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Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* emerges as a hybrid novel by the coalescence between parody and realism in the Radcliffean characters?.

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## Introduction

In this dissertation, we have set out to explore the Radcliffean model regarding the Gothic novel from a parodic point of view. To do so, we have focused our research on Jane Austen's novel, *Northanger Abbey*, using Anne Radcliffe's novels, with particular emphasis on *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, as an element of comparison. We will focus primarily on the characters in these plays, classifying them into three categories: the heroine, the villains, and the love interest. We will see how they develop, how this is due to their parodic characteristics, and how they affect the plot.

The Gothic novel was a popular literary genre during the eighteenth century, but there was one author that changed completely the 'paradigm' for the following generation of authors writing Gothic novels, astonishing as that is that such author was a woman; Ann Radcliffe, she revolutionized the Gothic scene with her rationalized terror and subtle romance in it, her style was well received for the audience—mostly female readers—which quickly became very popular. The major aspects addressed by her regarding her characters will later on become patterns to be followed in the next Gothic novels written by the writers that emulate her style. Hence, After her, the authors who preceded her and followed her steps, either the topics, narrative, characters or/and the combination of these aspects were a common practice, thus because of this recurrent literary phenomenon, this Gothic style later on would be known as the Radcliffean Gothic.

These were; the young orphan heroine, the main villain who seeks the unknown inheritance of the heroine, the secondary villains who delay the happiness of the heroine, and finally the love interest, the perfect young man who fall in love of the heroine at the moment he saw her, and who he is completely captivated by her and her manners. Besides the characters, there are many other characteristic aspects that Radcliffe implemented, such as landscapes and her narrative with long descriptions. Many of these aspects are interesting as the others, but for the purpose of this dissertation, our focus is on the Radcliffean characters.

Ann thus, set a precedent for the Gothic novel, shaping it in such a way that, as Cynthia Griffin points out in her essay *The Radcliffean Gothic Model: A Form for Feminine Sexuality*, has become a genre dominated by women—written by women; read by women; and choosing as its central figure a young girl, The Gothic heroine. Radcliffe invented a fictional language and a ‘set of conventions within “respectable” feminine sexuality might find expression.’ (98) As well, *In Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*, Anne Williams suggests that the Gothic genre partakes in the philosophical achievements of the Romantic movement in that its authors created a system of codification enabling their heroines, in the device of uncovering a hidden truth, to experiment with various epistemological options and to achieve a sense of selfhood (1-24). Moreover, Austen noticed ahead of Williams that the gothic blueprint could successfully be applied to the novel of growth to lay out the progress of a female protagonist’s passage into self-awareness. This dissertation will focus mainly on the latter. We will argue that *Northanger Abbey* goes beyond the parodic and becomes an original artwork, given its hybrid nature regarding the dual

dimension of parody and realism. Thus, in this way, showing the development of the protagonist, exposing her flaws, and how she relates to the other characters in the plot; how they affect her and how they contribute on her path to personal maturity.

As well, the importance of exploring a topic such as this lies on the fact that for us, what Austen did in this novel is completely innovator and refreshing regarding this genre, and she has not given the credit that she deserves for this work, which is usually underestimate regarding her other novels, so we expect that this dissertation is a small but necessary input for the many—but not nearly the deserving amount—analysis of this artwork whose complexity rely on the double dimension that is constantly appearing in the story, the subtle critique that Austen implies intelligently disguised as a mockery.

Some key terms need to be discussed before the development of our analysis, since they are the main and most important concepts to finally understand our dissertation properly. Those are Parody and Realism. Benét's Reader's Encyclopaedia defines parody as 'a comic or satirical imitation of a piece of writing, exaggerating its style and content, and playing especially on any weakness in the structure or meaning of the original.' (738) Furthermore, according to Cuddon Dictionary, in a parody, the writer will imitate 'the words, style, attitude, tone and ideas' (514) of another writer. In this sense, Jane Austen succeeds in imitating the various elements that characterise Ann Radcliffe's style as its creation of suspense, the ghostly elements to convey a strange atmosphere and the Romantic elements suggested by a sublime scenery. While creating a piece that can exist without the

original. Austen achieves it by adopting a tone in a plot similar to the original—*Northanger Abbey* itself turns out to be a parody of the plot of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, in which Montoni is the villain who wants Emily's fortune. In Catherine's case, everyone wants the money she does not actually have. Which is quite comical, because when they find out she has no money, they stop caring about her—as well as creating similar characters. Catherine, who is supposed to resemble Radcliffe's heroines, Mrs Allen to the watchful chaperone, Isabella as the confidant, John Thorpe the unwelcome suitor, General Tilney the titled Villain and Henry the hero (Rothstein, 20). Yet, the characters of *Northanger Abbey* do not meet such Gothic novels' characters' stereotypes. Catherine is far from a typical heroine—as much as she tries—. In fact, it is Isabella who achieves this likeness; the supposed villains do not commit any atrocities against Catherine and the hero is certainly not the faithful lover who would save his beloved from danger.

Likewise, at the same time that Austen parodies certain stereotypical characters of Radcliffe, she criticises some of the social matters, such as gender and class aspects. To do so, she does not resort to parody, satire or mockery, but maintains a realistic look. Thus, undoubtedly our next concept is 'Realism' Cambridge dictionary in one of its meaning regarding literature defines it as a 'style of writing, art, or film that shows things as they are in life' which is what Austen does, she portrays her characters realistically, not in a perfect unreachable scale that it is impossible to fulfil in reality, in fact every character is quite ordinary,—to which made it easy to the reader to empathise with them—their growth and their emotional spectrum.



Also, it is well known that very often *Northanger Abbey* is studied just as a parody, even some authors such as Henrietta Harmsel in her work *Jane Austen: A Study in Fictional Conventions* (1964) declared that Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* in parodying —Udolpho— presents the antitypes of its characteristics. According to her, 'Jane Austen's burlesque method in *Northanger Abbey* may be called demonstration by negation. For Miss Austen emphasised the qualities which the leading character—the heroine, the hero, and the villain—do not possess.' By doing this, she called to the reader's mind the absurdities of the qualities with which popular fiction often endowed them in her day.' (15)

Besides, as George Levine states in *Translating the Monstrous: Northanger Abbey*, 'Catherine's silliness is a necessary consequence of direct parody, and once parody has released Jane Austen into her own fictional reality, she immediately is freed to imagine real heroines again —Elinor Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet [...].' (346) This shows that Austen creates real heroines, that after this original work, which begins as a mockery, she breaks free from the bonds of Radcliffean Gothic and parody, to find her own way and create extraordinary and completely authentic works.

Further, similarities in the characters and the plots are frequent in parodies. Nevertheless, the devices used by Jane Austen, as we already mentioned, allowed her to create a unique piece that can exist without the original. It is for this very reason that we will attempt to show that *Northanger Abbey* is more than merely a parody. Rather, it has certain parodic elements, such as the characters—the basis of our

dissertation—who, although they can be pigeonholed into certain stereotypes of Radcliffean gothic novels, are characters who manage to stand out from the rest because they achieve a development process within the novel. The clearest example of this is Catherine, who goes from being an innocent and daydreamer young girl to someone who can realise that she is being teased. Catherine presents a development throughout the novel to the extent that we can read *Northanger Abbey* as a coming-of-age story. As readers, we accompany the protagonist on her journey from being an adolescent to a woman. We see her change from a naïve, immature and unrealistic girl to someone more mature, who can stand up to her enemies and who can make decisions for herself. In this sense, we would argue that Catherine Morland stands out among the Radcliffean heroines, like Emily St Aubert, for her own merit and agency. She plays an active role throughout the novel, in which she is able to demonstrate her growth since at the beginning her only concern is the illusions and fancies in her head, and as the story progresses and important events for the heroine's life occur, she begins to concern about real circumstances, and as she began to make decisions and be responsible of the consequences—sometimes she is right and other wrong—is when she learns, thus, at becoming a realistic version of a heroine, in which regarding the actions that she takes and her responsibility of them, she still manages to achieve her goals.

Thereby, the following dissertation is structured in three chapters, which will explore how *Northanger Abbey's* characters are a parody of those of Radcliffean Gothic novels while still having a realistic dimension in it. The first one relates to

how Catherine Morland's maturity contrasts with her gothic and romantic Radcliffean expectations. Specifically, because of the maturing process that Catherine faces throughout the novel, she becomes a new and realistic version of a heroine. In which, she possesses greater agency than Radcliffe's heroines, that gives her freedom to make her own decision. The second chapter focuses on Catherine's relationship with distinct characters who play the role of villains, and how they bond with her because of their greed and status seeking desires. Indeed, General Tilney was only kind to Catherine until he realised her lack of fortune. In the case of the Thorpes, Isabella acts as Catherine's confidant, however deep down she acts greedily regarding their friendship by searching for selfish materialistic goals, and John hinders Catherine's approaches to Henry by constantly courting her without her consent. Finally, the last chapter will focus on Catherine's Love Interest, Henry, and how he reveals the true nature of the Radcliffean Gothic Love Interests, by taking a mentor's posture towards the Heroine rather than acting as a saviour as the Gothic conventions. Besides, sometimes Henry seems complicit in condescension and ungentlemanly behaviour, as when he teases and mocks Catherine and his sister. Also, how Henry does not fall in love at first sight with Catherine. Indeed, it is she who first acknowledges him as a love interest, which challenges the Radcliffean gender roles in courtship by inverting it. Indeed, Henry married Catherine to keep his word rather than for the usual Radcliffean 'Love at first sight' which is a more realistic value for the middle-class.

### Chapter one: The Gothic Heroine

In the Gothic novel, as in any other genre, it is usually found a typical structure, concepts, themes, and certain types of characters regarding this theme. These characters fulfil a particular function in the novel, they have an aim to accomplish in the plot. Nevertheless, in the Radcliffean Gothic novel there are usual patterns concerning the kind of characters as are 'The Heroine' a virtue, intelligent and innocent young lady—usually an orphan—, like Emily St Aubert from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* who is described as ‘She had discovered in her early years uncommon delicacy of mind, warm affections, and ready benevolence.’ (5) The villain or villains, each of one fulfil a minor or grandeur villainy act against the heroine, as in the case of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in which Emily is persecuted by the main villain of the novel, Montoni. But also there is Madame Cherone, her aunt, who makes things difficult for Emily because of her jealousy. Each of these characters is there to commit their purpose of antagonising the heroine. They do this in different degrees of evilness but still they accomplish the author's purpose for them. Besides these two typical characters, there is always the inevitable character of 'The Love Interest' of the heroine. In Radcliffe's novel is Valancourt, an intelligent and benevolent young man. Each of these characters helps the protagonist make her way through the events and obstacles that she might have along the novel.

As well, things are not much different in the parody of a Gothic romance novel or in the case of *Northanger Abbey*, a novel with parodic and also realistic

elements, whose double dimension makes it a completely unusual novel from its predecessors.

In the text, we find the ‘Parodic Characters’, which are the stereotypes of the Radcliffean characters. Moreover, besides the similarities, we notice slight differences that completely change not only the characters’ development but the story’s development itself. For that reason Austen’s novel is certainly not a parody, but a completely different and original artwork, since the novel does not limit itself to mimic nor deride the Romance Gothic genre—understanding by ‘Romance Gothic’ genre as one in which the love story between the Heroine and her love interest is almost equally important for the novel as the gothic elements in it—. Instead, *Northanger Abbey* has a mixture of realistic and parodic elements, so might be classified as a hybrid novel because it suffers a transformation as well as the characters in it. The novel developed from the beginning from a mock text, to finally become a genuine novel with refreshing characters that grow in an almost-Radcliffean context, but that ended up being the complete opposite of Ann’s characters. Rothstein notices that ‘The sequence moves from burlesque to imitation (in the eighteenth-century sense) of the Gothic, setting up complementary ways of using Gothic fiction within the new idiom of *Northanger Abbey*.’ (20) The clearest example of this is the protagonist of *Northanger Abbey* Catherine Morland, whose maturity, as we will argue in this chapter, contrasts with—her—gothic and romantic Radcliffean’s expectations. Which allows her to differentiate herself from Ann’s character, who she is trying to imitate.

### **Catherine's maturity and a new realistic vision of a heroine**

Thus, every Gothic novel—especially the Romance Gothic novel—needs to have its heroine—usually a young, innocent woman—, a man who she falls in love with—a virtuous hero who accompanies the heroine in her journey, who eventually at some point is forced to separate from her side—, and a villain or villains who want to separate them for selfish reasons. Moreover, the main character of the genre is typically the heroine, a damsel in distress, who is surrounded by different people, and situated in old buildings—usually with Gothic architecture—in foreign places far away from society, in which she has to face uncomfortable and hideous circumstances, such as sexual and no-sexual harassments, threats or sometimes kidnapping. In addition, heroines are young and timid creatures, unable to fend for themselves, and rarely show any development within the plot. For instance, Emily St Aubert, the heroine of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* possesses the qualities of the conventional Radcliffean Gothic heroine. She is exquisitely beautiful and graceful:

In person, Emily resembled her mother; having the same elegant symmetry of form, the same delicacy of features, and the same blue eyes, full of tender sweetness. But, lovely as was her person, it was the varied expression of her countenance, as conversation awakened the nicer emotions of her mind, that threw such a captivating grace around her (6).

As Radcliffe's embodiment heroine, Emily, is almost perfect in every way, besides her unparalleled beauty,—and under her father's guidance—she is also well educated in Latin, art and science, aside-from her knowledge of violin. Then, she is the epitome of the Gothic heroine:

St Aubert cultivated her understanding with the most scrupulous care. He gave her a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature. He taught her Latin and English, chiefly that she might understand the sublimity of their best poets. She discovered in her early years a taste for works of genius; and it was St Aubert's principle, as well as his inclination, to promote every innocent means of happiness (125).

Radcliffe's Gothic characters, such as the Gothic heroine, are certainly stereotypes, and do not evidence any development besides what the stereotype allows them to become. In other words, they do not develop beyond into something else; they get stuck in the same character and personalities, if merely they suffer a slight change, but their essence is always the same; they are caught in their circumstances. In this regard, Mary Wollstonecraft in her preface to *The Wrongs of Women* stated that 'In many works of this species, the hero is allowed to be mortal, and to become wise and virtuous as well as happy, by a train of events and circumstances. The heroines, on the contrary, are to be born immaculate, and to act like goddesses of wisdom, just come forth highly finished Minervas from the head of Jove.' (2) She is saying that male protagonists are given a realistic character development, while their female counterparts are static, being models of virtue from the very beginning, with no space for evolution, since they born perfect. Austen contested this tradition by giving Catherine a 'development'. There is then a realism in Catherine's portrayal that differs from parody and their counterparts. Indeed, her situation differs slightly from the Radcliffean Gothic heroine cliché. Her character shows a development throughout the novel; Austen describes her at different stages of her life, showing the process through which Catherine reaches an emotional and personal development at the end of the story. As Marilyn Butler clearly points out, the story of Catherine

leaving her hometown and her family to go to Bath, and her progression towards reason and awakening constitute a fictional story on its own, which can exist beyond the humorous aspects: she ‘may not be a 'heroine' in the idealised mode of sentimental fiction, but she is a very good heroine at the level which matters.’ (178) Unlike Emily St Aubert for instance, who is shown in only one period of her life and her character does not present a great development from what is shown from the beginning of the novel to the end, she remains always virtuous and graceful, the perfect model of feminine virtue ‘as she [Emily] advanced in youth, this sensibility gave a pensive tone to her spirits, and a softness to her manner, which added grace to beauty.’ (8) To this extent, we would read *Northanger Abbey* as a coming-of-age novel, since as readers we accompany the protagonist on her journey from being a child to a woman. We see her change from a naïve, immature and unrealistic girl to someone more mature, who can stand up to her enemies and who can make decisions for herself.

On top of that, the heroine of *Northanger Abbey* lacks extraordinary beauty and several attributes that do not make her the typical Gothic heroine. As a matter of fact, when Jane Austen describes Catherine in the beginning of the novel, she suggests she is an unlikely Gothic heroine:

She had a thin awkward figure, a sallow skin without colour, dark lank hair, and strong features—so much for her person; and not less unpropitious for heroism seemed her mind. She was fond of all boyas plays, and greatly preferred cricket not merely to dolls, but to more heroic enjoyments of infancia, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird or watering a rosebush. Indeed she had no taste for a garden; and if she gathered flowers at all, it was chiefly for the pleasure of mischief—at least so it was conjectured from her



always preferring those which she was forbidden to take. Such were her propensities—her abilities were quite as extraordinary. She never could learn or understand anything before she was taught; and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid (1,2).

Gothic heroines are supposed to be the complete opposite to Austen's description; they are charming and beautiful, they do not have a 'thin awkward figure' (1), they behave feminine—according to what was appropriate for the time—they certainly avoid tomboyish behaviour, and they would hardly be called stupid by their own narrators. As Aurèlie Chevaleyre argues, Catherine is supposed to resemble a heroine as Emily St Aubert from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, since she is the heroine of Catherine's actual reading. Thus, we can tell Emily is the heroine model she wants to become. Besides according to Catherine their circumstances are similar, as she constantly compares their situations and tries to do what Emily would do in her circumstances, but it is evident that they have nothing in common, 'Emily is endowed with special gifts, such as poetry and drawing, while Catherine is not able draw anything and certainly cannot write.' (15) Indeed, Catherine's education was not as complex as Emily's, mainly because of the lack of Catherine's interests in those matters, 'Her taste for drawing was not superior [...] Writing and accounts she was taught by her father; French by her mother: her proficiency in either was not remarkable, and she shirked her lessons in both whenever she could.' (2)

### **Catherine's agency and her freedom to make her own decision**

Catherine is an ordinary girl who does not conform to gender norms, she is not feminine like her counterpart Emily, to the extent the narrator has to constantly remind the reader that she is the heroine of the story, given that the narrator's voice keeps referring to Catherine as a *heroine* 'here fortune was more favourable to *our heroine* (emphasis added). Every young lady may feel for *my heroine* in this critical moment, for every young lady has at some time or other known the same agitation.' (9) Furthermore, not only does the narrator think of Catherine as a heroine 'now was the time for a *heroine*, who had not yet played a very distinguished part in the events of the evening, to be noticed and admired.' (8), but Catherine sees herself as one, "Oh! No, I only mean what I have read about. It always puts me in mind of the country that Emily and her father travelled through in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. But you never read novels, I dare say?'" (64) This is highly influenced by the Gothic novels she loves to read. In this sense, Eric Rothstein argues that much of Austen's satire stems from her claim that in 'real'—fictional—life, Catherine can learn to be a heroine 'But from fifteen to seventeen *she was in training for a heroine*; she read all such works as heroines must read to supply their memories with those quotations which are so serviceable and so soothing in the vicissitudes of their eventful lives.' (3), a category that is not proper to real life at all, but only to the repertoire of fiction. Austen maintains this satiric tone about heroines and heroism throughout the story. At the beginning of the book she introduces Catherine by saying: 'No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine.' (1) Due to this attribute, Catherine is free to get over external impediments and take charge of any circumstances by herself, her distinction with the real

heroines—her true nature—and her craving to be one is part of Catherine's own double dimension.

Moreover, from the beginning of the story, it is clear that Catherine does not follow the typical Radcliffe's heroine model. She has neither the traits and character of one, nor her family situation resembles one. Further, throughout the novel she shows a greater agency than Radcliffe's heroines, which gives her freedom to make her own decisions; she displays an independent spirit, development and maturity that allows her to face every situation that comes her way and comes out on top. As Chevaleyre claims, despite being a naïve girl from a small town, Catherine performs heroic deeds, she does not become superficial like Mrs. Allen, confronts and defeats the villains embodied by the Thorpes and the Tilneys and finally marries the man she loves (16, 17). This is precisely what makes her a parodic heroine, despite being the perfect victim she defeats her enemies, through her agency she is able to act for and by herself, she does not expect that someone rescue her, nor a knight, nor a Lord or nobleman to fix their eyes on her and help her overcome her gothic fancies, nor the real obstacles that she must go through, like when she came back home completely alone, clueless of the reason for such cruel dismissal that General Tilney did to her: 'A heroine in a hack post-chaise, is such a blow upon sentiment, as no attempt at grandeur or pathos can withstand.' (144)

## Chapter two: The Gothic Villain

In the Gothic novel, we also find a character or characters who tries to commit felonies that mainly affect the protagonist and their goals, and the Radcliffean Gothic novel is not the exception. In this case, there are always one or more villains who try to hinder the heroine's plans. Most often their aim in the novel is to separate the protagonist from her beloved, usually by pursuing their hidden lustful desires towards the heroine, or by pursuing the heroine's inheritance,—as in the case of Signor Montoni, the villain of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, he is constantly trying to cripple Emily's existence; he not only thwarts her marriage to Valancourt and takes her off to Italy, but also makes threats to get her to sign away her properties—or at least to go after the supposed inheritance as in Catherine Morland's case, the protagonist of *Northanger Abbey*, who in her way to pursue typical heroine behaviour, she suffers multiple setbacks, many of which are caused by characters who seek to obstruct her happiness.

As the story progresses, Catherine displays a personal development that is highly influenced by her relationship with each villain and each one of them affects her differently to achieve her maturity. In Austen's writing, we also find some slightly perceptible social critique described behind the villains' greedy attitudes and actions, a barely noticeable view about society and class values expressed as some kind of formal realism that is not present in Radcliffe's narration.

The villains include Isabella and John Thorpe, who deceive Catherine on an everyday basis in order to keep her away from Henry, and also, the main villain, Henry's father, General Tilney. In his article 'The Lessons of *Northanger Abbey*', Rothstein states that 'if we consider the sequence of Mrs Allen, the younger Thorpes, and General Tilney, we find that we have pastiches of Gothic novel's watchful chaperone, confidante, unwelcome suitor, and titled villain' (20). Yet, the characters of *Northanger Abbey* do not meet such Gothic novel's characters' stereotypes; Mrs. Allen is the opposite of the usual chaperone found in those novels,—a wicked middle aged woman, who usually is motivated to do evil because of her jealousy towards the heroine—she is just a materialistic woman who is immersed in her own world focused on social gossip and appearances. Isabella takes the place of Catherine's confidant but deep down she acts corruptly and dishonestly regarding their friendship, and John plays the role of the unwelcome suitor. Finally, General Tilney, despite being the main villain,—who shares some characteristics of the Radcliffian Gothic villains' such as their motives and their age—is not in the same level of evilness if we compare it with his *Mysteries of Udolpho* counterpart, Montoni.

Even though, Rothstein sees in Mrs Allen a villain by what she represents in the story,—or, what she should represent according to the Radcliffian model of this character—we do not precisely agree with his statement, since typecasting Mrs Allen as a villain just for the role she plays in Catherine's life and not considering that she does not really commit a felony towards Catherine, is not enough to consider her a villain, even if she would be considered one in a novel by Radcliffe. Thus, by

changing the regular purpose of Mrs Allen—and the rest of them—Austen made noticeable the parodic tone of her novel.

Contrary to the Radcliffean Gothic novel as in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in which the protagonist acknowledges the villain almost immediately after meeting him, in *Northanger Abbey*, at the beginning Catherine does not perceive the villains as such, indeed she seems to have a good relationship with all of them. Even so, the Villains' motive to bond with Catherine is their greed and their status seeking desire, which is a contradiction with the diverse Radcliffean villains' motives. Indeed, little by little they show their true intentions, and eventually Catherine notices that, in opposition to typical Gothic novels in which the villains make their evilness clear from the beginning and keep it until the end of the story. This would probably never happen in a Radcliffean novel, in which the villains are cruel and ruthless, and of course are rarely deceived. Besides, those heroines always possess some fortune or benefit from large inheritances. This situation is clearly a satire of the characters of Radcliffe that Austen is parodying because the villains, in this case, are duped by a fortune that never existed. This produces a counter effect that sets them apart from Radcliffe's characters; they cease to instill terror, which is at odds with these types of novel, their situation is completely anticlimatic regarding a truer Gothic novel. Austen manages to create powerful characters who do petty and selfish things in their search for material wealth, but nothing monstrous like killing someone. Every villain of the novel seems to have in common the pursuit of a monetary reward and class opportunist desire when approaching her; this is their only reason to chase her

and eventually pester her. There is no other hidden motivation, such as jealousy or lust. They all approach Catherine just because they believe she has an enormous fortune, which in reality Morland's family has no money, and once the villains realise this, they are no longer interested in her. Austen's villains do not mistreat her physically, but rather their abuse is intangible and emotional—one of them is that she is humiliated more than once—and in consequence those actions reverberate into a moral significance for the heroine.

### **General Tilney**

We could argue that the General himself is a parodic figure in Austen's world; Tilney disrupts expectations both Catherine's and the readers. Rather than behaving like the Gothic novel villain that Catherine in her imagination believes him to be, the General misbehaves in a realistic way, this real forbidding makes him the most 'dangerous' villain of the novel, since his badness is genuine, thus he becomes a legitimate threat for the heroine. For most of the plot he behaves excessively kindly towards Catherine, until he realises her lack of fortune. The entire situation of the supposed inheritance of Catherine is a comic circumstance that is built from the beginning of the novel to the end, in which the truth is discovered. The revealing moment is an anticlimactic event, since neither Catherine or the readers were aware of the rumours about her richness, so discovering that this was the main motive for people to be around her was a completely unexpected event.

Moreover, the older Tilney's motives stem from very pragmatic prejudices, specifically towards people with less money and rank than he has. General Tilney is a snob of the worst kind and treats with disdain and rudeness those who have a lower social standing than he does, greed is what drives General Tilney, as A.N Kaul puts it, Tilney is 'the monster of avarice' and when Catherine 'finally recognizes him, turns out to be as cruel as any monster she had imagined, and not half so remote' (211-2). The General, and his outrageous behaviour, are undoubtedly part of the comic effect of the novel. This character resembles the most to the true villains of Gothic novels—a middle aged man chasing a young woman's inheritance—. We could even define the power of his villainy by the character of Montoni—an avaricious member of the military with an eye for a young lady's inheritance—.

General Tilney is Austen's parodic Gothic villain, but with the peculiarity that his sensibilities do not hark back to the lurid crimes of the 18th century Gothic literature. On the contrary, he is a thoroughly modern middle aged man, interested primarily in money, and his own social status. He is described as 'a very handsome man, of a commanding aspect' (46), also harsh and even dictatorial with his children. He is extremely wealthy and has multiple acquaintances and influences. This makes him obsessed with his social rank and his family's wealth. Due to this, he would never allow any of his children to marry someone without wealth or high rank, indeed 'The general, accustomed on every ordinary occasion to give the law in his family, prepared for no reluctance but of feeling, no opposing desire that should dare to clothe itself in words, could ill brook the opposition of his son, steady as the



sanction of reason and the dictate of conscience could make it.’ (154) Because of that, it is peculiar that he shows himself excessively kind to Catherine,—whose wealth was not remarkable—which later on it is discovered that this is just because he thinks she is rich. Therefore, when he realises the truth of Catherine's lack of fortune, he abruptly and cruelly changes his attitude towards her by behaving rudely and despective at throwing her out of the Abbey. A situation that creates an unexpected and comical effect, because that would never happen to a Radcliffean Gothic heroine, such as Emily St. Aubert.

The first encounter between Catherine and General Tilney, is described as a scene out of a Gothic novel. As she dances with Henry, she sees a mysterious man looking at her from across the room:

Catherine perceived herself to be earnestly regarded by a gentleman who stood among the lookers-on, immediately behind her partner. He was a very handsome man, of a commanding aspect, past the bloom, but not past the vigour of life; and with his eye still directed towards her, she saw him presently address Mr. Tilney in a familiar whisper. [...] her partner, coming nearer, said, ‘I see that you guess what I have just been asked. That gentleman knows your name, and you have a right to know his. It is General Tilney, my father’. (46)

At the time, Catherine has no particular opinion about the General, other than that he has a beautiful family. The first time they actually speak, the General is nothing but nice to her and even invites her to spend some weeks with his children in their home, Northanger Abbey: ‘If you can be induced to honour us with a visit, you will make us happy beyond expression.’ (84) His words seem full of good intentions, and he seems genuinely excited that Catherine is accepting the invitation, which is

strange since they have not spent a lot of time together and they barely know each other. His manners are nice beyond courtesy of a first encounter, and this is curious enough after it is described how he behaves and how his manners are regarding his children.

Moreover, From their first encounter, Catherine has an uneasy feeling regarding the General, she could not see him without having ‘very uneasy sensations.’ (79) This feeling keeps present everytime she is with Henry’s father, her intuition kept her alert even if there were no evident motives to be alarmed around a man that has been nothing but kind to her. This intuition did not fail her,—as the reader finally knows at the end of the novel—what sometimes failed her was her attempt to decipher the motives of it; she did not trust her own intuition. Goshal continues her reflection about Catherine’s feelings regarding the General’s mysterious and contradictory attitude during her stay in the abbey.

As the General appears in an increasingly unamiably light at Northanger, Catherine casts about for explanations for his oddities. Unable to perceive his selfishness and conceit —his desire to walk when and where he pleases, to impress Catherine with his important involvement in ‘the affairs of the nation’—she looks for ‘some deeper cause’ (p. 187). She locates it in her gothic fantasy about a wife murdered, or at least shut up in some remote corner of the Abbey (268).

Thus, unsurprisingly when the General offers to give her a tour of the abbey, but skipping some rooms, these being the part of the building where his late wife’s room is located, at noting this, Catherine starts to create her own hypothesis of why he avoids them, the most logical reason—from her perspective—being that he maintains his wife captive, or at least her corpse. Catherine’s Gothic fancies take on a

life of their own, clearly raving fantasies of living some aspects related to the Gothic novels usual plot:

Was she a very charming woman? Was she handsome? Was there any picture of her in the abbey? And why had she been so partial to that grove? Was it from dejection of spirits?—were questions now eagerly poured forth; the first three received a ready affirmative, the two others were passed by; and Catherine's interest in the deceased Mrs. Tilney augmented with every question, whether answered or not. 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 a something in the turn of his features which spoke his not having behaved well to her (111).

From now on, Catherine, with her imagination full of horrid inventions, and very little knowledge of the world, attempts to interpret the character of General Tilney so that he fits into the scheme of the evil and mysterious villain, of a common character in Gothic novels. Resembling the General as the worst type of villain, Catherine begins comparing him to Radcliffe's insidious Signor Montoni:

And, when she saw him [...] slowly pacing the drawing-room for an hour together in silent thoughtfulness, with downcast eyes and contracted brow, she felt secure from all possibility of wronging him. It was the air and attitude of a Montoni! What could more plainly speak the gloomy workings of a mind not wholly dead to every sense of humanity, in its fearful review of past scenes of guilt? Unhappy man! (115).

Much of Austen's famous Gothic burlesque revolves around Catherine. Austen utilises Catherine's overactive imagination, which is especially apparent during her stay at the Abbey, as a way of employing bathos to parody the Gothic novels of Ann Radcliffe, at given the heroine—and the readers—the same Radcliffean elements and suspense moments to finally ended up in something ordinary as in the scene when Catherine in in her room at the abbey with a stormy night outside creating shadows in the room and windy sounds, she creates a

Radcliffean atmosphere, even at finding an apparently ancient cofre with apparently old treasures or notes but at the end there is no more than an ticket. This is clearly an absurdity in the Gothic scheme but a more realistic one.

Nonetheless, if Catherine's ideas regarding the General being a murderer were wrong, her uneasiness about her future father-in-law was not entirely wrong—even though her original hypothesis were beyond imaginative—since Henry's father conduct was not innocent, at least not regarding his family's relationship with Catherine was not a innocent or selfless bond. As the true intentions behind his kindness towards Catherine are later revealed, it is discovered that even the General possesses great wealth, he is a fortune hunter, and his motives are not dissimilar to those of his prototype Montoni, since the latter wished to take all of poor Emily St Aubert's property. He notes Henry's liking for Catherine only as a way to promote the match and secure the fortune he believes her to possess, led on by the rattle of John Thorpe. But, when he realises that there is no fortune at all, he rudely dismisses Catherine, thus demonstrating that he cares nothing for her or his son's happiness. In fact, when he finally ungraciously assents to his son's marriage, he expresses himself in contemptuous terms, givin Henry permission for him 'to be a fool if he liked it!.' (155)

It is clear that the General's change in behaviour is due to his knowledge of Catherine's personal wealth. Tilney is extremely concerned with money. However, the General is far from being the Montonian villain Catherine thought him to be,

even though she suspects him of being a murderer or some sort of tyrannical fetishist who locked up his wife, he is far from being that malicious, yet, he is certainly still guilty of some wrongdoings, not least of which is his blatant disregard for the young woman's feelings as a guest.

### **Isabella Thorpe**

Isabella, like the General, is a fortune hunter who is only interested in money and social climbing. She takes the place of Catherine's confidant but deep down she acts greedily regarding their friendship by searching selfish materialistic goals. She takes advantage of her attractiveness to cajole people and get what she wants; in this way Isabella could be analysed as an ironic caricature by Austen, as an exaggeration of the emphasis on wealth and position that is often the preoccupation of high society. She comes across as a typical viper in the bosom, at first charming, but eventually showing her true colours. They meet in Bath's pomproom. Isabella turns out to be the eldest daughter of Mrs Thorpe, an old school friend of Mrs Allen. Catherine and Isabella instantly get along well as the Thorpes happen to know her brother James and he thinks very highly of them. Isabella seems to be the perfect child, her beauty and manners are admired by all, even her own mother considers her the most beautiful of her daughters. Indeed, we could argue that Isabella resembles more of a gothic heroine than Catherine does; most of the characteristics attributed to her are the same ones Catherine Morland lacks: Isabella is beautiful, intelligent and

has excellent manners. However, she is in the middle of the two functions; she is charming as typical heroines, but she is also manipulative and self-serving.

Isabella can be considered a Gothic figure because of the fascination she exerts on Catherine, her sexual drives which causes her to lose her fiancé and her responsibility as regard Catherine's misreading and misunderstandings. One can also consider that, like Catherine, she was lured by Gothic novels and that it is her misreading of them that led her to believe she could manipulate the people around her (Chevaleyre 40, 41).

After their first meeting, Catherine meets Isabella again in the theatre and from that moment on they become inseparable, at least until Catherine leaves Bath. Their friendship began quickly and 'they passed so rapidly through every gradation of increasing tenderness that there was shortly no fresh proof of it to be given to their friends or themselves.' (16) They seem to have the perfect friendship although there are several times in which the narrator makes it clear Isabella's real character and intentions, which Catherine seems reluctant to see, perhaps due both to her naivety and innocence. The discrepancy between Catherine's and the reader's conclusions regarding Isabella is what produces a comic effect, since for the reader from the beginning is noticeable and dubious Isabella's behaviours and motives, hence this can be seen as a parodic element of this character.

Isabella shows several contradictions in her character throughout the novel, and even despite her beauty and good manners, she lacks a large fortune, which is the main trigger for her end in Catherine's life. Since the beginning of the novel we can notice that her approach to Catherine seems precipitous. This firm friendship bond seems premature, taking into account the short period of time of their first meeting. Later in the narration we discover why this happened: the true reason behind

Isabella's approach to Miss Morland is to join in marriage with Catherine's brother James. Isabella's deception is not just regarding her first encounter and friendship with the heroine, but as the story is carried out it is more apparent her shallowness and manipulative behaviour.

Isabella's greed tendencies begin to surface when she discovers that James Morland does not have as much money as she thought. When she receives a letter from her fiancé informing her of the sum her father can give them, Catherine gets her first glimpse of the real Isabella. Isabella is clearly disappointed, but keeps up appearances in front of Catherine:

It is not on my own account I wish for more; but I cannot bear to be the means of injuring my dear Morland, making him sit down upon an income hardly enough to find one in the common necessaries of life. For myself, it is nothing; I never think of myself.' [...] 'As to that, my sweet Catherine, there cannot be a doubt, and you know me well enough to be sure that a much smaller income would satisfy me. It is not the want of more money that makes me just at present a little out of spirits; I hate money; and if our union could take place now upon only fifty pounds a year, I should not have a wish unsatisfied. (83, 84).

Catherine is uncomfortable with the situation, and because of her naivety, she endeavours to believe her friend '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.' (84) Although Isabella cannot be considered a full-fledged villain, we can compare her attitude to that of General Tilney. It is clear from her attitude that she only approached Catherine because of her brother and because she thought they had a large fortune, but when she realises that they have no money Isabella walks away from Catherine—in her own style—pretending to be oblivious and playing

Catherine for a fool. However, by this point in the novel Catherine has reached a level of maturity that makes her realise the falseness of her supposed friend. In this sense, Catherine herself, having finished reading Isabella's last letter, concludes by saying:

She must think me an idiot, or she could not have written so; but perhaps this has served to make her character better known to me than mine is to her. I see what she has been about. She is a vain coquette, and her tricks have not answered. I do not believe she had ever any regard either for James or for me, and I wish I had never known her. (135)

Thus, Catherine's personal development and power of agency within the novel is demonstrated. She is able to realise that she has been mocked and confront them. This is what sets her apart and allows her to differentiate herself from her counterparts, both Isabella and Emily St. Aubert.

### **John Thorpe**

However, Isabella is not the only Thorpe who interferes in Catherine Morland's life. John, her brother, also attempts to interfere with Catherine's happiness by pushing her away from Henry. He is not an unpleasant character in the sense that he does not physically harm Catherine, but his intentions when approaching her were not innocent. He only courts Morland with the intention of ultimately creating obstacles for the heroine in her pursuit of the hero. What drives him to act in this way is that, like his sister and General Tilney, he is a predator who wants to get Catherine's supposed money. In this sense, his manners are not so refined as his



sister's, and he straightly asks about Catherine's properties, referring to her friend Mr Allen having no children of his own and being her godfather, thus to her being one of his heirs 'Old Allen is a rich as a Jew—is not he [...] And no children at all? [...] A famous thing for his next heirs; He is your godfather, is not he?.' (34)

As Shoutham states, John is also the reverse of the villains in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, as Montoni. He does not abduct the heroine in order to incarcerate her in some far off castle. Probably the most villainous thing he does is to lure her to Blaize Castle which they are prevented from seeing. Southham says that John Thorpe is not much worse than rude, vain, selfish, stupid, boastful and dishonest. He does not seduce anyone; defame anyone; coolly run off with a married woman; deceive anyone (except General Tilney); or insolently ignore the claims of an indigent widow. John Thorpe is simply 'a stout young man of middling height, who, with a plain face and ungraceful form, seemed fearful of being too handsome unless he wore the dress of a groom, and too much like a gentleman unless he were easy where he ought to be civil, and impudent where he might be allowed to be easy.' (22) It does not take Catherine long to open her eyes to his character, and he soon fades out of the action, for he is not much of a villain contrasted to Signor Montoni or Count Morano.

Despite the villainy actions that any of these characters committed against Catherine they still help her in her maturity process and thus, developing a sense of agency to finally achieve her goals, as George Levine states 'Catherine's innocence allows her to behave with precisely the kind of passionate anaivité that gives her the qualities of a romantic heroine. The various lies and deceptions of the Thorpes and

General Tilney are what make the happy ending possible. The logic of the particular narrative entails a mixing of the antagonist elements.’ (338) They fulfil double function in the story, this duality is a constant in this novel, one of the most important is the double dimension between realism and parody is also present here. When Austen describes the characters, she does so by highlighting their features in order to differentiate them from those of Radcliffe and thus create a comic effect at the expense of exposing the characters by placing them in gothic scenarios but develop them and their reactions of those situation in completely different way and by doing this creating a ‘bathetic’ feeling to the reader, such as the fact that Isabella is more beautiful than Catherine and that she really does resemble the classical heroines. Or the excessive good manners of General Tilney. On the other hand, when she presents her view about society and talks about gender roles or the greed of the characters and their constant quest to climb the social ladder, she does not do it through satire but in a realistic way. What Austen does is to criticise the social values of the time portrayed by Radcliffe.

### Chapter three: The Love Interest

In the case of the Radcliffean Gothic ‘Love Interest’ the changes regarding the original and the *parodied* artwork might not seem notorious since in both novels, *The mysteries of Udolpho* and *Northanger Abbey*, the author uses the typical characteristics to create the gothic hero who is portrayed to the audience as an intelligent, and virtuous young man—but older than the heroine—, who near the beginning of the novel becomes the heroine partner through their journey and who eventually becomes the love interest of her. Nonetheless, the major difference relies on Henry’s attitude regarding the heroine, and also on the not typical way in which they attain the conventional gender roles regarding their relationship and courtship. In addition, the importance of class values—a realistic value for middle-class—to Henry where he places above any romantic illusions, an anticlimactic outcome comparing it with Radcliffe’s style.

#### The hero condition

While in the case of Valancourt, Radcliffe’s hero, it is noticeable that he had a limited development along the novel; he possessed a static heroic personality. Even at the beginning of the story St. Aubert remarks ‘this young man has never been at Paris’ (27), meaning that Valancourt has not yet faced all the temptations that young men experience when they are in a big city, and that is the reason he seems such an ingenuous and passionate young man.

The opposite happened in Austen's parodic hero Henry, a character who along the novel shows different facets and is not always 'perfect'; going from a non-confrontational young man to eventually defying and overriding his father by marrying Catherine. Although he maintains his own moral discourse in doing so, it is contrary to Valancourt's steady behaviour.

Even though Henry Tilney can be described as an intelligent and rational man with a strong sense of duty who is governed by ethical behaviour, he also has intentionally placed flaws by the author. Austen made noticeable to the readers some imperfections that are not particular to the hero, but also the rest of the relevant male characters, which is the masculine superiority. Gentil notices that 'In his assumption of intellectual superiority, even Henry Tilney sometimes seems complicit in masculine tyranny and bad male behaviour, as when he teases and mocks Catherine and his sister, Eleanor, for their feminine ignorance and gullibility Along with the comic villains, Henry partakes in a masculine, competitive, game-playing culture.' (83) Many times when Henry tries to teach or explain something, he errs on the side of arrogance, as when he points out to his sister and Catherine:

Come, shall I make you understand each other, or leave you to puzzle out an explanation as you can? No—I will be noble. I will prove myself a man, no less by the generosity of my soul than the clearness of my head. I have no patience with such of my sex as disdain to let themselves sometimes down to the comprehension of yours. Perhaps the abilities of women are neither sound nor acute—neither vigorous nor keen. Perhaps they may want observation, discernment, judgment, fire, genius, and wit. (68)

From the beginning of their relationship, Henry openly criticises Catherine's reasonings and opinions, which provokes in her doubts, instability and lack of trust

(Ghoshal Wallace, 63), a situation that is totally unimaginable in a Gothic novel written by Radcliffe. Certainly we would not expect such behaviour from a Radcliffean hero, who would never dare to hurt or denigrate in any way his beloved or anyone related to her. Valancourt would do anything that would affect Emily, and would never criticise or correct her, since she is always right. On the contrary, everything his beloved does is worthy of admiration for his eyes; she is idealised and worshipped by Valancourt.

Despite though there are observable and obvious differences between both hero and villain, there also exists similarities, these regarding the power that they gained over the heroine and her decisions, Griffin explains, 'The pairing of "villain" and "hero" in the eighteenth-century Gothic is quite overt, achieving a kind of Augustan balance. The antagonists play strangely similar roles to the heroine, each embodying one sort of "authority": the demon lover is a figure of considerable power who would exert a malevolent influence; the hero (a considerably less potent figure throughout much of the novel) is a force for order and benevolent control.' (103)

### **The Saviour and The Mentor Role**

Since the first encounter between St Aubert, Emily and Valancourt, it was noticeable his noble manners towards them; he helped them to find their way towards the nearest cottage in which they could rest, he even offered to take them to where he was staying, even lend them his own bed, to such agreeable offering and

company, father and daughter accept the newly friend proposal and follow him. The pleasant and kind manners of the young man provoked a good impression. ‘St Aubert was much pleased with the manly frankness, simplicity, and keen susceptibility to the grandeur of nature, which his new acquaintance discovered; and he had often been heard to say, that, without a certain simplicity of heart, this taste could not exist in any strong degree.’ (35) What St Aubert perceived about Valancourt is very important to the plot, since it represents how he is seen through the eyes of a honourable and good man as St Aubert is. This description of this character prematurely gives us a hint of who will be the love interest of our heroine, since from the first meeting the description of this character’s nature shows us how heroic, honourable, and good-hearted he is.

In Austen's novel even though the hero has ‘good intentions’ towards the heroine, and is portrayed as the white knight with shining armour, Henry is not absent to commit some not that chivalry acts towards Catherine, and that is one of the intentional flaw of Austen’s hero, he is portrayed by the author like a 'real' person, not a Gothic hero. In fact, what Austen does with the character of Henry is exposing it; she exhibits the gothic hero and their ‘good guy’ behaviour and actions regarding certain social dynamics that Radcliffe in her own portrayal of the gothic hero idealises.

Henry, on the contrary to Valancourt, does not save Catherine from danger, he does not rescue her. Instead of acting as a saviour he acts as a mentor, he lesson her,—which is not a flaw but is not a Gothic canon—by doing so he sometimes mocks at her and her ingenuity, and that is a defect of him if we compare him with

his Radcliffean counterpart. He mocks her naivety. It does not idealise or worship that from Catherine, instead is something to make fun of.

### **The Hero (inverted) courtship role**

Comparing the novels of Austen and Radcliffe, Leland Chanderl d argues the hero is treated much like the heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, as Henry Tilney is the opposite of Valancourt. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* we see how Emily is introduced to her hero in the romantic twilight hour, high on a mountain road. Emily meets a young nobleman whose named Valancourt who possesses an air of mystery about him. He is the typical gothic hero, handsome, manly and in love with Emily at first sight. This love never wavers; it is the force that finally binds them together. Indeed, immediately after the first encounter with Emily it is evident that he *sees* her, in other words, it is clear for the reader that she does not go unnoticed by him, not even by Emily's father. 'St Aubert observed him look with an earnest and pensive eye at Emily, who bowed to him with a countenance full of timid sweetness.' (38)

In contrast, Henry Tilney is very ordinary. He does not have an air of mysterious origin. In fact, he reveals himself to be a clergyman from a respectable Gloucestershire family early in the novel. He does not make a heroic entrance and rescue the heroine at just the right moment. Instead, he is introduced to her at a ball and converses with her about such trifling things as female letter-writing. He does not fall in love at first sight, as heroes are supposed to do. In fact, we could argue that gender roles in courtship—according to their time—are inverted, since it is Catherine who falls in love with Henry at the very first moment, and who pursues

him throughout the story. Furthermore, it could be said that Catherine and Henry pay little attention to the ideal, because he marries her to keep his word rather than for the usual Radcliffean 'Love at first sight', which is a more realistic value for the middle-class, that is disappointing and completely anti-romantic, the whole marriage proposal—which is not even described—is an unexpected and indeed disenchant non-Radcliffean outcome.

As Harmsel rightly notes, 'in Henry Tilney's cheerful, mocking, realistic character, Jane Austen is exposing the artificiality of the mysterious Gothic hero'. (Harmsel, 17) The way in which Henry is described, his 'real' personality is clearly a mock to the other Gothic heroes. He differs completely from his predecessors, and this is just because of Austen's ingenuity at creating the opposite of a hero at giving to the character a different behaviour of the typical love interest of the heroine. Henry is not blinded by the beauty of Catherine nor her ingenuity or intelligence, he does not treat her like a precious object, indeed their interaction is mostly of friends to be. Their relationship developed slowly. At the beginning it was mostly thanks to Catherine that they kept in contact, because she always looked up to him; she idolised him from the first moment. She sees him as a handsome and intelligent young man, almost like he was out of reach 'His address was good, and Catherine felt herself in high luck' (9), she even compares his attitude to a Gothic hero 'This sort of mysteriousness, which is always so becoming in a hero, threw a fresh grace in Catherine's imagination around his person and manners, and increase her anxiety to know more of his.' (16) Then, on their way to the abbey, they began to be a bit closer, their relationship as friends grew stronger since then. This was not a platonic



relationship anymore, at least not from Catherine's side. In their stance at the abbey is where the 'climax' of their relationship happens. Here, an event changes not just their closeness, but Catherine's own maturity. This happens when Henry confronts Catherine about her gothic ideas regarding the evilness of the General. After that there is a change in Catherine's growth that helps the plot develop.

## Conclusion

While *Northanger Abbey* can be read as a parody of gothic novels, specifically those of Anne Radcliffe, it has one element that sets it apart, and that is that the novel develops along with the personal development of the protagonist. At the beginning of the story, Catherine is presented as an ordinary young woman, without many qualities or exceptional abilities. Even the author herself calls her stupid. However, due to all the situations she is exposed to throughout the story. Her relationship with the other characters and her responsibility regarding her own decisions, she achieves a certain maturity, which allows her to cope with adversities and enemies.

This leads us to conclude that what starts as a simple parody, ends up becoming a completely original and hybrid work, given that it still maintains certain parodic features, this is not its purpose, because it tells a different story of personal development that does not remain just as a mockery.

Moreover, Austen manages to separate her work from Radcliffe's and create a fresh and new work, with characters that move away from her stereotypes, which although they still exist in the categories of heroes and villains, she manages to give them a realistic perspective. That is why it is so easy for readers to empathise with them and their situations; they are not hateable characters, because their flaws are human; they make mistakes that even we ourselves can make, such as greed in the case of villains, or prejudice, which are not so evil or perverse things, but temptations in which we can also fall.

Thus, the arguments of the present work have both strengths and weaknesses. Some of the former are that although we were unable to delve in general into other issues necessary for the development of this work, all arguments include a deep analysis of the characters and how each of them relates to the protagonist, how they affect her personal development, something we did not see in other essays. We believe that the focus we gave to both the duality of realism and parody, as well as the development of each character, will be a great contribution because it will allow to continue advancing in the analysis of *Northanger Abbey*, and to read this novel not only as a mere parody, as other authors in other texts make it seem.

Some weaknesses in the arguments are that certain sections are more underdeveloped than others, since some characters allow for more discussion. In addition, the problems during research were related to the difficulty of finding open access to articles, and relating each argument to the parody, we were often not explicit enough in this sense, and we focused more on a mere description of the characters, which in the end was not the most relevant or the purpose of our dissertation. Finally, the extension of the dissertation did not allow for an in-depth exploration of other relevant issues, such as gender and class roles that are relevant for a better understanding of the double dimension mentioned above.

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