

CATHERINE MORLAND'S CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN JANE  
AUSTEN'S *NORTHANGER ABBEY*

JANE AUSTEN'İN *NORTHANGER ABBEY* ROMANINDA CATHERINE  
MORLAND'İN KİŞİLİK GELİŞİMİ

РАЗВИТИЕ ЛИЧНОСТИ КЭТРИНА МОРЛАНД В РОМАНЕ ДЖЕЙНА  
ОСТИНА „НОРТАНГЕРСКОЕ АББАТСТВО”

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**ABSTRACT**

Throughout the ages, the development of human character has always been an important issue for the establishment of a good society. Since Platon and Aristoteles, who handled morality and education, up to the present educational sciences and psychology, many books with various views have been written, and many researches have been carried out. Besides, scientific studies have focused upon human nature and tried to explain it through genetic, socio-genetic, social or sociocultural approaches, according to which they developed educational systems and institutions in order to have humans act in the desired way. Since the primitive religions and beliefs, which emerged in order to explain the mysterious natural events, and get rid of the fear of the unknown, up to the present heavenly religions, it has always been an important goal to direct human behaviour into a moral and socially acceptable set of conduct.

By setting the Victorian period as the basis of her novels, Jane Austen deals particularly with the morality of the period. As a realist author, she attaches great importance to the depiction of her female characters in their struggle to overcome their depravity and achieve higher social status. In *Northanger Abbey*, a novel of her early period as an author, the protagonist Catherine Morland needs to construct a new existence and attain a new personality by transforming herself from the poor villager girl into an acceptable woman in an aristocratic circle. Her lack of education, ignorance of human nature and aristocratic circles, as well as loneliness with no experienced adult to guide her leave her alone in a seemingly hostile and indifferent environment, where she has to find her own path by her own means. She finds herself amid the world of aristocrats and her personality develops in line with the choices and decisions she makes. This article, which examines her character development, aims to trace personality development through social and psychological terms, and analyse the transformation in her attitudes and perceptions.

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## Catherine Morland's Character Development In Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*

**Keywords:** *Northanger Abbey*, Personality Construction, Maturation, Gender Roles, Female Identity

### ÖZ

İnsanın kişilik gelişimi çağlar boyunca iyi bir toplumun kurulması açısından çok önemli bir konu olagelmıştır. Ahlak ve eğitim konusuna eğilen Platon ve Aristoteles'ten günümüz eğitim bilimleri ve psikoloji alanına gelene kadar, çok çeşitli görüşleri yansıtan kitaplar yazılmış ve bilimsel birçok araştırma yapılmıştır. Üstelik, bilimsel çalışmalar insan doğasına yönelerek genetik, sosyo-genetik ve sosyal ya da sosyo-kültürel açılardan insan kişiliğinin bileşenlerini ortaya koymaya çalışmış ve insanın istenen davranışları sergilemesini sağlamaya yönelik eğitim kuramları geliştirmişlerdir. İlk başta bilinmeyen doğa olaylarını açıklamak ve bilinmeyenin yarattığı korkuları aşabilmek adına ortaya çıkan ilkel dinlerden günümüz semavi dinlere kadar insanın kişilik gelişimini olumlu biçimde gerçekleştirmek önemli bir hedef olarak belirlenmiştir.

Viktorya dönemini temel arkaplan olarak benimseyerek, özellikle ahlak konusu etrafında kişilerini kurgulayan İngiliz yazar Jane Austen, realist akımın bir temsilcisi olarak, kadın kişilerinin bulundukları yoksunluk durumunu aşmalarını romanlarında önemli bir sorunsal olarak işler. Onun ilk dönem romanlarından birisi olan *Northanger Abbey*'de romanın baş kişisi olan Catherine Morland, eğitimsiz ve yoksul bir köylü ailenin kızı olarak kendini soylu ve zengin bir çevrenin içinde kurmak ve yeni bir kimlik kazanmak zorundadır. Eğitimsizliği, insanları ve yeni çevreyi tanınamaması, kendini bulma yolunda kendisine yol gösterecek deneyimli birilerinin eksikliği ile kendini aristokratların değerleri ile belirlenmiş bir dünyada bulur ve kişiliğinin gelişimi diğer insanlarla nasıl iletişim kurduğuna bağlı biçimde belirlemeye başlar. Onun kişilik gelişimini inceleyen bu makale, sosyal ve psikolojik açılardan kişilik gelişiminin izlerini sürmeyi ve değişimi çözümlemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Northanger Abbey*, Kişilik Kurgusu, Olgunlaşma, Cinsiyet Roller, Kadın Kimliği

### АННОТАЦИЯ

Развитие личности человека было очень важным вопросом для создания хорошего общества на протяжении веков. Начиная от Платона и Аристотеля до наших дней, в области педагогики и психологии обрабатывается тема морали и образования. На эту тему были написаны книги, отражающие широкий спектр мнений. Было издано много научных исследований. Кроме того, научные исследования велись в области по изучению природы человека и в нём, с точки зрения генетики, обсуждались вопросы человеческой личности. Велась работа по изучению социально-генетических и социальных или социокультурных аспектов, пытались раскрыть черты личности. Были разработаны образовательные теории с целью того, чтобы люди смогли продемонстрировать желаемое поведение. Сначала были первобытные религии. Они возникли с целью объяснения неизвестных природных явлений и преодоления страхов. Как важная цель, была определена направление позитивно реализовать развитие личности до современных традиционных религий.

Британская писательница Джейн Остин принимает викторианскую эпоху в качестве основного фона в своих романах. Как представитель реалистического движения, она в своих романах описывает жизнь бедных женщин и помогает им выйти из этого положения. В одном из его ранних романов „Нортангерское аббатство“, ведущим персонажем является Кэтрин Морланд. Как дочь необразованной и бедной крестьянской семьи, она должна утвердиться в благородной и богатой среде и приобрести новую личность. Она необразованная, не знакома с новыми людьми и

новой средой, испытывает недостаток в опытных людях, которые будут вести его на пути к обретению себя. Она попадает в мир, определяемый ценностями аристократов. Развитие его личности начинает проявляться в зависимости от того, как она общается с другими. В статье, исследуется развитие личности главного персонажа, прослеживается и анализируется его социальное и психологическое положение.

**Ключевые слова:** *Нортангерское аббатство, изменение личности, созревание, гендерные роли, женская идентичность*

### Introduction

Jane Austen set her novels in the end of the 18th century England, where the main elements to define the typical society of the time were agriculture, mostly crude village life, small landowning and fate of young girls depending on their beauty, characters, morality and chastity. So, in such an atmosphere, what is the position of a young lady from a village, as the daughter of a farmer couple with almost no landowning, and therefore no proper love, education and social guidance? This is the story of Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*, and to answer this question means to explain her fate and personality development.

There have been debates for a long time as to whether a person is the product of their social environment, or from a fatalistic point of view, they just take after their parents both in appearance and character. Away from the philosophical arguments, most of which try to lean on the research data of various disciplines trying to define the development of human character, it would not be wrong to say that “[As] *conventional wisdom would have it, [...] a person is the product of the company he or she keeps*” (Snyder and Smith, 1986: 65). Although it does not shed light on the development character as a whole, this simple sentence forms the basis of the complex human personality development, as it refers to the fact that humans are social beings in which they interact and transform each other.

Although some people might argue just the opposite, it seems that one’s character is shaped mostly in the social and cultural environment the person grows. If one surrounds themselves with negative people, they will adapt to their negative character traits such as lying or cheating. If one is surrounded by positive people, they will eventually become as positive as them. When examined closely, it can be seen that one’s religious belief, cultural values, normative behaviours, choices, liking and disliking, perception of other cultures and the general view of the world is extremely similar and compatible with those of his close surrounding, such as their family and friends. If the child grows up in such an environment, it becomes relatively easier to trace the stages of their character development. However, what happens if parental relationships, childhood memories and building relationships outside of home influence this process? Is this process the same in all people? What are the stages of this development and at what ages do we observe them? Are there differences in the experiences of females and males?

Novels (realist and naturalist novels in particular) attempt to define and reflect the social and psychological reality of the individual and society through objective fiction, and so they position their characters in various social atmospheres so that they can exhibit different perspectives of reality. “*With a view to reflect the*

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*human, society, nature and the interaction among them, the novel, which constructs its presence upon plot and story, has always aimed to establish a connection with life and the community through the creation of characters*" (Aşkaroğlu, 2018: 2020). In Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, the main character, Catherine Morland, undergoes a transformative psychological process and is presented by the author so as to find answers to the upper questions. Coming from a village where nothing ever happens, she goes to Bath for a couple of weeks and not only gains valuable experiences but also meets interesting new people who help her find out who she really is. With the psychological approach regarding friendships, this article analyses all the crucial factors such as parental affection and its impact on one's self-confidence that contribute to forming Catherine Morland's character.

It can be claimed that Jane Austen uses Catherine to prove that despite the obstacles she encounters due to her social, cultural and economic status as a female, Catherine is a true heroine. This means that if the intentions are of good nature (as is the case with Catherine), a person will overcome the negative things that might keep them from achieving their goals. By doing that, Austen manages to make the reader see their own prejudices in regards to individuality. Lots of things happen unconsciously, which is why it is necessary to recognize one's misconceptions about physical beauty, for instance. Placed amid a traditional society by Jane Austen, Catherine is expected to overcome not only her economic and social status but also obstacles of her gender roles, because "*gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed*" (Butler, 2004: 900).

First, I will discuss the character development of Catherine Morland by going through the essential points that have an impact on her personality such as her childhood, her family constellation and how much love she receives from her parents. Then, I will analyse to what extent she changes herself after forming relationships with her boyfriend Mr. Tilney, his family and Isabella. Next, I will compare Catherine to Isabella, who is portrayed as the complete opposite of the former by keeping in mind that Austen uses irony and binary oppositions in the form of themes, motifs, values and even characters in order to indirectly state her opinion. This will be supported by Derlega's and Winstead's edition of *Friendship and Social Interaction* (1986) as well as Demir's edition of *Friendship and Happiness* (2015).

### **Characterization of Catherine Morland**

Jane Austen introduces her protagonist with the use of her most common stylistic device - irony. Her description of Catherine is clearly exaggerated and often times implies criticism of Victorian society through the presentation of a beautiful female figure. As an example, by claiming that due to certain unchangeable predispositions, Catherine cannot influence "*[her] situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her person and disposition*" (Austen, 1813: 7), Austen lets Catherine Morland appear as if she were obstructed in developing her full potential. However, this can hardly be a reasonable excuse for a person's inability to make something out of oneself. Yet, society is a crucial factor in terms of how one is regarded as an individual. If a person does not fit into the social value system, they

are usually excluded from the group and treated like a second class citizen. Austen wants to highlight that despite lesser outer circumstances such as the familial background or looks, Catherine still has the tools to become successful in creating meaning out of a weird position she is thrown into in a mostly hypocritical society.

However, Austen tries to convey her message in a humorous and sometimes heart-breaking manner – as is suitable for the use of irony. Describing Catherine as having “*a thin awkward figure, a sallow skin without colour, dark lank hair and strong features*” as well as stating that she was rather interested in “*boy’s plays*” (1813: 7), Austen is not only preventing the reader from building positive feelings towards her main figure but also gendering her character traits. Hence, not fitting into the common beauty standards for women at that time, Catherine is automatically assumed to be an outcast and seems to behave like a boy since she enjoys playing with dirt instead of occupying herself with her dolls which again is used to give voice to the opposite argument and view- namely that especially children should not be told which toys they could play with and that everybody is allowed to behave in their own way regardless of society’s allotted gender roles.

Another crucial point is that Austen judges Catherine from the very beginning when stating that she was “*occasionally stupid*” just because she needed someone to teach her something instead of figuring it out on her own which is considered to be normal especially for a child. It is obvious that Austen uses this exaggeration to mock society’s general approach to education. Instead of letting children enjoy their free-time, they are expected to learn everything as quickly as possible to become capable and wise adults so that their parents no longer have to keep an eye on them once they have grown up. Nevertheless, it does provoke the reader when all the things that Catherine is bad at are listed because she might have not found the right hobby for her yet or - being only ten years old - she is probably too young to be interested in learning French or playing the piano. Still, Austen gives her credit for being even-tempered although mentioning at the same time that Catherine is rather annoying and finds pleasure in the simple things in life like “*rolling down the green slope at the back of the house*” (1813: 7). Therefore, Austen uses her words wisely since she never writes something unless it does not have a deeper meaning. When complimenting someone she makes sure to also express the negative side of a character to let them appear realistically with human flaws.

However, connecting looks with likeability, Jane Austen sees Catherine in a different light now that she has become beautiful. Not only has she grown up but her interests have also become more feminine saying that Catherine now prefers “*cleanliness*” over dirt and even “*grew smart*” (Austen, 1813: 7). Nevertheless, in her parents’ eyes she only looks “*almost pretty*” which immensely flatters Catherine who - in Jane Austen’s words - cannot ask for more since she used to be an ugly duckling. Her development into a more heroine-like figure - meaning, becoming more beautiful - is based on superficiality and on fitting to society’s depiction of how a girl is supposed to be. In addition, as a female figure she can never remain immune to the oppression inflicted by the men around; “*Henry’s attempts to transform Catherine into a reassuring feminine figure by correcting her language and taming*

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*her imagination are initiated in a manner that further reveals his 'odd ways,' the distance between his wobbly self-identity and the gendered role he is expected to play"* (Wylie, 2007: 140). Therefore, in a way, Tilney becomes like the "shadow archetype" defined by Carl Gustav Jung, and the consummation of the female (Catherine) and the male (Tilney) forms a grown up, matured heroine.

Moreover, Catherine forces herself to like something she does not just because this is how she should behave according to society. Consequently, it leads to the loss of individuality when everyone is interested in the same things and all people behave in the same way. Having hardly read a book before for the sole purpose of self-entertainment, Catherine starts to obsessively consume every literary work that counts as a classic one just to learn some quotations by heart and apply them to her life. Without any real role model in her surrounding, Catherine uses reading as a means of learning about the world and teaching herself valuable lessons in regard to behaviour and self-confidence. Besides, she now manages to observe other people doing something culturally meaningful like listening to someone playing the piano instead of doing it herself which can be considered as a tiny step into the right direction towards becoming more sophisticated and therefore more heroine-like. Despite all this personal growth and Catherine's happy emotional state, Austen still thinks she is just a naïve teenager.

Unfortunately, no one seems to recognize Catherine's potential. In Bath, she is introduced into a whole new world full of balls, gowns and sophisticated people. Again, having no real guidance except for Mrs. Allen, who is too busy with her own appearance, Catherine can only observe this new phenomenon from outside instead of actively taking part in it. Although she would love to dance, she cannot do so without a partner. Thus, she and Mrs. Allen - having no acquaintances in the pump rooms - feel extremely unwelcome and treated as outcasts by the other guests. When Catherine is finally approached by two gentlemen who compliment her on her beauty, her mood immediately lightens up as if seeking approval and interest especially from men. At the present, being pretty appears to be her only goal in life. However, the next day continues to be like the ones before according to the principle she fatally follows not to get hurt: "*looking at everybody and speaking to no one*" (Austen, 1813: 14).

In fact, lacking parental affection, Catherine has to seek approval and interest from strangers and since the next equivalent to a mother and father during that time was a husband, Catherine is so influenced by Mr. Tilney - whom she automatically connects and falls in love with - that she cannot avoid feeling sad after she does not see him again, at least not in the following days. Still, someone has finally noticed Catherine's potential. Nevertheless, she should be careful in order not to be too dependent on someone else.

Thus, Catherine's parental relationship is a crucial point when it comes to understanding her character. Having ten children, it is impossible for her parents to give each and every single one of them the same amount of attention, guidance and love. Despite wanting only the best for all her children, Mrs. Morland had to decide who of them needed nurturing the most. So, she laid her focus on the youngest

siblings while the elder ones had to have enough discipline to teach themselves. Even though it is not Mrs. Morland's fault that she does not have enough time for all her children, this should not be an excuse for not offering them all at least a little love. When Catherine leaves to go to Bath, the only concerns her mother has is that first, she should always keep herself warm enough and secondly, she should always be aware of how much money she spends. Instead of worrying about her, giving her extra pocket money<sup>1</sup> or at least showing her some sort of physical intimacy like giving their daughter a hug, her parents remain calm and unbothered, keeping Catherine's departure rather cold and distant.

Due to this lack of love from her family, Catherine all the more tries to have empathy towards her fellow people. When asked by Mrs. Hughes to take care of a young lady, she could not be happier. Especially after Catherine misses her appointment with Miss Tilney, she deeply regrets it because on the one hand she accidentally insults her - at least she thinks she did - and on the other hand she does not want to be perceived in any negative way since her main purpose in life is to get consent from others. By following this principle, she does a lot of overthinking which leads to false assumptions. For example, when General Tilney insists on his walk with Miss Tilney - therefore sending Catherine away - she starts to read into things such as the General expressing some sort of hostility towards her, which is probably not true. This behaviour unconsciously makes her sad but at least she stays humble which is a positive character trait. Nonetheless, this can be seen from a different perspective like when John Thorpe tells her that the General thinks of her as "*the finest girl in Bath*" to which she replies, "*Oh! Nonsense! How can you say so?*", showing that Catherine does not think too highly of herself (Austen, 1813: 51). Nevertheless, after she is sure that Mr. Tilney's family likes her, she is greatly relieved and finally starts to relax and enjoy her time with Henry.

Unfortunately, Catherine's constant struggle with how other people perceive her leads her to have high expectations of others. She is so focused on having a good time that she cannot enjoy the moment in real life. Since imagining how something should happen never corresponds to how it actually happens, Catherine is unhappy and annoyed by every little thing even when the General is nothing but nice to her. Clearly, she is confused by her emotional state since there seems to be no logical reason for it which is why it is important for her to take a step back and reflect her mindset. She would have benefitted greatly from a trustworthy mother figure in that situation instead of a friend like Isabella who misunderstands the whole thing and only blames the Tilneys for not being friendly enough even though in fact they were. Catherine's focus should be on learning how to be happy instead of always finding something to criticize is what the focus should be on. Another example is that Catherine forces herself to remain as a guest at Northanger Abbey even though, being Mr. Tilney's love interest, she is soon supposed to be a part of the family. She

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<sup>1</sup> Her father gives her ten guineas but Austen mentions in the same sentence that hundred pounds would be more appropriate (Austen, 1813: 10).

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is truly lacking knowledge about how she should handle compliments and nice gestures.

However, Catherine manages to be nice to everyone except herself. She is so focused on pleasing everybody that she does not admit to being neither very fond of nor interested in Isabella's brother John Thorpe who also happens to be her brother James's best friend. This behaviour can be explained with Heider's Theory of Cognitive Organization (Heider in Perlman and Fehr 1986, 17): "consider the case where P likes O, and O likes X, but P has no attitude towards X. In this situation, P would be apt to develop a positive attitude towards X so as to achieve symmetry." In order to not hurt anybody's feelings, she puts her own ones aside which is a character trait that shows a lot of reasonable behaviour in a seemingly polite society such as the one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Even though Catherine has grown so much over these past couple of weeks, she is not immune to getting hurt. General Tilney, not having said to her personally that she had to leave their residence immediately or telling her the reasons for his sudden decision, leaves her to draw assumptions that are probably false and only depress Catherine more. Since it is not in her control how others act towards her, she should actually stop thinking about possible hostile motives from her boyfriend's father and reflect everything that she has gained from the experiences outside her hometown. Nevertheless, coming back to her parents highlights the fact that she needs to move out and be on her own to keep her new level of self-confidence. When her daughter obviously seems to be bothered by something after she returns home from a long vacation, it is again not the best way to just leave her alone for the simple explanation that she is probably too tired from the journey. The problem is that her parents do not even seem to care since they do not even try to understand what went wrong, thus neglecting their responsibility as parents of a teenage daughter who especially needs their comfort during that phase in her life.

All of this shows that Catherine is trying to find out who she really is as a person and where her place in society is. Since she has neither meaningful relationships with her parents nor any friends and therefore no person to help her through the difficulties in life, she tries to adapt into this new life that Bath offers by using books as role models. This is not always useful because fiction rarely corresponds to reality and can therefore cause serious problems like when she accuses General Tilney of having murdered his wife because of her obsession with Gothic novels where these scenarios can be found quite often. Confiding into friends or romantic partners helps her more just like Mr. Tilney makes her see the absurdity of her imagination and therefore giving her a much needed reality check. In addition, moving away from one's hometown - at least for a couple of weeks - is in itself frightening and stressful especially when it is the first time and one has no friends. Catherine is forced to learn the hard way that not everyone is to be trusted but she takes the lesson and grows through it. It requires enough courage to go to Bath and thanks to that she learns valuable life lessons that could have never been taught to her in her village.

As Erikson according to Manago and Vaughn states: “*An important component to psychological health and well-being in lifespan development is learning to build meaningful relationships outside the family during the transition to adulthood*” (2015: 187). While Catherine is quite devastated to not see Mr. Tilney again with whom she had such a deeply emotional connection, she is not only happy about meeting Isabella - hence forming a new relationship - but also relieved that this helps her deal with her heartache. Austen fittingly explains that “[friendship] is certainly the finest balm for the pangs of disappointed love”. Therefore - Mr. Tilney apparently being Catherine’s first love interest - it is normal that she is helplessly overwhelmed, does not understand her feelings and has no idea how to react properly. Due to her new friend who has experience with these kinds of things, she gets the much needed emotional support.

Despite all of her achievements, Catherine has one problem that she needs to solve on her own and which keeps her from expressing her true self: speaking out her mind. Putting her good intentions aside, honesty sometimes really is the best policy because hiding from someone who clearly has a crush on one for instance, is at least not a long-term coping mechanism and also unfair for said person who is better off with the truth than relying on false hopes. Another example is that, when Catherine is basically thrown out of Northanger Abbey, she prefers not to speak out her mind - therefore avoiding any more conflicting situations - just as Eleanor does it who also seems to be uncomfortable and does not know how to behave in that situation. Whether Catherine’s reaction is right or not depends on her priorities: pleasing others always comes first whereas doing what she actually wants to is on the second row.

### **Characterization of Isabella Thorpe**

Contrary to Catherine Morland, Isabella Thorpe is depicted in a much more elegant way. She is considered to be so beautiful and stunning by her fellow people that even her younger siblings try to imitate her, hence Isabella functions as a role model. Even Catherine’s brother, James Morland, seems to be fully compelled by Isabella’s charm when telling his sister that she is the best companion anyone could have asked for since amongst other things Isabella keeps her good manners and virtues high.

It is obvious that Austen uses these different approaches - characterizing her main figures - to state from the very beginning that between these two friends a conflict will arise. Since irony always means the opposite, the underlying message therefore is that despite that Catherine does not have the ideal circumstances regarding her family background and outer appearance, her character is nevertheless heroine-like for she is selfless and courageous to find her own way in life. Isabella on the other hand is not lacking anything that a true heroine needs. Her mother is a widow and her father used to be a lawyer. Thus, she does not come from a rich family and “*has no fortune at all*” (Austen, 1813: 107-108). So, she fits perfectly into the role of a beautiful young woman who is dependent on a man to secure her living standards.

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However, her personality compared to Catherine appears to be the exact opposite. At first sight, Isabella seems to be rather open when she is directly addressing Catherine and telling her that she looks just like her brother, therefore mentioning right away how she knows her. This could be a strategy of hers to make sure that nothing will stand in the way of her and James' relationship. Furthermore, this would explain why even though they just met, Isabella is already seeing Catherine as a friend, simply because she is her brother's girlfriend. Catherine being naïve does not suspect anything since she is grateful for every friend that she encounters while being alone in this new town. So, she is more than happy and relieved when Isabella shows her around and therefore introduces Catherine to this new and unfamiliar society.

Another point that underlines the fact that Isabella is of great use for Catherine is that she is four years older than her and therefore has more knowledge about things such as clothing, flirtations and balls that are still unknown to Catherine. Hence, Isabella again functions as a role model for others, especially for people like Catherine who greatly lack self-confidence and therefore are in desperate need of someone who guides them through life. In addition, Catherine can learn from her by doing that. So, she learns important lessons from her friend and applies them to life. According to Lott's and Lott's Classical Conditioning Approach the "*basic premise of reinforcement theories of attraction is that we like people who provide us with rewards.*" (Lott and Lott in Perlman and Fehr, 1986: 11). An individual experiences some kind of reward and all the factors surrounding them such as time, place, people, etc. automatically become associated with having gotten the reward (Lott and Lott in Perlman and Fehr, 1986: 11). So, "[any] *person who is present when we are rewarded comes to be liked*" and the more often this happens, the more the person is liked (Lott and Lott in Perlman and Fehr, 1986: 11). Consequently, we do not like people who are on the one hand not instantly "*reinforcing our behaviour*" and who on the other hand are getting in the way of us getting the reward/ being rewarded (Lott and Lott in Perlman and Fehr, 1986: 11).

Henceforth, these two benefit from each other which is the foundation for their rapidly growing strong bond. They seem to be always united whether it is about attending the pump rooms or the chapel the following day. This seemingly intense friendship makes them appear like soulmates who have known each other since forever and cannot live without one another. Catherine has finally found a female role model who can offer her guidance, support in life changes and love that she has been devoid of in her family home. This is also the reason why Catherine starts to admire her new best friend in a seemingly obsessive manner, for example when she is watching Isabella move and analysing her aura. The reason for this might be that Isabella is her first real friend, hence the first person apart from her family that she has ever been attached to and since this is all new to Catherine, her exaggerated fascination in Isabella is usual.

However, as the story continues, Isabella's façade starts to slowly break down. A common phenomenon when it comes to friendships where one person starts a romantic relationship with their significant other, is that they neglect their friends.

Despite praising Catherine always in the highest manner, hence, acting like she cannot live without her, Isabella seems to care less and less about her when she is engaged with her brother James. This probably shows Isabella's intention right from the start: as long as her love interest is not around, she uses other relationships as a fill-in to overcome her loneliness. The fact that she turns to friends in that situation is not what is remarkable but that she lets them fall after James is there again, is morally questionable since therefore all her nice words and gestures cannot be authentic. Thus, pretending to be someone else is the wrong approach to deal with feelings of solitude.

While Catherine is described rather negatively by Jane Austen claiming that she would be too ugly and stupid to be a heroine, Isabella seems to be perfect for this role since she is beautiful and everybody likes her. The major difference is that Catherine can be read like an open book. She cannot hide anything even if she wants to. Isabella on the other hand appears to be the ideal person though her behaviour is often times very exaggerated. But she slowly reveals her true self as the story goes on. Contrary to Catherine being an open book whose thoughts and feelings can be guessed very easily, Isabella hides behind her social and likeable façade that she creates to get her goal in life: a man who is able to secure her living standards. For this, she does not mind using people and hurting them.

According to Aristoteles there are three kinds of friendships: "*friendship for the sake of utility*", "*friendship for the sake of pleasure*" and the "*perfect friendship*" (Aristoteles in Snyder and Smith, 1968: 64). Since Isabella willingly befriends Catherine just because she is her boyfriend's sister, their friendship fits to the first kind mentioned by Aristoteles who would furthermore describe this relationship as an "*imperfection*" since the use for the person is only one-sided (Aristoteles in Snyder and Smith, 1968: 64). Even though Catherine does benefit from Isabella as well, she is repeatedly let down by her once James is there to keep Isabella company - not to mention when the two break up in the end and Isabella continues to use Catherine who by that time has figured out her tactic.

### **Conclusion**

Summing up, the overall message in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* when it comes to her two main female characters is that one should not judge a book by its cover. Austen tries to convey this message in a humorous way by using irony. Portraying Catherine in a rather negative way and claiming that she cannot fulfil her potential because she does not have the circumstances such as attraction and a loving family, the reader is led to believe that Catherine cannot be a true heroine despite her good character. Isabella on the other hand, being pretty and intelligent, fits more likely into the common prototype of how a woman has to be in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Contrary to Catherine, who seems to be a lost lamb, Isabella knows exactly what to do in order to achieve her goals. But as the story goes on, it becomes evident that the first impression does not always turn out to be true. Catherine, despite all of her obstacles, becomes a wise young woman who manages to see behind Isabella's façade who is now left with no soon-to-be husband or best friend. All of her beauty

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does not change the fact that she has truly made a huge mistake and can hopefully learn from it to find her way in life just like Catherine does in the end.

Starting with gender roles, people should never be put in a box labelled accordingly to societal norms because this endangers their individuality. If all people act and look the same, there is no meaning in life anymore especially not when it comes to building deep emotional relationships. So, society should allow each individual to express themselves freely without being judged for it. Especially children should have the right to display their personality consisting of certain tendencies and preferences no matter whether these are considered rather (un)suitable for male or female. If a child is raised like this, society will become more tolerant, kinder and more open and negative character traits such as the ones that Isabella has will lessen.

In addition, beauty and intelligence do not always go hand in hand just as proven by Catherine and Isabella's development. Even though Catherine lacks both, she is the one who undergoes a major development. Having no support system, she manages to find a boyfriend with a loving family and a best friend from whom she learns much even though it turns out that Isabella is not a real friend. Catherine goes through many obstacles, for example, trusting the wrong person and becoming too obsessed with her and almost letting that person ruin her relationship with her boyfriend, and finally benefits from it with huge personal growth. In the end, she is capable to tolerate Isabella's behaviour even though this has hurt her a lot. Due to her residence in Bath, she becomes an adult which would have never happened if she had not built relationships outside of her family.

Isabella, contrary to Catherine, is perceived to be more heroine-like, being more beautiful and self-confident. Unfortunately, she has not found her place in life since she uses people to get what she wants. Even though Catherine is in a more urgent need to stay friends with Isabella who used to be the female role model the former never had, it is Isabella who suffers the most from their break-up, being left with nothing but her regret and shame. The book has an open ending and therefore, the reader does not know whether Isabella really learns from her mistakes or not, but at least Austen's intention - to prove the reader with their prejudices about heroine-characters wrong - has been successfully conveyed.

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