have learned as much as she does, for, regardless of the numerous interpretations of the character, there is no denying that he serves as Catherine’s mentor for a good part of her trajectory, teaching her about the finer cultural items Catherine must be aware of as a young woman (such as history, landscapes and beauty) and guiding her towards seeing people in a less morally black-and-white manner. However, because of their dissimilar positions in the social hierarchy, theirs is a delicate and complicated dynamic.

Henry’s introduction to the reader already stresses his intellectual superiority over Catherine: “He talked with fluency and spirit – and there was an archness and pleasantry in his manner which interested, though it was hardly understood by her” (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 13). It is interesting to note that, from their first interaction, Catherine is already awed by Henry’s wit, which she can never quite follow. Henry, a twenty-four or twenty-five-year-old clergyman, is clearly the more intelligent and experienced individual of the two, and, from the start, he seems

to be the most self-aware character in the novel, speaking ironically most if not all of the time and being very critical of the social environment he and Catherine inhabit, mocking the common topics of conversation between ladies and gentlemen, women's writing of diaries, among other conventions.

Yet he is not free from the expectations and demands of this environment, and, as John Sutherland points out, "he is clearly in Bath in search of a wife" (2008). Sutherland goes further still in his reading of Henry Tilney, by claiming that he "wants above all an innocent girl, someone whom he can shape. Someone whom he can, as it were, put into the mold of the ideal wife" (2008). Gilbert and Gubar take this interpretation of Henry's character and examine it under a very negative light – to them, Henry Tilney is more of a villain than hero in the story, successful in shaping Catherine into being a personality-less wife of his own making, equating Catherine's tale with the "growing down" narrative of Pratt. Mônica Chagas, on the other hand, has a more positive opinion on the character, bringing up Marvin Mudrick's views on Henry when she says that

Segundo Marvin Mudrick, Henry é o contraponto ideal para Catherine, opondo ironia e franqueza, sofisticação e ingenuidade, segurança e timidez, informação e ignorância. Ele se comporta constantemente como mentor de Catherine, buscando através da ironia que ela se comporte mais criticamente em relação às situações que a cercam. (2013, p. 16)

Whether one accepts the negative or the positive reading of Henry Tilney and his impact on Catherine, the way in which one chooses to understand Tilney and interpret his actions is important in order to interpret Catherine's growth and the ending of her tale of development, either as a failed and frustrated development (as Annis Pratt would argue) or an actual progression from naïveté to a certain level of intellectual, social and psychological maturity (which would follow Lorna Ellis' views on the female *Bildungsroman*). A development that gives her autonomous, fully-developed intellectual and psychological maturity and a relationship with no personal concessions on Catherine's part, however, is an impossibility – as already observed when discussing the female *Bildungsroman*.

The most interesting interpretation of Henry Tilney and his relationship to Catherine, however, is one that considers both seemingly dissenting views as valid, that understands his role as a limited instructor, at times successful and at others problematic. Katie Garbarino argues that "Austen does not pen a villain in Henry; rather, she uses Tilney to discuss male paternalism in her society, specifically in relation to the women it maintained power over" (2013, p. 19). He is, according to Garbarino, a "benevolent patriarch—a figure who educates

and guides, but who does not abuse” (p. 19). Yet, Henry is a male adult in a patriarchal society, and so he has a great amount of power over Catherine (who falls for him soon after their first meeting) and he can and will, even unconsciously, overstep his role as mentor, manipulating Catherine into accepting his judgement over her equally-valid one, which tends to frustrate Catherine’s autonomous internal growth and lead her to question her own judgement and place his own above hers. Their complex relationship, charged with power and gender dynamics, is an important factor in Catherine’s progression towards an accepted form of adulthood, and, despite impacting her negatively, it also allows her to become a smarter reader of people and situations and a more socially-aware, functional individual.

The next ball after meeting Tilney, Catherine is disappointed to find he is not there – but she does meet a few new individuals who are also worth noting, as well as enjoy the company of the already-introduced Allen couple. Of the two, Mrs. Allen, in particular, is an interesting character – described by the narrator as having “the air of a gentlewoman, a great deal of quiet, inactive good temper, and a trifling turn of mind” (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 9), she is quite as ignorant as seventeen-year-old Catherine at the start of her journey. In fact, Mrs. Allen, and her newly-introduced old friend Mrs. Thorpe, seem to be “fit representatives not only of fashionable life but also of the state of female maturity in an aristocratic and patriarchal society” (GILBERT; GUBAR, 200, p. 129). In addition to the scarcely-present Mrs. Morland, those older women are the only visible examples in the novel of (married) adult women, and they appear to prophesize a dreadful, yet similar future for Catherine, one in which intellectual development has been checked and halted, and married women all have a silly, almost child-like disposition. Mrs. Allen is obsessed with fashion and little else, while Mrs. Thorpe can only talk about her children – stuck between these two very ‘womanly’ topics of conversation, they have little else to add to the narrative, and Mrs. Allen, who might have been a mentor of sorts to her young protégée, fails at giving any meaningful advice, leaving the role of aiding Catherine to other characters, such as Tilney.

If these female figures are nothing to emulate, but rather examples of failed female maturity to avoid, perhaps Catherine might find companionship and instruction with Mrs. Thorpe’s older daughter, Isabella Thorpe. From a first impression, Isabella does seem to be a good mentor-figure for Catherine. However, after their acquaintance and first interactions, the reader is quickly assured that, despite being the more mature of the two, Isabella does not have much to add to Catherine’s upbringing besides the futile subjects Mrs. Thorpe and Mrs. Allen already seem to excel at:

Their conversation turned upon those subjects, of which the free discussion has generally much to do in perfecting a sudden intimacy between two young ladies; such as dress, balls, flirtations, and quizzes. Miss Thorpe, however, being four years older than Miss Morland, and at least four years better informed, had a very decided advantage in discussing such points; she could compare the balls of Bath with those of Tunbridge (...), could rectify the opinions of her new friend in many articles of tasteful attire, could discover a flirtation between any gentleman and lady who only smiled on each other. (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 19)

And yet, as the narrator observes rather cynically, “these powers received due admiration from Catherine, to whom they were entirely new” (p. 19). This is not surprising, seen as Isabella is older and more experienced in all the social matters and conventions of towns like Bath than Catherine, a naïve teenager, is still being introduced to. However, as John Sutherland observes: “Isabella is a veteran of the Bath season, people who go there at a certain time of the year and look for potential mates or partners. But Isabella (...) has been at Bath three or four seasons” (2008). In Sutherland’s views, this “makes her rather a suspicious character, (...) She’s a very striking woman, but there’s something about her that suggests that is she being (...) ‘left on the shelf’” (2008). Therefore, although at first Isabella may seem to be in a position of power over Catherine, she is actually in a very precarious situation herself, more powerless than even the protagonist, as her family probably does not have enough money to offer a dowry for her that will interest most gentlemen looking to make a financially-sound match. As Blair comments: “for all her chipper self-assurance she is trapped and, even at the age of twenty-two, running out of time” (2007, p. x). This makes Isabella an anti-model of behavior, but one that is much more knowledgeable than Catherine in social matters, and so is able to manipulate Catherine for her own interests – the reader soon finds out that Isabella’s close friendship with the protagonist is simply a way to become more attached to Catherine’s brother, in whom Miss Thorpe is interested.

Yet, if Isabella herself is not a model of womanhood to be followed by Catherine, she does introduce the protagonist to a world of feminine voices she might at least relate to, if not downright emulate: “If a rainy morning deprived them of other enjoyments, they were still resolute in meeting in defiance of wet and dirt, and shut themselves up, to read novels together” (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 21). It is with Isabella Thorpe that Catherine expands her literary tastes, and whether that is a positive or negative thing is up to one’s interpretation of the Northanger Abbey chapters that follow. John Sutherland, for instance, reprimands Catherine’s liking of gothic novels, by describing the genre in the following manner:

There is a kind of fiction purveyed, circulated, which is romantic, addicting, lightheaded and corrupting. Catherine is introduced, put to this kind of fiction: it is gothic fiction, of course. (...) And the celebrity author in gothic fiction is Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, notably Mrs. Radcliffe's great best-seller, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. (2008)

Sutherland is not alone in his critic of the genre, which was viewed at the time by “educational treatises and conduct books” as a “gross mismanagement of time, which led to the muddling of fiction for reality and overindulged the female reader’s sensibility and sense of self-importance” (CROGAN, 2002, p. 14). Austen herself criticizes these assessments throughout the book and goes on a passionate, if still ironic, ‘defense of the novel’ at the end of Chapter V, where she vehemently condemns those novel-writers who decry their own genre:

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 (...) 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. (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 21)

There is no denying, as already previously observed regarding the genre, that novels – and here Austen deals with the gothic in particular – had an irresistible magnetic attraction for women, simply because they managed to portray real female apprehensions and fears through a female heroine who ventures outside the designated female space. Catherine makes this attraction clear when she exclaims, while speaking to Isabella about Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794): “I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it. I assure you, if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for all the world” (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 24). In a way, gothic novels for Catherine, as for many other young women smothered by their lack of autonomy and excitement, serve as a glimpse into a world that is both unfamiliar and relatable, oppressing and freeing, pleasurable because it is dangerous and unexpected in a way reality shall never quite be. These ‘horrid’ novels, most of which were written by women writers, also serve as the voice of the female mentor that Catherine is missing: they teach her how to behave and react, and they give a voice to her female apprehensions later on in the story. Catherine comes to rely on the gothic throughout the *Northanger Abbey* chapters because it is a familiar feminine voice that resonates with her own experiences as a young woman, even if the world it depicts is a warped, caricatural version of her own.

The second Thorpe sibling Catherine meets also leaves a lasting impression on the young woman, though she is quicker to recognize John Thorpe is not exactly a gentleman. He is not only the brother of Catherine’s dear new acquaintance, but also a close friend of the

heroine's older brother, James Morland. Both men arrive suddenly in Bath, surprising their sisters, although Catherine's joy at meeting John Thorpe is short-lived.

John Thorpe works somewhat as a foil to Henry Tilney, being hateful wherever the other is pleasant. On their first meeting, Thorpe already manages to upset Catherine by a conversation that involves only "a short decisive sentence of praise or condemnation on the face of every woman they met" (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 30). The young heroine attempts to follow and agree with his commentaries, as her mind is, as the narrator critically puts it, "fearful of hazarding an opinion of its own in opposition to that of a self-assured man" (p. 30). Catherine is again shamed when she tries to speak with him of her favorite subject, gothic novels:

‘Have you ever read Udolpho, Mr. Thorpe?’

‘Udolpho! Oh, Lord! not I; I never read novels; I have something else to do.’ (p. 30)

The young woman is, consequently, "humbled and ashamed" of her question – gothic novels were, after all, a popular genre among women and dismissed among 'serious' readers. It does not make much difference that John Thorpe goes on to say that he actually does read novels, despite the first outburst of denial, though he does not seem to know much about them, as he makes several false and/or prejudiced accusations about the genre. Yet Catherine is either afraid of shaming him herself by what she knows to be wrong, or simply ignorant of the absurd things he claims to even consider contradicting him, and so stays quiet, which is one of several instances throughout the novel where Catherine's status as a woman and her lack of knowledge in certain subjects will silence her in conversations with male figures. John manages to finally make Catherine question his likability, however, when he also mistreats both his mother and sisters:

‘Ah, mother! how do you do?’ said he, giving her a hearty shake of the hand: ‘where did you get that quiz of a hat, it makes you look like an old witch?’ (...) On his two younger sisters he then bestowed an equal portion of his fraternal tenderness, for he asked each of them how they did and observed that they both looked very ugly’ (p. 31)

John Thorpe's actions are those of a tyrannical man, though one who fails to be threatening, if only because he lacks any meaningful power (the Thorpes are not a socially-prestigious family) to exert over anyone other than his family and Catherine, whose young age, minimal education and lacking self-confidence do not allow her to contradict him. Thus, he is able to silence and upset Catherine, who has so little trust over her own judgement she is only able to observe her displeasure with the man's manners for a moment before her opinion is quickly subjugated to the view of others (and of others' views of her) and, so, softened and erased:

These manners did not please Catherine; but he was James's friend and Isabella's brother; and her judgement was further brought off by Isabella's assuring her, when they withdrew to see the new hat, that John thought her the most charming girl in the world (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 31).

Catherine, however, ultimately becomes capable of standing her ground against the two regarding her judgement of right and wrong, as well as her true impressions of John Thorpe's character and (later) Isabella's.

Although she constantly attempts to understate or simply stifle her own feelings, there is no denying that, from the very beginning, Catherine is not pleased with John Thorpe's character. Her struggle to acknowledge the validity of these feelings, as well as to recognize in him and in Isabella individuals who are manipulative, dishonest and even dangerous to her own self (both socially and ethically), is one of the main challenges Catherine faces throughout the first volume of the novel. In fact, although Catherine's journey is one of ultimately making a good marriage and achieving financial security, her progress towards trusting herself and her own judgement is one that cannot be dismissed, and that is portrayed in an understated way throughout the book.

Sheila J. Kindred argues that "although one might view Catherine as a puppet of others' wishes in some of her social interactions, there is persuasive evidence that, in the Bath episodes, Austen lays a careful foundation for a flesh and blood character" (1998, p. 197). She argues that this constitutes an achievement of 'personhood' on Catherine's part. While Kindred believes that Catherine's journey is one of steady growth, a statement that is reconsidered in this monograph, she does point out her significant improvement when dealing with Isabella and John Thorpe, and does not ignore all the instances where Catherine either "judges faultily or not at all" (p. 153), usually due to her own minimal confidence in her own intuition and dependence on others'.

One of those instances of being untruthful to her own self in order to appease others happens soon after she first questioned John Thorpe's likability during their first encounter. Even when only in her brother's presence, the bond she knows him to have with John Thorpe does not allow her to be honest about her feelings for the man:

When the two Morlands, after sitting an hour with the Thorpes, set off to walk together to Mr Allen's, and James, as the door was closed on them, said, 'Well, Catherine, how do you like my friend Thorpe?' instead of answering, as she probably would have done, had there been no friendship and no flattery in the case, 'I do not like him at all;' she directly replied, 'I like him very much; he seems very agreeable.' (p. 32)

Therefore, although Catherine is fully aware she does not like John Thorpe, she forces such feelings back and gives him a few other chances to prove himself, which will only lead to disaster for her. Moreover, Catherine is not at all prepared to handle a figure such as John Thorpe, and, thus, is susceptible to his dishonest and manipulative ways time and time again. An example can be observed in the following scene, when, on their first drive together, John points out how James' carriage is incredibly unsafe. He changes his mind, however, when the comment scares Catherine to the point where she begs him to turn back so she can warn her brother, and John soon claims that the carriage is safe enough to last many years. The narrator observes how unprepared Catherine is to deal with people like him, as her family experiences have failed to introduce her to such behavior before:

Catherine listened with astonishment; she knew not how to reconcile two such very different accounts of the same thing; for she had not been brought up to understand the propensities of a rattle, nor to know to how many idle assertions and impudent falsehoods the excess of vanity will lead. Her own family were plain matter-of-fact people (...) they were not in the habit therefore of telling lies to increase their importance, or of asserting at one moment what they would contradict the next. (p. 45)

Because of this, she is, in a way, at John Thorpe's mercy, as he will never speak plainly, but rather say whatever he can to unabashedly force her to follow his lead. Yet, Thorpe's behavior also forces Catherine to use her own wit and decipher his words in order to find their true meaning – in this case, she is quick to look past her own astonishment to decide if Thorpe does find her brother's carriage dangerous or not. Kindred points out that, in this particular scene, "Catherine's reasoning process is impressive" (KINDRED, 1998, p. 198) and she manages to come up with a satisfyingly logical answer in spite of his lack of clarity. From early on, the Thorpes' influence on Catherine's naïve mind, who is forced to decode their behavior to interact with them, can be observed.

Although this is only their first outing together, Catherine's progress toward trusting her own self is significant, as Kindred again observes. In an important passage in that same scene, Catherine finally seems to confront the fact that she does not like John Thorpe, though she does note this in a very gentle way: "little as Catherine was in the habit of judging for herself, and unfixed as were her general notions of what men ought to be, she could not entirely repress a doubt, while she bore with the effusions of his endless conceit, of his being altogether completely agreeable" (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 45-6). This is an important moment as not only it is the first instance of her questioning the "high authority" (p. 46) of a man's opinion, – that is, of her own brother's judgement of his friend – but it also makes explicit Catherine's lack of

knowledge and, consequently, of confidence in her judgement, which explains why she tends to lean on other people's. By the end of the chapter, once Catherine is back at the Allens' house and away from her 'friends', - and their influence, as Kindred sharply observes – her opinions are definitely less delicate, and she does not hide her feelings: “it was clear to her, that the drive had by no means been very pleasant and that John Thorpe himself was quite disagreeable” (p. 47). Kindred too observes that Catherine's slowness to admit her feelings about Thorpe come from her own lacking trust in herself as well as the fact that “her clerical family would have discouraged” (KINDRED, 1998, p. 200) that she think badly of others – this sort of censorship results in her not being ready to judge people who deserve to be thought of negatively. Yet Catherine is capable of making astute judgements, if only she can trust herself to stand by them, and Isabella and John Thorpe will test and help hone this skill of hers.

This drive with John Thorpe is also important because it was a change of plans for Catherine. After meeting Henry Tilney's sister, Eleanor, at another event a few days before, she had initially decided to spend the morning in the Pump-room² hoping to further her acquaintance with the young woman. However, she was convinced to join Isabella and the rest of her company in a drive outside which turned out to be less than enjoyable, and was only able to meet with Miss Tilney the next day, while walking around the Pump-room with Isabella and James, who were too focused on themselves to pay her any attention. The narrator describes the scene as follow:

At length however she was empowered to disengage herself from her friend, by the avowed necessity of speaking to Miss Tilney, whom she most joyfully saw just entering the room with Mrs. Hughes, and whom she instantly joined, with a firmer determination to be acquainted, than she might have had courage to command, had she not been urged by the disappointment of the day before. (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 49)

While there are many possible interpretations of the scene, one can read Catherine's newfound 'courage' as a developing confidence in her own active ability to make conversation and build friendship and a growing desire, fueled by John Thorpe's unlikable figure, to further other acquaintances, especially Henry Tilney's, who seems all the better in comparison to Isabella's brother. In a sense, the Thorpes give her the necessary boost to go after new experiences. Catherine's experience facing the world outside her home, rather than making her self-aware

² The Pump-room (or Grand Pump Room) is a building in Bath that served as a meeting place, where people could walk around, and interact throughout the day, with women and men displaying their fashionable outfits and music playing. It is there that Catherine first meets Henry Tilney, and visits again a number of times while in Bath.

of her own unpreparedness and ignorance, is causing her confidence to increase and leading Catherine to long for new involvements.

With Isabella, however, Catherine's recognition of her friend's problematic attitudes is a little slower and more convoluted, as the two have a bond, as far as Catherine can perceive, even if it is only based on furthering other interests on Isabella's part. The first time Catherine senses there is something not wholly truthful about Isabella's behavior does happen as early as Chapter VIII, though she does not dwell much on the feeling. During the scene, Isabella is extremely anxious for Catherine to point Henry Tilney to her at a ball, yet as soon as James Morland arrives, the matter is entirely forgotten and "though Catherine was very well pleased to have it dropped for a while, she could not avoid a little suspicion at the total suspension of all Isabella's impatient desire to see Mr. Tilney" (p. 38). Catherine's 'suspicion' of Isabella's behavior mirrors her more overt judgement of John Thorpe – in both cases, she is aware there is something either odd or unpleasant about these people, but her lack of knowledge on social norms and human behavior leads her to force these feelings down or question their legitimacy time and again.

While Catherine is already aware of John Thorpe being quite dislikeable from their first drive together, it is only when he actively lies to her and endangers her friendship with Henry Tilney and his sister that Catherine is able to let these feelings come to the surface and allow herself to be disagreeable too, rather than complacent. In the scene, Catherine is again being driven by John Thorpe on his chaise and so "angry and vexed as she was, having no power of getting away, was obliged to give up the point and submit. Her reproaches, however, were not spared" (p. 60) Although she is, once again, in a position of submission to John Thorpe, with no way of quitting his presence, Catherine still does what she can to make him aware that she will not be humored by him anymore, and so her mask of forced amiability is for once dropped: "Catherine's complaisance was no longer what it had been in their former airing. She listened reluctantly, and her replies were short" (p. 62). Even Isabella *almost* suffers from Catherine's judgement, when the narrator observes that the protagonist "could almost have accused Isabella of being wanting in tenderness towards herself and her sorrows; so very little did they appear to dwell on her mind and so very inadequate was the comfort she offered" (p. 63). Catherine's patience for her new friends' shortcomings is beginning to wear out, and she is finally being forced to recognize, slowly as it might be, that they are selfish and superficial individuals. Although she still cannot decipher Isabella's true nature and continues to misjudge her, that seems to be connected with Catherine's unwillingness to view a friend in a bad light

rather than with said friend's ability to conceal her true self. To recognize Isabella's lack of empathy for her would be to view her only female model of behavior – a savvy woman who knows how to flirt, how to dress and what next gothic novel to read – and friend as a false role model, a figure who lacks all the virtues of the heroines of novels.

After this terrible event, Catherine is finally able to put her foot down and stand her ground when the Thorpes and her brother arrive to take her along on another endeavor (and so force her to cancel plans with the Tilneys). This time, unwilling to delay a walk with Henry and his sister for another disappointing drive with John and Isabella Thorpe, Catherine “looked grave, was very sorry, but could not go” (p. 68). Despite the Thorpes' incessant attempts to guilt her into following them, Catherine remains steadfast, “distressed, but not subdued” (p. 70). This is a meaningful change for a young female character in Catherine's position, who is looking to please the new acquaintances around her and be as amicable as possible. This time, Catherine seems to be both putting her own enjoyment and happiness in the first place (after observing how unpleasant an outing with the Thorpes could become) while also looking after her own interests before others' for once – Catherine, naturally, hopes to become more intimate with the Tilneys in the hopes of attracting Henry, the kind and knowledgeable bachelor she has already fallen for. Not only that, but Catherine holds her moral values very strongly and, though she does not know much about societal behavior in Bath, she knows what behavior is wrong according to her own moral compass.

Catherine grows, becoming more confident in her own decisions (which include decisions of a moral sort), because she has to in order to efficiently handle the Thorpes rather than be handled by them. Her own brother, James, points out this change, in a language filled with emotionally manipulation masquerading as affection: “‘I did not think you had been so obstinate, Catherine,’ said James; ‘you were not used to be so hard to persuade; you once were the kindest, best-tempered of my sisters’” (p. 71). Here, adjectives such as ‘kind’ and ‘good-tempered’ equal ‘docile’ and ‘obedient’, and reinforce Catherine's subjugation to the male authority of her brothers – and the fact that her experiences in Bath have allowed her to become (even if just a little) less so. Catherine's response to her brother's comment shows that, even if James' accusation is painful, it is not enough to deter her from doing what she knows to be correct: “‘I hope I am not less so now,’ she replied, very feelingly; ‘but indeed I cannot go. If I am wrong, I am doing what I believe to be right.’” (p. 71). Her response to John Thorpe's attempt to force her into joining them by cancelling himself her meeting with the Tilneys behind her back also leads to another spirited speech from Catherine:

I do not care. Mr. Thorpe had no business to invent any such message. If I had thought it right to put it off, I could have spoken to Miss Tilney myself. This is only doing it in a ruder way (...) Then I will go after them,' said Catherine; 'wherever they are I will go after them. It does not signify talking. If I could not be persuaded into doing what I thought wrong, I never will be tricked into it'. (p. 75)

Thus, Catherine actively strives to fix the mistakes of others, refusing to compromise a single degree of her values, either for family or friendship.

Even so, Catherine is just a seventeen-year-old girl out in the world for the first time, raised in an environment where she was supposed to follow someone else's judgement rather than take the lead herself, and so her progression cannot be so simple. As soon as the adrenaline of being true to herself is gone, Catherine begins to question her choices based on their effect on the people she cares for:

And now that she had been triumphant throughout, had carried her point and was secure of her walk, she began (as the flutter of her spirits subsided) to doubt whether she had been perfectly right. A sacrifice was always noble; and if she had given way to their entreaties, she would have been spared the distressing idea of a friend displeased, a brother angry, and a scheme of great happiness to both destroyed, perhaps through her means. (p. 75)

Arriving home, the young heroine naturally turns to an authority figure in the hopes of finding a soul that can back her up on her decisions, and so give Catherine the necessary support to maintain confidence. The figure in this case is the complacent Mr. and Mrs. Allen, who, as always, are not of much help, though they do leave Catherine feeling positive of her choices.

While, up to this point, Catherine's views of John Thorpe and reaction to Isabella's unexpectedly hypocritical and affected behavior come from Catherine's observations alone, there is no denying that Henry Tilney is an essential part of Catherine's lessons on the 'real world' and its inhabitants. One scene in which he plays a significant part takes place at a ball in volume II, Chapter XVI. By this point, Catherine's brother James has already proposed to Isabella, making Catherine finally aware of the 'romance' that had been blooming between her two close companions. While that is no surprise to the reader, it does catch Catherine completely unaware. Because her modus-operandi is that of overt frankness, she has a difficult time noting the hints and subtle behavior of the people around her, or decoding them without either being literal or using some reference from the literary world which she has a better grasp on. However, the character introduced for the first time during this ball causes some ripples in Catherine's naïve picture of her friend that the young heroine cannot simply turn away from, and that Henry forces her to acknowledge.

It is in this scene that Henry's older brother, Captain Frederick Tilney, appears, having just arrived in Bath. After claiming to dislike dancing, he has Henry ask Catherine whether the young woman's friend, Isabella, would not like to dance. Catherine replies negatively, after hearing Isabella herself proclaim she would dance with no one the absence of Catherine's brother. Catherine does observe to Henry how 'good-natured' his brother is, to see a young woman without a partner and volunteer despite his own disinterest in the activity. Henry's response perfectly points out Catherine's difficulties in reading people:

Henry smiled, and said, 'How very little trouble it can give you to understand the motive of other people's actions.'

'Why? – What do you mean?'

'With you, it is not, How is such a one likely to be influenced? What is the inducement most likely to act upon such a person's feelings, age, situation, and probably habits of life considered? – but, how should *I* be influenced, what would be *my* inducement in acting so and so?' (p. 94)

Henry observes that, rather than read others based on their actions and situations, Catherine interprets other people's behavior from her own position, both socially and morally, especially those she holds in high regard – as is the case with her friend, Isabella, and with Frederick, a member of the family of the man she is in love with. Catherine's attempts to always see the best in others, Henry kindly concludes, just show how good a person she is herself: "Your attributing my brother's wish of dancing with Miss Thorpe to good-nature alone, convinced me of your being superior in good-nature yourself to all the rest of the world." (p. 94). It is important that he never actually makes Catherine's mistaken assumptions explicit, but instead allows her space to decide where and how her own judgement fails her in reading someone else, as, after this conversation, Catherine finds that "there was a something, however, in his words which repaid her for the pain of confusion; and that something occupied her mind so much, that she drew back for some time, forgetting to speak or to listen, and almost forgetting where she was" (p. 94). Henry's mentorship forces her to think critically about those around her, rather than excuse their behavior based on her own moral values.

Catherine is incapable of explaining Isabella's behavior, however, when she soon sees her friend dancing with Frederick Tilney. The reader, if they are paying attention, knows that Isabella must be aware of the Tilney's great financial situation, possibly from Catherine's newly-acquired knowledge of the Tilney family, and so her interest in him is completely in line with her character. Henry Tilney, likely having had a lot more experience with individuals such as Isabella, has a better grasp on her true character than Catherine, and all his enigmatic

responses to Catherine's stupefaction at seeing her friend go against her own word seem to confirm the feelings Catherine herself has felt before but chose to ignore:

‘I cannot think how it could happen! Isabella was so determined not to dance!’

‘And did Isabella never change her mind before?’ (p. 96)

In this sense, as Kindred observes, “Henry’s role in these exchanges is reminiscent of the mentor who encourages his pupil to explore relevant issues” (1998, p. 203), as he guides her towards seeing the real character of Isabella, subtly pointing her towards the truth behind her friend’s actions.

Another important scene regarding Isabella takes place soon after this ball, shortly before Catherine is invited to go to the Tilney’s home, Northanger Abbey. A letter from Catherine’s father has just arrived to James, with his approval of the match as well as an stipulation of the sum of money that would constitute the young couple’s living. Catherine’s expectations ‘had been as unfixed as her ideas of her father’s incomes’ (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 97), which is to say that, in regard to her family’s financial situation, she also has very little knowledge. However, she chooses to follow her brother’s reaction and be joyful with the response, though the same cannot be said of Isabella, who is rather disappointed and makes no effort to hide it. Catherine cannot help being “hurt by these accusations. ‘I am very sure,’ said she, ‘that my father has promised to do as much as he can afford’” (p. 98). Yet, as soon as Isabella blames her behavior on the anxiety of having to wait for the wedding to take place, Catherine is quick to shut away any negative emotions that might have risen:

Catherine’s uncomfortable feelings began to lessen. She endeavoured to believe that the delay of the marriage was the only source of Isabella’s regret; and when she saw her at their next interview as cheerful and amiable as ever, endeavoured to forget that she had for a minute thought otherwise” (p. 98)

The ‘uncomfortable feelings’ Catherine feels will reappear the next time she observes Isabella and Frederick Tilney interacting, and “how odd” (p. 106) Isabella’s manner when speaking to him is. The point has arrived when even Catherine can perceive that the nature of their connection is not simply friendly, and so she can no longer ignore her friend’s behavior and especially not the way it is harming her own brother. Making an effort to understand Isabella’s actions, Catherine begrudgingly maintains that “Isabella could not be aware of the pain she was inflicting; but it was a degree of willful thoughtlessness which Catherine could not but resent” (p. 107). She finally decides to take action, both for her brother and for Captain Tilney’s sake, who, she believes, must be completely unaware of Miss Thorpe’s engagement.

In the hopes of clearing things up, she approaches Tilney and in her characteristically frank manner, asks him to let his brother know of her friend's engagement, only to find out he had known of it all along. Catherine is incapable of understanding how Frederick would still choose to act the way he does with such information, but Henry is quick to point out that Isabella, rather than his brother, is the one responsible for James Morland's suffering, moving the conversation away from his own brother's conduct. Catherine, however, is very to the point, since, lacking experience in the matters of social conduct, she is not aware of the danger represented by certain subjects and lines of questioning:

‘But what can your brother mean? If he knows her engagement, what can he mean by his behavior?’

‘You are a very close questioner.’ (p. 108)

Henry is clearly in discomfort, but still attempts to give her the facts of the matter in order to appease her, though she is far from happy with this. Catherine cannot even conjecture why a man such as Captain Tilney might flirt with an engaged woman, and Henry is ultimately led to try and calm her with promises of his brother soon leaving and things returning to normality. Catherine allows herself to be relieved by that at last and “would contend no longer against comfort. (...) Henry Tilney must know best. She blamed herself for the extent of her fears, and resolved never to think so seriously on the subject again” (p. 109). Once again choosing to ignore her own feelings rather than trust them, due to her own lack of knowledge on how to shape them or decode them without some form of external aid, Catherine leans on Henry's judgement and accepts it for fact. Such a judgement will not be of comfort long, as his promises do not hold up, and Catherine is finally forced to face Isabella's true nature (with Henry's support yet again), even if she never actually quite decodes Frederick's in a satisfying manner, in a clear display of the limitations of Catherine's journey of social and personal development.

In sum, Isabella and John's characters are a source of growth for Catherine, who has been used solely to the familiar figures of her home parsonage. Both Isabella and her brother represent the hypocritical, superficial staples of femininity and masculinity, and, in a way, they both unnerve Catherine, though she is not quick to point out how (and, in Isabella's case, it does take her longer, and the aid of Henry's guiding hand, to accept). Yet it is by knowing them that Catherine comes to expand her own knowledge and understanding of human behavior, by coming face-to-face with individuals who represent the worst of the society she is a part of, but who are nevertheless an inevitable product and portion of it. With both her own developing confidence in her intuition and the aid of Henry Tilney's patient mentorship, Catherine learns

the true character of Isabella, and so grows more prepared to face figures like her and her brother. Despite manipulating and causing Catherine a great deal of trouble, the Thorpe siblings help Catherine realize the world is not the easy, uncomplicated place she had readied herself to find (a realization that will arrive full-force during her stay at Northanger Abbey), but rather a difficult place to traverse, one where a young woman raised at home with little social experiences outside of her village is easily manipulated and used. To be prepared to handle these types of figures, Catherine must recognize them for what they are and so become aware of their existence – and to do so, she must be aware of her own feelings of discomfort and anger, and learn to trust them rather than stifle them, something that does not happen easily to a young woman who has grown expecting those around her to be just as she is. As David Blair observes, “Isabellas and Johnn Thorpes are inevitable, and entry into the world can only properly be accomplished by learning to recognize them” (2007, p. x). Through those two characters, Catherine gains an experience that will allow her to become both a more efficient social member, as well as a young woman who is far more confident in her own judgements.

However, her ability to decode Isabella’s behavior and understand some of its nature stems in part from Henry’s helpful guidance. In other cases, such as when discussing Henry’s brother, Frederick, and the way he reciprocates Isabella’s attentions despite her current situation, Catherine is not allowed to understand the nature of his actions. She does not have the social knowledge or skills to make sense of it, and in this matter Henry denies her instruction. The implication is clear: this is not a subject that a young woman such as Catherine should concern herself with, as, unlike Isabella, Frederick Tilney “is backed by money, gender and status” (CROGAN, 2002, p. 21), and his sexually-charged attitudes toward Isabella and the potentially destructive consequences of it for herself do not deserve the same dissection and reproach than hers do. In a situation such as this, it is better that Catherine not understand everything; Catherine grows and improves her mind, but also finds that one must not overstep certain social and cultural boundaries of knowledge. And, because she is not allowed or not capable of knowing certain things, she is forced to trust a higher authority on the matter – in the case of Frederick’s behavior, it is Henry’s.

Another character who is also of great significance to Catherine’s development throughout the novel is the already-mentioned sister of Henry Tilney, Eleanor, who is first introduced in the story in Chapter VIII. Like Henry to John Thorpe, Eleanor works as a foil to Isabella and, from the very beginning, seems to represent a much more ideal model of female behavior. While she appears to be around Catherine and Isabella’s age, she is much more

knowledgeable than the former, and more discreet and unaffected than the latter. To stress the difference between Eleanor and Isabella, Mônica Chagas observes all the ways in which Eleanor's behavior differs from Isabella's when she is first introduced:

Ela se resguarda em um primeiro momento, aceitando a amizade que Catherine avidamente oferece, mas não buscando uma intimidade instantânea; comporta-se de maneira recatada ao longo do baile, ao invés de flertar compulsivamente; e não procura intrometer-se na relação entre heroína e irmão. (2013, p. 21)

Claire Crogan observes how Eleanor is just as capable a reader as Henry Tilney (contrasting with Catherine, who only reads novels), even if Henry inevitably has dominance on most interactions and circumstances due to his higher status as a man. Crogan goes on to state, regarding Eleanor's position, that:

Eleanor reads in accordance with accepted educational treatises since she exhibits little independent thought or action and is well aware of her dependent position. She is very much a puppet in the patriarchal system. In this respect Eleanor is an isolated, sad creature who epitomizes the ideal dutiful daughter. (2002, p. 21)

Thus, from Crogan's perspective, Eleanor, who symbolizes the best example of female behavior Catherine encounters throughout her journey, is more like a heroine than Isabella or Catherine, in the sense that she is lonely and tragic. She is also, like heroines usually are, subjugated to the male authority of both her brother and her father (as it is made clear in the *Northanger Abbey* chapters); the second-to-last female character to appear in the story, she is hardly a positive portrayal of a woman, less a fleshed-out character and more a shadow of her own brother. Even at the end of the novel, once both Catherine and Eleanor have successfully married and gone on to have 'happy endings', Eleanor's husband is a non-person, who only serves the purpose of removing her from the parental home.

Yet, one of the most discussed and analyzed scenes in *Northanger Abbey* involves Eleanor, taking place in Chapter XIV, after Catherine has managed to stand her ground and not cancel a walk with the Tilneys for a ride with the Thorpes and her brother James. Catherine, Henry and his sister take a walk around Beechen Cliff, "that noble hill, whose beautiful verdure and hanging coppice render it so striking an object from almost every opening in Bath" (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 77). The conversations that take place during this chapter serve as an example of the complex power dynamics influencing Catherine's relationship with Henry, as well as Henry's relationship with women in general.

The beginning of their conversation parallels Catherine's discussion with John Thorpe over gothic novels, where she is silenced out of shame for enjoying the genre. This time, when she speaks of the subject with Henry, she does it with much more self-awareness:

'But you never read novels, I dare say?'

'Why not?'

'Because they are not clever enough for you – gentlemen read better books.' (p. 77)

As Gilbert and Gubar note, Catherine's "censure is really, of course, a form of self-deprecation. The novel is a status-deprived genre, Austen implies, because it is closely associated with a status-deprived gender" (2000, p. 131-2). This self-awareness of the lack of value of this literary genre has already appeared in the narrator's defense of the novel in Chapter V, who argues that there is value in the novel, and Catherine believes so too, even if she cannot admit it to the man she fancies out of fear of being seen as stupid or frivolous. Instead, it is Henry who is quick to point out how wonderful novels are, particularly Mrs. Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. It is only with Henry's impassioned approval that Catherine can again appreciate her favorite genre without fear or embarrassment: "'I am very glad to hear it indeed, and now I shall never be ashamed of liking Udolpho myself'" (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 77). Catherine's reliance on external approval is expected in a young woman of her age and social standing, yet, with Henry, this support is in risk of being more harmful than good, because he is clearly more than willing to provide it for her whenever possible – therefore, rather than build her own opinions and argue for herself, Catherine can simply follow Henry's well-formulated and highly-valued ones.

Moreover, he is also happy to instruct her on all the subjects her minimal education failed her. Once the Tilneys begin observing the view of the countryside, Catherine "was quite lost. She knew nothing of drawing, nothing of taste" (p. 80). Catherine becomes "heartily ashamed of her own ignorance" (p. 80), yet, in a brilliantly vicious speech, the narrator observes how wrong Catherine was to feel ashamed, for, "to come with a well-informed mind is to come with an inability of administering to the vanity of others, which a sensible person would always wish to avoid. A woman especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing anything should conceal it as well as she can" (p. 80). The narrator mentions here Fanny Burney's *Camilla* (1796) as an example of how ignorance in women looked upon favorably by men, and "a good-looking girl, with an affectionate heart and a very ignorant mind, cannot fail of attracting a clever young man" (p. 80). Here, the author "angrily attacks their [women's] culturally conditioned ignorance" (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 134) in a way that makes it clear that Catherine's ignorance is not a positive thing in her character, but a negative trait that leaves her

open for male subjugation and indoctrination, while at the same time being an important part of what makes her achieve her (and society's) goal of marrying a well-off man and living a stable and tranquil life. For, as Blair points out, "a young woman like Catherine makes a young man like Henry feel an effortless superiority which is inseparable from the fondness with which he appears genuinely to regard her" (2007, p. xvii).

It is important to remember that Catherine is, after all, "not destined to be a feminist hero: that way martyrdom lies" (BLAIR, 2007, p. xvii). Annis Pratt, in her book on women's fiction, would call Catherine's development throughout her journey 'growing down', because the only way for a woman to grow up is to refuse societal accommodation, and so either perish or face madness/exile. Catherine is following the route of the common woman, while the narrator is the one who uses humor to go against this "growing down" process by carefully stressing how unjust, stifling, difficult and dangerous for a young woman's selfhood and self-ownership such a route must be. Catherine's journey is lined with challenges, and to survive with most of her individuality still intact is the hardest of them all. It is a tricky position for Catherine, because she is not yet aware of how precarious the balance in which she stands is, even if the reader and narrator are, between what she wishes to become (the wife of Henry Tilney) and what she must give up to achieve it (power over her own self), a concession that must be carefully made if she is not to end up either as a complacent and silly Mrs. Allen or as a sad and translucent Eleanor.

Yet, throughout the novel, it becomes clear that Catherine relies on Henry more and more to help her see the world and understand it for what it really is, since she is from the start at a disadvantage, as no education ever prepared her for what she was to find. This is a difficult situation for her, as it inevitably forces her to depend on Henry rather on herself for guidance and intuition, and, because he is a good teacher and an intelligent man, this is rather easy. Therefore, when Henry decides to play the part of tutor and teach her about landscape, he is actually teaching Catherine to see things from his perspective: "his instructions were so clear that she soon began to see beauty in everything admired by him" (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 80). At the same time, he is the one who gets to choose when to stop the lessons and, consequently, limit the knowledge – indeed, he has power over Catherine to lead her back into ignorant silence: "Delighted with her progress, and fearful of wearying her with too much wisdom at once, Henry suffered the subject to decline, and by an easy transition (...) he shortly found himself arrived at politics; and from politics it was an easy step to silence" (p. 81).

In this way, Henry's mentorship is both a positive and a negative part of Catherine's development. While it clearly helps in developing her mental capacities and her critical thinking, it is also a way for Henry to promote a mastery over her and control and restrain her budding knowledge, even if his reasons for doing so do not make him an unpleasant man such as John Thorpe, but rather are in line with the also restricted roles women were allowed to occupy at the time. When discussing Susan Fraiman's 1992 book on the female *Bildungsroman*, *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development*, Cíntia Schwantes observes the role of the male mentor for female development: "O mentor por excelência, entretanto, é o homem que a educa para ser a esposa dele e a mãe de seus filhos. O que torna-se evidentemente problemático, porque essa é uma educação para servir, não para ser" (1997, p. 60). Fraiman points out how harmful this is to female development, as it stifles, rather than helps promote female intellectual abilities: "and finally, consequently, when the mentor is a husband and when the apprenticeship reduces to a process of marital binding, it never leads the heroine to mastery, but only to a lifetime as perennial novice" (FRAIMAN, 1992, p. 6). She reiterates what Annis Pratt had observed previously on the impossibility of achieving female adulthood in eighteenth and nineteenth-century British novels, observing that "the usual parameters of Georgian and Victorian womanhood preclude the goals of progress and mastery" (p. 6). Catherine is another example of this journey of frustrated adulthood, or, at least, so it must seem.

Another significant passage in this scene actually precedes this one and involves a lively conversation with all three characters about history. When, while discussing different readings, Henry says he is fond of history, Catherine is quick to give her own opinion on the matter,

I wish I were too. I read it a little as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars of pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all – it is very tiresome: and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention. (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 78)

Catherine's comment, when taken at face-value, seems to imply that she is not that different from the silly married women she has encountered in her adventure, who care for nothing more than clothes and their own selves. Reading Catherine's opinions from this perspective, according to Blair, also allows the reader to observe that "this expresses not just Catherine's own callowness but reflects on the whole tendency of her society to create precisely the kind of young woman she is – ill-informed, anti-intellectual, trivial and entrapped within a limited and

devalued agenda of femininity”. (2007, p. xv-xvi), which would reinforce the author’s criticism on female ignorance as something that is both socially reinforced and rewarded. On another level, however, Catherine’s views are quite valid – history is not interesting for Catherine because it is a male-dominated narrative, from which women are mostly absent. This would explain Catherine’s disinterest in it and love for novels, since,

novels for readers like Catherine are compelling because they represent a female-centered form of narrative. If history is by men and about men – and contains its own elements of ‘invention’ – then novels, on the contrary, - although not the kind read by John Thorpe – can be by and about women, and whether responsibly or meretriciously, they are histories of women’s aspirations and fears. (BLAIR, 2007, p. xviii)

In fact, Catherine’s distaste for history due to it being ‘tiresome’, according to Avrom Fleischman, “implies a desire for an image of life that will be larger than the proceedings of statesmen and the movements of armies; she wants a picture of the actual life lived by men and women” (1974, p. 654). This depiction of ordinary life as history, Fleischman observes, “was later assimilated into historiography by nineteenth-century Kvultugeschichte”. Catherine’s condemnations on the restrictive nature of history are actually a lot more poignant than she might be aware, even if they do not excuse her dismissing the subject altogether as reading material.

Eleanor, however, is fond of history, in spite or perhaps because of historians’ creative liberties. Catherine, surprised with the fact, cannot help but call the learning and reading of history books a ‘torment’, something that an intelligent and well-read man such as Henry takes offense at:

‘That little boys and girls should be tormented,’ said Henry, ‘is what no one at all acquainted with human nature in a civilized state can deny (...) I use the verb “to torment”, as I observed to be your own method, instead of “to instruct”, supposing them to be now admitted as synonymous.’ (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 79)

Yet, this time, Catherine does not cave in to Henry’s more knowledgeable views, but rather stands her ground:

‘You think me foolish to call instruction a torment, but if you had been as much used as myself to hear poor little children first learning their letters and then learning to spell, if you had ever seen how stupid they can be for a whole morning together, and how tired my poor mother is at the end of it, as I am in the habit of seeing almost every day of my life at home, you would allow that to *torment* and to *instruct* might sometimes be used as synonymous words’. (p. 79)

In this case, Catherine has had experiences of her own with the subject and so is capable of having an opinion herself and expressing it confidently – she remains firm on the validity of her sentiments for the subject, because she knows them to be true from personal experience.

The language used by Catherine, therefore, while not making sense to Henry, “quite accurately reflects her own perspective” (GILBER; GUBAR, 2000, p. 138). This is an important instance of Catherine being true to herself and to her own ‘truth’, rather than bending to a higher authority’s reality.

As a matter of fact, it is Henry Tilney’s imposition of his own interpretation of reality over Catherine’s that constitutes one of the young heroine’s biggest setbacks during the Northanger Abbey chapters, especially considering the dangerously high regard in which Catherine holds him (“It was no effort to Catherine to believe that Henry Tilney could never be wrong. (...) His meaning must always be just – and what she did not understand, she was almost as ready to admire, as what she did.” [AUSTEN, 2007, p. 82]). Yet, this tendency is clear from the very beginning, not only in Henry’s mentorship and guidance of Catherine, but also in the way that he attempts time and again to fit her into a preconceived notion of female behavior. Richard Lansdown is the one to point out this strategy, observing that Tilney “defends himself against women by conventionalizing their lives (...) and patronizing them” (2004, p. 74), such as by claiming that, like all women, Catherine possesses a diary (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 14) or needs motivation to go outside and do exercise (p. 126). This is an important point to make regarding Tilney’s character, as it stresses his own limitations, rather than only Catherine’s, and the fact that “many readers exaggerate his tutelary function in this respect, or overlook the fact (...) that when and if Austen's leading men do "educate" the women they come to marry, they are also demonstrably in need of learning something themselves” (LANSDOWN, 2004, p. 73). Although Henry’s need for some social and emotional lessons is much less overt and dire than Catherine’s (who is lacking both in knowledge of social cues and in sharpness of inner voice), it still shapes his character, and consequently, affects Catherine’s development in the second chapter of this analysis, both in the sense that it frustrates some of her internal development and also allows her to recognize him as not the idealized, all-knowing being she is infatuated with, in a way that points to a less straightforward answer to Catherine’s development than simply a lesson on failing to reach adulthood.

4 CATHERINE MORLAND IN NORTHANGER ABBEY

Before discussing Catherine's adventure in Northanger Abbey and what she found there, it is important to bring up another important character who has so far only been mentioned briefly: General Tilney. Introduced in Chapter X, General Tilney is the father of Henry, Eleanor and Fredrick, as well as the current owner of Northanger Abbey. He is described by the narrator as "a very handsome man, of a commanding aspect, past the bloom, but not past the vigour of life" (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 56), making a more austere impression than any of his children, something that will only become more pronounced as Catherine gets to know the family better.

The first time the reader is made aware that there may be something not so pleasant in the General's character is a little after the Beechen Cliff scene, when Catherine is invited by the Tilneys to dine at their place. The whole evening, however, turns out to be a disappointment to Catherine, as,

Instead of finding herself improved in acquaintance with Miss Tilney, from the intercourse of the day she seemed hardly so intimate with her as before; instead of seeing Henry Tilney to greater advantage than ever, in the ease of a family party, he had never said so little, nor been so little agreeable. And, in spite of their father's great civilities to her – in spite of his thanks, invitations, and compliments – it had been a release to get away from him. (p. 91-2)

She is quick to distance those feelings from any fault of the General himself, turning the blame on herself instead: "He could not be accountable for his children's want of spirits, or for her want of enjoyment in his company. The former she hoped at last might have been accidental, and the latter she could only attribute to her own stupidity" (p. 92). Catherine is again pushing down her own feelings or trying to frame them in a way that makes herself, and no one else, responsible for them being negative. However, as much as Catherine might try and deny it, it is the General who is the source of both his children's uncomfortable behavior and Catherine's own uneasy feelings throughout the meal. After all, not only is he the father and head of the family of the man she is in love with, which puts her in a situation of extreme pressure to please, but he is also (as the reader will come to see later on) not a good man.

Soon after this, Catherine is invited by an overly-eager General and a very passive Eleanor ("My daughter, Miss Morland," he continued, without leaving his daughter time to speak, 'has been forming a very bold wish'" [p. 99]) to be their guest at the family home, Northanger Abbey. Catherine is not yet aware of the General's materialistic nature, and of his mistaken perception of her as the heiress to the Allens' fortune (a perception given to him by John Thorpe, also financially interested in Catherine), and so she cannot know that he views

her only in terms of the dowry she would bring to the marriage with his son. The General, in this sense, is not wholly unlike John Thorpe, in that they are both tyrannical and avaricious men – the difference is that, unlike Thorpe, the General is a threatening figure for Catherine and his own children, because he has power, both material and symbolical, as state-owner and family patriarch. Catherine's stay at Northanger Abbey will force her to face her discomfort and listen to her own intuition of him, in a process that is much more challenging than the one she goes through trying to accept her distaste of the Thorpes.

The General's position above Catherine, everything he represents to her as the Tilney father as well as her own anxieties over going to a strange new place mingle to make Catherine's departure from Bath with the Tilneys an emotionally-charged one. In a new situation such as this one, that involves going to an unfamiliar place with new acquaintances and with her whole future possibly in the line, Catherine cannot help her insecurities from bursting forth when taking leave of Mr. Allen:

So great was her agitation in finding herself as one of the family, and so fearful was she of not doing exactly what was right, and of not being able to preserve their good opinion, that, in the embarrassment of the first five minutes, she could almost have wished to return with him [Mr. Allen] to Pulteney Street. (p. 110)

It is clear, then, that even before the trip has begun, Catherine's journey to the Abbey is already fraught with fears and apprehensions of a social nature, regarding her reputation, others' views of herself and her somewhat lacking social skills.

Additionally, from the very beginning, one of the chief causes of her anxieties is General Tilney. This can be observed in the following passage, where the narrator states that,

Miss Tilney's manners and Henry's smile soon did away some of her unpleasant feelings; but still she was far from being at ease; nor could the incessant attentions of the general himself entirely reassure her. Nay, perverse as it seemed, she doubted whether she might not have felt less, had she been less attended to (p. 110)

Although Catherine cannot help feeling even more upset for her own disquiet at being the center of the General's exaggerated attentions, even she is incapable of denying the fact that he makes her feel bad, though she cannot point out exactly why. This becomes even worse when Frederick Tilney arrives late and is severely scolded before her. It is clear to Catherine that "General Tilney, though so charming a man, seemed always a check upon his children's spirits" (p. 112), and the entire trip becomes an uncomfortable one because of him.

The one thing that seems to make her more confident about the trip to the Tilney home is the gothic aspect of the Abbey to which she is going. As it was previously observed, Catherine

is very interested in gothic literature, and such interest also contemplates gothic architecture (abbeys were popular locations in the novels the young heroine read). The idea of spending time in such a place already fills Catherine with idealized notions of gothic adventures and mysteries: “she could not entirely subdue the hope of some traditional legends, some awful memorials of an injured and ill-fated nun” (p. 101). From a passage such as this, it can be observed that Catherine tends to read gothic novels’ situations and stories in a very literal sense, which she transposes to the real world with little change. In a way, Catherine still hopes to play the part of the heroine in her own gothic tale, and a stay at Northanger Abbey might just allow her to live out an implausible adventure for a young woman in eighteenth-century England. Henry’s joking suggestions of the gothic horrors that might await her at the Abbey only reinforce the idea that she is to encounter the exact things she had been reading about, and fill her with expectation for an adventure not yet begun.

Such imaginative wanderings are put to an abrupt end, however, with their arrival at Northanger Abbey. The place before Catherine is much more distressing than what she expected, because it is completely unfamiliar and resembles nothing that gothic novels have prepared her to deal with: “To pass between lodges of a modern appearance, to find herself with ease in the very precincts of the abbey, and driven so rapidly along a smooth, level road of fine gravel, without obstacle, alarm or solemnity of any kind, struck her as odd and inconsistent” (p. 116). The result is that Catherine finds herself suddenly thrust in an unfamiliar place and unfamiliar situation, and her only guiding voice for dealing with the social world (the voice of the novels she reads) does not seem to be of any aid in helping her traverse this environment. It is no wonder that Catherine’s anxieties increase at the realization that Northanger Abbey’s windows had no “painted glass, dirt, and cobwebs” (p. 117), as she uses the lack of gothic as an excuse for all of her feelings of distress and discomfort. Finding nothing familiar to hold on to, she is forced to revert to fabricating it in order to relieve some of her anxiety and channel it somewhere externally. By doing so, she is again using her preferred method for dealing with unwanted emotions: pushing them back and ignoring their real roots.

The first incident of the sort occurs when Catherine is taken to her room in the Abbey for the first time. There she comes face-to-face with a big old chest, not unlike something that a gothic heroine might encounter in her adventure through a frightening castle, and it instantly places Catherine within a more familiar narrative. She is suddenly thrust into a gothic narrative of her own making, and the reader along with her: “Her fearful curiosity was every moment growing greater; and seizing, with trembling hands, the hasp of the lock, she resolved at all

hazards to satisfy herself at least to its contents” (p. 118). Catherine, however, reminds herself that she must be getting dressed for dinner; she had already been silently warned by Eleanor that “the strictest punctuality to the family hours would be expected at Northanger” (p. 117) and, yet, after fixing herself up, she considers that “one moment surely might be spared” (p. 119). Knowing what awaits Catherine is an evening in the presence of the oddly fearful General Tilney, it is not difficult to view these gothic wanderings of hers as means to both evade the General and to indirectly defy the orders set by him in the household.

Despite placing herself in a gothic (and, therefore, supposedly frightening situation), it is only when Eleanor arrives at Catherine’s door that actual fear takes over her. This time, however, the girls’ alarm is “not wholly unfounded” (p. 119) and the meeting with the General is scarier than Catherine’s literary reveries, despite the fact that he is, after a violent demand for dinner, polite to her as always: “Catherine trembled at the emphasis with which he spoke, and sat pale and breathless, in a most humble mood” (p. 119). Catherine blames herself and her silly imagination for the scene, as of yet incapable of pointing a finger at the patriarch of the Tilney household, despite the fact that she does acknowledge the effect he has on her, evidenced in the following passage: “The evening passed without any further disturbance, and, in the occasional absence of General Tilney, with much positive cheerfulness. It was only in his presence that Catherine felt the smallest fatigue from her journey” (p. 120). Thus, it seems that “even if Catherine still cannot entirely decode the situation, she nonetheless experiences the intuitive unease of a guest caught in a family situation fraught with unspoken tensions (BLAIR, 2007, p. xiii). Stuck in a distressing environment such as this one, Catherine’s imagination inevitably runs wild to make up for her lack of understanding of human behavior.

Once Catherine returns to her room for the night, the weather and the darkness have aided in creating a more than receptive setting for gothic ideas. After all, she is in a new environment with a different family which she hopes she might become a part of, and, though she tries to deny her fears, they manage to seep through somehow: “She would not hurry herself; she did not care if she were the last person up in the house. But she would not make up her fire; that would seem cowardly, as if she wished for the protection of light after she were in bed” (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 122). This time she is struck by a “high, old-fashioned black cabinet” (p. 122), another mysterious element in the room that is worth an investigation, and so Catherine becomes once more a heroine on a novelistic endeavor. She turns again to an object that might resonate with the narratives she is familiar with, and so become itself familiar to her, in an attempt to regain control over this strange situation she finds herself in. Catherine starts going

through the cabinet, until she finds an old manuscript, hear a door closing and jumps to the bed again, horribly frightened. As David Blair sees it, this incident derives

from a need to understand where she is, to decode unfamiliar surroundings and to take some kind of imaginative possession of the space she occupies. (...) Unable to locate Northanger in a validating historical narrative, she falls back on the Gothic narratives that she does possess, filtered through Henry's reinforcement of them. (2007, p. xviii)

Thus, in *Northanger Abbey*, the gothic stops representing the idealized world Catherine wishes for, but a safe space for her to fall back on in an unfamiliar environment that brings out difficult feelings to repress. In this way, the gothic both empowers her (as it aids Catherine in decoding this new environment and allows her to feel surer of herself) and harms her, by giving her a skewed vision of the place she is in and of her position within its narrative. Catherine has grown and become more confident after her time with the Thorpes, but this new experience at the home of the Tilneys is more than she and her newfound self-confidence can handle, especially considering she is near her beloved Henry as well as his family, which means any misstep might be fatal for her. The gothic allows Catherine to safely make sense of her feelings through a familiar language while still having her refuse to acknowledge their real cause, in a way that lets her register the emotions brought on by the suffocating presence of General Tilney presiding over *Northanger Abbey* without having to comprehend them.

The figure of the General in particular, as previously observed, is the main source of anxiety for Catherine, and the way she handles him is quite intriguing. From the start, one is aware that General Tilney tyrannizes his own children with his patriarchal power, and he uses it on Catherine as well, speaking for her and manipulating the situation to achieve his own desires, not unlike John and Isabella Thorpe have done. When taking Catherine on a tour of their home along with Eleanor, General Tilney very politely inquires whether Catherine might prefer to see the rooms or the gardens (while also pointing out that, due to unstable weather, it might not be so nice outside for much more time). He does not, however, give Eleanor or Catherine enough time to reply before he decides for them:

Which did his daughter think would most accord with fair friend's wishes? – But he thought he could discern. – Yes, he certainly read in Miss Morland's eyes a judicious desire of making use of the present smiling weather. – But when did she judge amiss? – The Abbey would always be safe and dry. – He yielded implicitly, and would fetch his hat and attend them in a moment. (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 128)

Not only does he attempt to make his own decisions fall on Catherine's shoulders, when in truth she wanted nothing more than to see the inside of the house, but he also manipulates her into believing such a decision takes a strain on him, making Catherine inevitably feel uncomfortable.

She cannot, however, voice her concerns directly to him: “He left the room, and Catherine, with a disappointed, anxious face, began to speak of her unwillingness that he should be taking them out of doors against his own inclination” (p. 128). When Eleanor explains to Catherine that her father always takes a walk at this time of the day, Catherine is dumbfounded and not sure what to think of him.

Moreover, Catherine’s stay at Northanger Abbey seems to enhance her dependence on Henry Tilney’s presence, as, by having taken on the role of mentor time and again, he is a comforting figure to fall back on in scary and unfamiliar situations such as this. Catherine unhappily observes, when they are beginning their walk: “If Henry had been with them indeed! – but now she should not know what was picturesque when she saw it” (p. 128). Yet, a few seconds later, when struck by the majestic gothic opulence of the Abbey, Catherine seems completely able to form her own opinions on landscape: “her feelings of delight were so strong, that without waiting for any better authority, she boldly burst forth in wonder and praise” (p. 128). As much as even she might believe otherwise, Catherine still owns her own mind and opinions and, though it is easier to rely on Henry’s rather than voice hers, she is completely capable of judging for herself.

After observing for a while the excessive richness possessed by the Tilneys, Catherine finds herself in another situation of mild, but noticeable defiance to the General’s wishes. While General Tilney wishes to walk through the park, Eleanor is already stepping towards her favorite path, which the General immediately defines as “cold” and “damp” (p. 130). Eleanor concedes, but Catherine, however, “struck by its gloomy aspect, and eager to enter it, could not, even by the General’s disapprobation, be kept from stepping forward. He perceived her inclination, and having urged the plea of health in vain, was too polite to make further opposition” (p. 131). As with the incident with the old chest, Catherine again uses her attraction to gothic and sinister things as an excuse to go against General Tilney’s orders, leading to a moment of slight confrontation in which Catherine comes out the winner. This scene shows that, even when being passive and subjugating her wishes or judgements to others, Catherine is still acting subversively and rebelling, in the small ways she can do it without being socially punished. In a way, this shows that she does not and will not fully welcome General Tilney’s authority, even if she is not conscious of her own attitude – and, perhaps, this might point to a more ambiguous position regarding Henry’s authority as well.

In this scene, there is also the first mention of the late Mrs. Tilney, another (this time, literally) absent figure of female adulthood. Henry and Eleanor’s mother quickly becomes a

source of curiosity for Catherine, and she makes her first confident supposition regarding the woman after finding out that the walk which General Tilney disliked used to be his wife's favorite:

Of her unhappiness in marriage, she felt persuaded. The General certainly had been an unkind husband. He did not love her walk – could he therefore have loved her? And besides, handsome as he was, there was something in the turn of his features which spoke his not having behaved well to her. (p. 131-2)

Catherine, thus, uses Mrs. Tilney's favorite path in the garden as proof of General Tilney's general bad-behavior towards his wife – in truth, though, her conclusions all come from her own personal experience of him, this newest piece of information being just further evidence that the General is someone unpleasant, who likely treated his wife the way he treats his children (specially his daughter, Eleanor). Catherine is finally allowing her intuition to make itself heard, now that she is faced with such evidence of the depreciation of the late mistress of the house, and her judgement is sound, just as it was with John Thorpe.

Her views of General Tilney do not improve when she finds out he “was dissatisfied” (p. 132) with the painted picture of his wife, and so chose not to have it hung in the drawing-room. Catherine's feelings are stronger than ever, and so is her conviction that “he must have been dreadfully cruel to her!” (p. 132). Catherine can no longer ignore her sentiments about him and finally recognizes what she has been feeling all along: “Catherine attempted no longer to hide from herself the nature of the feelings which, in spite of all his attentions, he had previously excited; and what had been terror and dislike before, was now absolute aversion” (p. 132). However, because she is not experienced enough of the world and its individuals, Catherine must find a familiar narrative in which to place General Tilney to make herself understand both his domineering figure and the feelings he brings out in her, and so she turns again to the gothic narratives she has a grasp on: “She had often read of such characters; characters which Mr. Allen had been used to call unnatural and overdrawn; but here was proof positive of the contrary” (p. 132). Before, while they were surrounded by a much more hospitable environment in Bath, Catherine was still able to censor her feelings, and “accommodate these feelings to an idea of what she *ought* to feel” (BLAIR, 2007, p. xii). Yet now she can no longer ignore the overwhelming anxieties about him that “have in fact begun considerably earlier than the journey to Northanger and have formed another strand in the narrative of Catherine's struggle to decode the complex personal and social semiotics of the world beyond Fullerton” (p. xi). Catherine's recognition of her real feelings for the General and

her attempts to understand him are, then, an important step in the development of Catherine's personal and social maturity.

Catherine, however, is still held back by her lack of confidence in her own opinions as well as by her social desire to be pleasing. When the General makes an appreciative comment about her family, Catherine "deeply regretted the impossibility of thinking well of a man so kindly disposed towards herself, and so full of civility to all her family" (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 135), placing once again on herself all the responsibility for her negative feelings about the General, rather than on the one that caused them. However, her newfound belief in the General's nature makes her also bolder and, when Eleanor is stopped in attempting to take Catherine over to another passage in the house because of the General's angry restrictions, Catherine "believed herself at last within the reach of something worth her notice" (p. 135). Again, she uses the gothic-like architecture of the place as a justification for her wishes to go against the General's orders, though this time she is more honest about the reason: "The General's evident desire of preventing such an examination was an additional stimulant" (p. 135). When she finds out that along that passage is the bedroom of the late Mrs. Tilney, Catherine becomes even more intrigued, and the gothic mystery she builds upon this information becomes even more absurd while, nevertheless, being significant development for a girl who hid even from herself the true reactions brought on by other people's disagreeable behavior.

After hearing more about the late Mrs. Tilney, Catherine decides that the General had certainly murdered his wife, or kept her incarcerated somewhere around the house, and she equates him with the gothic villain Montoni from Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries Of Udolpho*. While many critics of the novel seem to view Catherine's gothic take on the General as silly and a regression of her character, others read it as a natural and valid reaction to what Catherine has experienced of him and of his treatment of others. As David Blair observes:

Her reading of Gothic novels has not created her perceptions of General Tilney. Rather, it has begun to provide a vocabulary and narrative syntax through which to accommodate and develop those perceptions (...) What her suppressed narrative of the General's 'gothic' career as a wife-murderer and/or wife-incarcerator results from, then, is in part the collapse of those modes of self-censorship which have previously blurred her view of him. (2007, p. xiv)

Hers is a deeply personal response to a tyrannical man who is, by all accounts, a less dramatic and sanguine version of the villains of her novels. Catherine feels safe to make her judgements because she has the language and knowledge of the gothic novels to support her. Although her readings are not very sophisticated, Catherine understands that her beloved novels portray a universe that is not wholly unconnected to her own, as they depict (as previously observed)

female fears, apprehensions and struggles. This use of the gothic to help her make sense of situations, thus, only appears with such strength in the *Northanger Abbey* segments because it is here that Catherine is faced with the real-world dangers hyperbolically portrayed in her novels of aggressive and threatening masculine power over women. As a resourceful reader, Catherine uses the only literary tools available to her to make sense of a distressing situation.

At the same time that she comes to her realizations of the General, she also begins to realize that the gothic might not be the most trustworthy of guides to the real world, particularly as it relates to *Northanger Abbey* as a home. One of the clearest examples takes place when she is observing the kitchen of *Northanger* and is surprised to find such a huge number of servants, something wholly unlike the situation of the narratives she knows: “How inexpressibly different in these domestic arrangements from such as she had read about – from abbeys and castles, in which, though certainly larger than *Northanger*, all the dirty work of the house was to be done by two pair of female hands at the utmost” (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 134). This encompasses some of Catherine’s discoveries “about the life lived in country houses, the relation of that manner of life to the visible structures” (FLEISCHMAN, 1974, p. 657), discoveries she makes without Henry’s aid and which are contrasted with her use of gothic as support when it comes to the General and his deceased wife. While at the same time relying more and more on the gothic to explore the unknown, she also comes to distrust it (and with it, her own judgement).

Catherine’s view of General Tilney as a gothic villain, however, is quite a valid reading of him, that connects both to her experiences and to her limited knowledge of human narratives. The problem with this use of the gothic to decode Henry’s father, however, lies in her lack of interpretative sophistication. In Avrom Fleischman’s views, Catherine’s use of the gothic to explain the General is legitimate and efficient, yet she looks at literary conventions in a literal way. However, Catherine’s negative experiences at the Abbey will allow her to understand the function of literature as a way to aid her in reading the world around her, and to hone her skills when using such a tool:

The heroine must therefore be instructed in the approved way of taking her literary experiences: not as simple schemes for perceiving the world around her, but as highly-charged symbols whose forms add shadow and depth to the prosaic. In the end she must learn to take the Gothic novels not as alternatives to the given but as enrichments and articulations of it (p. 662)

By the end of the novel, Fleischman believes Catherine comes to understand the symbolic, rather than literal, nature of the narratives she has been leaning on to get by, thanks to her visit to *Northanger Abbey* and her constant use of gothic narratives as a safe space.

Ultimately, Catherine's recognition of General Tilney as a gothic villain comes to an abrupt and embarrassing end, and so does her trust in her intuition. While attempting to investigate Mrs. Tilney's headquarters, she is found by Henry and, ashamed of being seen exploring his home unaccompanied, tells him of her suspicions regarding his father. The result is a strong reprimand from her mentor:

Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. (...) Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 144)

The speech once more forces Henry's own worldview onto Catherine – and, this time, she has no choice but to see her folly and accepts his judgement yieldingly.

Yet, as David Blair observes, Henry's reprimand represents “one of the most slippery of all the passages in the novel” (2007, p. xx). The real situation in England is not as simple as Henry describes it, for, even if women are protected from being murdered by their spouses, English laws “do not offer much more than this minimal security for a wife not beloved, or a woman not a wife” (GILBERT; GUBAR, 2000, p. 136). While some critics do believe that Austen makes Henry's words her own, Blair stresses women's fragile social situation when stating that Henry's

vision of England in 1800 is patently wishful thinking. Austen would have had to have spent the previous twenty-five years on Mars rather than in rural Hampshire not to be aware that ‘the correct answers to [Henry's] questions are not as straightforward as [he] thinks’, as Margaret Kirkham rightly insists (Kirkham, p. 90). The laws of England do give a husband in 1800 something very close to absolute power over his wife and daughters, and nothing we see of Eleanor and learn of her mother's life, whose hardships Henry cannot disguise, does anything to reassure us about the General's exercise of that power. (2007, p. xx)

Henry's views are, after all, the views of a very conservative young man who is, like all the other characters, restricted by his position in the world and the readings he is allowed to make of it. Henry, as Katie Garbarino sees it, “would not and could not understand the insecurity and vulnerability of a girl like Catherine. He could not understand her fear of the General, as he is not vulnerable to his potential cruelty” (2013, p. 22). Henry is only attempting to calm Catherine by forcing a more acceptable and secure vision of the world onto her. He is playing the part of the mentor once again, yet this time he has managed to shatter whatever confidence Catherine had begun developing in her own intuition, and his false and idealized views of the English do not allow Catherine to ready herself for the General's true nature, the cruelty of which is worthy of any gothic villain.

Henry's return to the Northanger Abbey storyline through this passage also represents the return of Catherine's dependence on his 'good-sense' and wise judgement, and the distrust of her own capacities. However, one must consider Catherine's situation before placing her in the position of "puppet": Catherine is a seventeen-year-old girl whose current objective is to become the wife of the man in whose house she is a guest. She has just been caught wandering his home and creating morbid suppositions about his father, and has only now realized how improper her behavior has been:

It was not only with herself that she was sunk – but with Henry. Her folly, which now seemed even criminal, was all exposed to him, and he must despise her for ever. The liberty which her imagination had dared to take with the character of his father, could he ever forgive it? The absurdity of her curiosity and her fears, could they ever be forgotten? She hated herself more than she could express. (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 145)

Giving up her intuitive gothic reveries for his judgements is a way to try and regain his affection and to salvage her reputation in his eyes. Catherine must, if she is not go home defeated, give up her own judgements and accept Henry's – that is the greatest concession she must make if she wants to become his wife. She does so by blaming all her fancies on the novels, without knowing that they were only giving her an adequate language to express the fears and apprehensions she felt. Because of Henry, Catherine's views of human behavior take on a less idealized hue ("among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad" [p. 146]), but her opinion of General Tilney, though not positive, becomes much milder: "she need not fear to acknowledge some actual specks in the character of their father, who (...) she did believe, upon serious consideration, to be not perfectly amiable" (p. 146). And so Catherine is no longer curious to know more about him or his motivations; this experience has allowed her to learn her social place, and that some knowledge is too risky for her to seek. As with her experience with Frederick Tilney and Henry's uncomfortable refusal to let her know more, Catherine hits a boundary in her journey toward maturity and is again forced to revert to a male authority for guidance – and, in this particular situation, in order to see to her own interests of marrying said authority.

After the incident, however, Henry begins treating her with more kindness than ever, and things progress smoothly for Catherine. She is finally made aware of Isabella's real character, after finding out from letters that she and her brother had broken up because she believed Frederick Tilney would propose to her. This comes as a surprise to Catherine, who had trusted Henry's well-meaning words about her friend and her brother James, and so was completely unprepared to deal with the blow of the discovery. Henry helps her make sense of

her friend, however, though the same cannot be said for the subject of Frederick Tilney, for whom Catherine still has mixed feelings.

Once Catherine finds out Frederick led Isabella on with no prospect of marrying her, she becomes again upset with the man's behavior. The conversation she has with Henry on the matter indicates clearly that the two have different positions on the subject, with Catherine being naturally more sympathetic toward Isabella's relatable female plight, despite her total dislike of her old friend:

'I do not like him at all. As it happens, there is no great harm done, because I do not think Isabella has any heart to lose. But, suppose he had made her very much in love with him?'

'But we must first suppose Isabella to have had a heart to lose, - consequently to have been a very different creature; and, in that case, she would have met with very different treatment.'

'It is very right that you should stand by your brother.' (p. 160)

While Catherine judges Frederick from the same position she judges Isabella, Henry is more moderate on his verdict of his brother, placing most of the blame on Isabella herself. While it is clear that Catherine does not agree, she does manage to change her mind (or, at least, drop the subject), as she is "complimented out of further bitterness. Frederick could not be unpardonably guilty, while Henry made himself so agreeable" (p. 160). This passage seems to suggest that, rather than being subjugated to Henry's authority, when it comes to Frederick, Catherine simply chooses to give up the discussion, without actually acknowledging that Henry is right or caving in to his views. Rather, considering Lorna Ellis' views on the female *Bildungsroman*, Catherine seems to be learning to manipulate Henry's expectations and making concessions that favor her situation, even if she is not necessarily aware of it – she does not agree with Henry's views, but she also does not argue against them, allowing Henry to silence her with pleasant words. As she allows him to have power over her, she paradoxically also gains (much more limited) power over him.

Nevertheless, the last experience Catherine has at Northanger Abbey is far from a positive one. Once the General leaves for London for the week, things are very tranquil, even if Henry is forced to leave the women due to other engagements. However, Catherine is soon faced with the General's unexpected return and his sudden and inexplicable demand (which Eleanor is forced to voice) that she leave his home immediately. Because Catherine had allowed herself to trust Henry's views of his father, she is not prepared to handle the cruelty he finally shows himself capable of.

In this sense, to Gilbert and Gubar, *Northanger Abbey* would be a novel that describes “the terror and self-loathing that results when a woman is made to disregard her personal sense of danger, to accept as real what contradicts her perception of her own situation” (2000, p. 143). Yet, this is not all Catherine’s journey is about. She does come to learn much about the world and to develop her social skills and a higher level of confidence in her own self, even if she is still subjugated to Henry’s experienced authority in most matters. This final act of violence from the General is a reminder to Catherine that, like her own, Henry’s judgement is also not infallible and that relying on it does not automatically ensure she is right or safe.

When delivering the message of Catherine’s departure to her friend, Eleanor makes a poignant statement on her own (and, in a way, on women’s) position within the household: “I trust you will acquit me, for you must have been long enough in this house to see that I am but a nominal mistress of it, that my real power is nothing” (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 164). Eleanor, the representation of the ideal young lady, is also a depiction of the powerlessness and severely limited autonomy of young women (the only way Eleanor can gain some power is through marriage, which she happily goes through). Catherine has come across this fact time and again, by watching the desperate situation of the unmarried women around her or the lacking maturity of the married ones, by learning that there are limitations to what she can know or has the tools to understand and by experiencing first-hand the trials a young woman is exposed to on the road to making a match and leaving the parental home. Ultimately, according to Blair, Catherine’s final journey from Northanger Abbey back to the parental home is a “reminder that the world is a more complex, devious and dangerous place than Catherine’s brief exposure to it has equipped her to anticipate” (2007, p. viii). It is possible that Catherine will never actually understand most of the world she has come across.

Yet, this does not nullify her growth throughout the novel. And she has grown, as Catherine’s mother observes when she reaches home: “It is always good for young people to be put upon exerting themselves; and you know, my dear Catherine, you always were a sad little scatter-brained creature; but now you must have been forced to have your wits about you” (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 172). In more subtle ways, Catherine herself also recognizes the changes she has gone through in her journey, changes which caused her to stop viewing the world as a simple and idealized place, but as a much more complex one, that she is not capable of decoding (but is at least aware of the fact). And yet Catherine herself has matured and become more complex as a result of this contact, even if it has led to some sad realizations:

For soon were all her thinking powers swallowed up in the reflection of her own change of feelings and spirits since last she had trodden that well-known road. It was not three months ago since, wild with joyful expectation, she had there run backwards and forwards some ten times a-day, with an heart light, gay, and independent; looking forward to pleasures untasted and unalloyed, and free from the apprehension of evil as from the knowledge of it. Three months ago had seen her all this; and now, how altered a being did she return! (p. 173)

She has become stronger and smarter, and knows the real dangers hiding in the world behind light and airy abbeys and good manners – and she knows how powerless she is to handle them.

Too much experience, however, is not a good thing for young women, as knowing too much about the world leaves them dissatisfied with their lives, or so it is ironically suggested in the words of Mrs. Morland. Seeing Catherine dispirited, she quickly proclaims that “Wherever you are, you should always be contented, but especially at home, because there you must spend the most of your time” (p. 176). The author continues quietly pointing out the stifling limitations put upon women’s development by showing how Catherine is subjected to attempts at retrogression when her mother claims she has a book that will help cure Catherine: “There is a very clever Essay in one of the books upstairs upon much such a subject, about young girls that have been spoilt for home by great acquaintance” (p. 176). Luckily, Catherine is not allowed to continue on this journey toward anti-maturity, as Henry soon arrives to rescue her and take her to her next (and final) destination, the marital abode.

Henry appears at Catherine’s home at Fullerton to explain and apologize for his father’s behavior, and, finally, to ask for her hand in marriage. On hearing General Tilney’s motives for his actions, Catherine is quick to go back to her original judgement of him and validate it: “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” (p. 181). Following Avrom Fleischman’s reading of the scene, Catherine has finally learnt to use gothic symbols metaphorically, refining her reading of literature and situations – the gothic voice that served as Catherine’s compass to understand and decode the world is not completely erased as it appeared to be when she left Northanger, but only refined and given a more effective applicability. More than that, she is finally recognizing the truth behind her own intuitive judgements and, in doing so, she is going directly against Henry’s, even if she does not do it aloud. This is a small, but significant moment for her character, because it points to her being able to judge confidently for herself and being able to understand when Henry’s views do not hold the only truth. Interestingly, in the 2007 movie version of the novel, it is Henry, rather than Catherine, who acknowledges and confirms Catherine’s

suppositions regarding his father. In this version, he admits to her that his father was cruel to his mother and observes that: “Your imagination may be overactive, but your instinct was true” (2007). This is an interesting twenty-first century reimagining of Henry and Catherine’s relationship, as it ultimately leads to Henry recognizing he was wrong, rather than Catherine realizing she was right. Be as it may, the happy couple marries at the end and gains their happiness. Catherine’s small window of freedom between leaving the parental home and entering the marital home is at an end, and the ultimate goal of a young woman like her has been successfully reached: “To begin perfect happiness at the respective ages of twenty-six and eighteen, is to do pretty well” (AUSTEN, 2007, p. 184).

To Catherine (and to Eleanor) ‘perfect happiness’ means being able to marry nice men of their own choosing and being able to live in financially-stable homes. Yet such words are fraught with irony, which only helps to make the reader (if they have read the text carefully) more aware that Catherine did not have anywhere else to go or any other choice on how to get there. In Jane Austen’s England, marriage is the only viable option for a woman to have both power and autonomy, at the expense of her own intellectual and personal autonomy. But that does not mean the author condones this situation, even if it is granted to her protagonist in the best way possible. As Gilbert and Gubar observe,

Although she has become a symbol of culture, it is shocking how persistently Austen demonstrates her discomfort with her cultural inheritance, specifically her dissatisfaction with the tight place assigned women in patriarchy and her analysis of the economics of sexual exploitation. At the same time, however, she knows from the beginning of her career that there is no other place for her but a tight one, and her parodic strategy is itself a testimony to her struggle with inadequate but inescapable structures. (2000, p. 112)

Catherine’s place is also a tight one, yet that does not mean that the character herself is stagnant or a passive victim of the limitations of her position. Rather, Austen allows Catherine to grow and mature, to become aware of her limited position in the world and to actively work within it in order to make herself comfortable and happy nevertheless.

As Lorna Ellis observes, those novels of female development, such as Catherine’s, tend to end ambiguously, with their protagonist’s marriage. What Catherine’s newfound ‘perfect happiness’ will mean to her life and to her growing maturity, the reader will never know, as the story closes just as she enters adulthood. Different interpretations of Catherine’s relationship with Henry will lead to more negative or positive readings, but, from what has been shown in this analysis, it is possible to believe that Catherine will still be, even if a nominal

mistress of the Tilney household (which is unlikely considering her relationship with Henry), at least mistress of herself.

5 FINAL REMARKS

With the end of Catherine's journey in *Northanger Abbey* comes also the end of this monograph, which attempted to detail and scrutinize her trajectory and her growth as a young woman traversing a world that can be scary, but rewarding, even if under restrictive and suffocating circumstances. The main topic of discussion throughout this analysis of Catherine was whether there existed the possibility of reading her journey as one of growth, both personal and social, in a way not necessarily satisfactory enough to be seen as positive female development for twentieth and twenty-first century readers and critics, but which nevertheless represents an honest depiction of a journey of female maturity at the turn of the eighteenth-century in England. It is easy to look at a character such as Catherine Morland under the lens of a conformity versus rebellion dichotomy, with her falling predominantly under the category of the former. And while it is true that Catherine does not constitute a rebellious depiction of womanhood in eighteenth-century English society, to reduce her figure to a peon in the game of marriage, and her journey to a conservative portrayal of a woman's path from parental home to marital home, is to ignore the subtly subversive hints that such a portrayal inevitably brings forth and to erase the details that color her experiences and make Catherine's journey authentically and quietly affirming.

Catherine's portrayal throughout the novel is done in a most paradoxal and ambiguous manner, with regressions and progressions that seem to resemble realistic human development more than narrative linearity. This helps one understand why some feminist analyses of this Jane Austen novel, most prominently Gilbert and Gubar's, read Catherine's development as a non-growth, and Catherine herself as more of a puppet than a person. This perspective on Catherine goes along with Pratt's views on the female novel of development as a work in which female growth is checked and socially rejected, and young female protagonists, consequently, are not allowed to reach the same level of adulthood as their male peers. These views are vital for an analysis such as this, as they allow one to grasp the restricted position that women occupied in the social circles Jane Austen knew and wrote of, and how this lack of autonomy influenced their development, as they were ultimately raised and shaped for the crucial purpose of marriage. Catherine (as well as all of Jane Austen's protagonists, in more or less implicit ways) is not immune to this socially-imposed restrictions, even if she is never aware of their existence, and her journey towards becoming a more knowledgeable and sophisticated young woman must ultimately end (for it to end happily) with her marrying a good-natured and well-off man like Henry Tilney. While that is certainly a happy ending for Catherine, more acute

readings such as Gilbert and Gubar's help pinpoint how the character never had much choice to start with in how her journey could end, which allows the reader to understand the fragility of her position from start to finish, and how these social restrictions also work intellectually and psychologically on Catherine, as she is not allowed to understand certain subjects that she is instinctively aware of, or learn much more than what her male tutor will teach her.

Yet, one must be aware that Catherine is not the only one who is imposed upon by her society's values. In fact, no character is immune to them, just as no individual is, and even Catherine's "teacher" and love interest Henry Tilney cannot escape from the social norms that he consciously ridicules. It is only natural that such characters be limited by the world in which they live, yet it is imperative that the criticism does not forget such a fact or demand more from them than they are capable of giving, lest one might ignore the fact that there is much more to Catherine than the fairytale-like ending Jane Austen kindly chose to grant her. Jane Austen, however, is aware of her culture's hypocritical values and norms, and through irony she is able to produce examples of the non-adult destiny of adult women (such as Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Thorpe) which Pratt talks of, while also pointing out how that is not the only fate of the socially-accommodated heroine through Catherine Morland's journey.

By reading the novel from Lorna Ellis' perspective on the eighteenth and nineteenth-century female *Bildungsroman*, it is possible to find a more nuanced depiction of Catherine's internal journey. Such a depiction takes into account her position as a young woman in her socio-historical context, as well as the decisions she must make to navigate such an environment and make the most out of the limited possibilities for self-growth that she is allowed. Throughout her story, Catherine is forced to make difficult choices and give up certain views of herself and of the world around her in order to properly fit in and gain the reward of marriage – she might not be consciously aware of the concessions she must make so as to reach this final goal, or even of the urgency with which she must reach it before she is placed in an even more delicate social position (such as Isabella Thorpe's), but Catherine is at least instinctively aware of the nature of the world and her role in it to do what she must. Unlike Pratt, who views a journey such as Catherine's as a failure because she has not grown enough to rebel and be martyred, Ellis' readings of female developments allow one to see in Catherine's journey a difficult struggle, in which autonomy paradoxically demands conformity, and so the concessions one must make to be socially-conforming (and, thus, more independent) take on subversive undertones.

From the previous analysis, one can read that Catherine's journey is one of learning that there are social boundaries to her development, and of learning to work within those boundaries in order to reach some level of personal and social fulfillment. To choose to dismiss Catherine's development because it plays conservatively with, rather than against, social norms and values is to dismiss the quietly subversive aspects also inherent in such a narrative. It might have been easier to define Catherine had she been a rebellious martyr whose story ends in death, but she is not, and neither is her tale a depressing depiction of the impossibility of female adulthood as some critics might choose to read it as. I would argue she is, rather, a portrayal of a female character surviving and growing in a world that is hostile to her growth, with the positive and negative connotations that such a portrayal brings to light. When speaking about the novels she considers to be Female *Bildungsroman*, Ellis observes how they "do not suggest that the heroines should try to change society, but only point out society's faults and offer a way for the heroines to work within them" (1999, p. 34), a goal that is not any less socially-subversive despite not being outright defiant. Ultimately, it is our own views of what constitute valid female development in a narrative set in late eighteenth-century England that can determine whether Catherine is bound to a life of subjugation and stagnation or has achieved a level of power and autonomy that will allow her to continue growing.

One must not ignore or erase the negative and regressive aspects of Catherine's journey, of course. It is more than once apparent that Catherine holds Henry's judgement above her own and, even if she does come to grow and trust her own self more and more throughout the narrative, it is difficult to determine the extent of her dependence on Henry's opinions. Yet, such dependence is also a form of manipulation, if only because (as pointed out in the Northanger Abbey scene where the couple discusses Frederick Tilney) by being agreeable, Catherine can remain in Henry's good graces – this is an important portrayal of how young women like Catherine had to use their 'agreeableness' to their own advantage when it came to finding a male suitor, in the hopes of making good matches, though it might not be a conscious technique on their part. Moreover, while the prospect of marriage as a woman's one and only aim is, nowadays, a highly limiting view, in Catherine's (or rather, Jane Austen's) world marriage is the only way for a woman in her position to gain both power and autonomy without having to face the social and physical hardships of singlehood. It is a difficult situation, one which Catherine is visibly not prepared to deal with, as observed from the very beginning of her journey from the parental home into the busy city-life of Bath. In fact, her journey ends with her still being unprepared to handle a great deal of what she has experienced, the most

prominent being General Tilney's tyrannical figure and his cruel behavior. Some of those things she might never be able to confront or understand, if only because her society (Henry being a significant part of it) will never allow her to.

Catherine does manage to keep her head above the water despite all the difficulties encountered, and, in the small space she is given to move around in, she is able to exploit it as much as situations allow her to. She grows intellectually with Henry Tilney, becomes a better and more refined reader of social situations and narrative symbols, learns to trust her own intuitions and judgements, and finds at the end of such a road of trials and changes the prize of a happy and fulfilling marriage – or, as fulfilling as it can possibly be for a young woman such as Catherine with a young man of such superior intellect such as Henry. With this, she not only fulfills her own wishes of marrying the man she likes, but also the wishes of her social and familial circle – her parents have one less child to worry about and the Allens, her rich friends, can be satisfied with the knowledge that they successfully aided Catherine in such a conquest.

Gilbert and Gubar state that “Austen makes a virtue of her own confinement, as her heroines will do also” (2000, p. 121). Yet I would argue there is no virtue to be found in Catherine's confined situation, though there is acceptance, and a striving for the best possible outcome (an acceptance that is not any less critical for being conforming). Annis Pratt points out how the only option for women in such tales is to self-destruct (to go mad or to die) if they refuse the world they are given. Austen, instead, presents a character who navigates this oppressing world of norms and values, not as an endorsement but as a denouncement – yet an optimistic one, that points out the ways in which young women such as Catherine can make the best out of the situation they are given. Catherine's journey ends in an ironically positive note, emphasizing the fact that, even though she has reached her goal, it was not a goal she ever consciously chose for herself. Even so, through it all she has gained something much more precious, and of which she is aware of, even if she has failed time and time and is hardly experienced enough to handle most of what the world still has to offer: she has grown. Catherine has become aware of her own unpreparedness, has secured a position of stability and relative autonomy for herself, has found some happiness and a good marriage. In sum, she has learnt to recognize her social place and its boundaries, and to master it in order to find fulfillment. And, while her ending might be ambiguous, reading a Jane Austen text involves hoping for the best for its female protagonists, despite our knowledge of the fragile and powerless position they find themselves in at every turn. And so one can hope and trust that Catherine's entrance into adulthood will hold anything but stagnation.

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