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# Jane Austen's Liminal Heroines: Rituals of Personal and Social Growth

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# JANE AUSTEN'S LIMINAL HEROINES:

## RITUALS OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL GROWTH

By Allison Juda

I hereby reaffirm the Lawrence University Honor Code.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Austen's life and works are simultaneously so complex and so simple that it is, in fact, very difficult to capture all that she has done and the incredible impact she has made on literature and pop-culture even today. Throughout this work I have endeavored to do Austen the justice I can within the context of my topic, yet there is still so much to discover. Ultimately it is for each person who reads Austen to decide the many ways that Austen portrays the life of the liminal heroines and their societies.

This project would not have been possible without the many people who have helped me along the way. First and foremost I would like to thank my family, my parents for always pushing me and supporting me completely in everything I do, and my brother for always being there to make sure that I am not taking myself too seriously. Their support has meant everything to me and I am so thankful for all that they have done. Next, to my friends and coworkers who have put up with my crazy schedule and incessant discussion of Jane Austen for the last year, thank you for hearing me out and being there with an ear and a warm smile—it has really made a huge difference. I must also thank Professor Timothy Spurgin who proved himself to be an invaluable advisor for this whole crazy adventure, and Sarah Perret-Goluboff who helped me edit my massive project as it came to its final form. Thank you to everyone who helped me in this incredibly rewarding adventure. There have been ups and downs but it is the people around me that have helped me through.

# ENTERING AUSTEN'S WORLD

It seems that Jane Austen has become synonymous with grand balls, witty conversations, mysterious and handsome strangers, sweeping romantic gestures, and happy endings. In all six of Austen's novels, the basic structure of the romantic plot is relatively simple, beginning as the heroine falls in love with the hero, and ending as the characters overcome several obstacles so that the heroine and hero may end up together. The same basic beginning and end can draw attention away from the more complicated transitional period in the middle, so that even this part of the plot can appear to become simplified. It may seem that from the onset the hero and heroine belong together, and that it is just a matter of time before they will be happily married; that, while the path may not be entirely free from complications, the plot and characters are always moving toward each other at a constant pace, and that the roadblocks along the way are simply hurdles to the foregone conclusion. In short, people want to live Elizabeth Benner's fairytale life without really understanding her difficulties. They never expect the danger that the heroine may not end up with the hero, or that the hero might, in some way, be flawed to a point where the relationship is unworthy.

As the most well known Austen heroine, *Pride and Prejudice*'s Elizabeth Bennet serves as an excellent starting point from which we can begin our analysis. She follows the same basic path as all of Austen's heroines, neatly defining the journey we will be examining. Yet, in even the most essential way, society and its restrictions play an integral part in Elizabeth Bennet's initial position and later journey. In fact, Elizabeth does not seek out Darcy's company for almost the first half of the novel. Thus, even in the most basic elements of the romantic plot we see complications, where both Elizabeth and Darcy must work toward a better understanding of

each other and grow to love each other rather than experiencing an uncomplicated love at first sight. In this period of discovery we also see the serious nature of what Elizabeth has to overcome and it becomes obvious that these are not the simple roadblocks we might have predicted, but serious restrictions that reflect larger social structures. The telltale obstacles—money, social status, family name—all play a crucial role in both Elizabeth and Darcy's journeys. Thus, there are systems in place that might impede Elizabeth's ultimate happiness and even go so far as to prevent her from joining hands with her hero.

I will argue that the societal restrictions confining the Austen heroines are crucial indicators of the faults and personal growth with which these characters must actively engage before the conclusion of their novels. Literary analysis of Austen's novels normally focuses on the personal challenges of the characters, but I would like to emphasize how the personal growth of the heroine may be more complicated than it first appears as it reflects the larger society. Throughout these journeys, society as well as the heroines must grow and change for the ultimate successful conclusion, indicating that the characters are, in fact, importantly reliant upon their social worlds. Thus, social reform is just as important as personal growth. Indeed, as I will argue, they cannot be separated as both become importantly interconnected throughout the heroine's journey.

## *LIMINALITY IN THEORY AND REALITY*

At the beginning of her novels, all of Austen's central heroines are at a crucial point in their lives. They are between two stages—in a position of liminality. The heroine cannot fully fill her role in any social position, and is therefore pushed toward her journeys of discovery in order to find a more stable future. The transitional journey is marked with obstacles that prevent the

heroine from becoming a full member of her society without learning valuable lessons. Thus, liminality is a powerful device through which Austen voices some of her strongest social criticisms and allows her characters to grow the most. It is the specific role of liminality in the novel that prompts the heroine to engage in her society in new ways and challenge old, flawed, systems.

Therefore, in order to better understand the characters and plots Jane Austen created, it is important to establish the underlying principles of liminality. By creating such a theoretical basis we may better understand the central concepts of Austen's novels and delve into a more sophisticated perspective of the works. We will look for prominent threads of this theme and connect it with a broader understanding of society in a way that should enhance our understanding of Austen's works as a whole.

## *Victor Turner's "Betwixt and Between"*

Anthropologists have been fascinated with theories of liminality for years. Victor Turner was influenced by Arnold van Gennep's work on liminality and, after van Gennep, was one of the first anthropologists to explore the experience of those going through a transitional phase in life, and is thus an influential figure in the discussion of liminality. His work with the Ndembu people's ritual during the first half of the twentieth century, led him to the exploration of individuals going through what van Gennep refers to as rites of passage. Turner specifically addresses the issue in his ethnography "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites of Passage.*"

In this study, Turner determined that "we must regard the period of margin or 'liminality' as an interstructural situation" (93) and thus establishes that rather than experiencing a world

outside of the reaches of society, liminal individuals are incorporated into the social organization. As part of this process, these men and women learn about themselves as well as their society. The focus on the structure, rather than the chaos of the liminal state, emphasizes that the period of liminality is marked by binding rules and specific roles for these individuals and thus suggests that, rather than being an arbitrary state in between other roles of life, the position of the liminal individuals is especially restricted. Turner continues to specifically address these roles and the structure of liminality in the context of the Ndembu people. He emphasizes that rites of passage "tend to reach their maximal expression in small-scale, relatively stable and cyclical societies," yet also acknowledges that the position of liminality in rites of passage can be found in all societies (93).[1]

In his description of liminal positioning, Turner seeks to break down the experiences of the liminal individuals, "regard[ing] transition as a process, a becoming, and in the case of *rites de passage* even a transformation" (94). As described by van Gennep, the transformation for the rites of passage as marked by three phases: separation, margin (or *limen*), and aggregation (in which the individual is reunited with society in a way that firmly fixes his or her state). Although Turner would not emphasize one phase as more important than another, the position that is of the most importance to our study of Jane Austen is the middle one—limen—the one in which the 'neophytes' experience their unique condition as "one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories" (Turner 97). As the neophyte's position is not fixed in any given state, his or her role is often rationalized through complex and bizarre imagery, with a frequent

[1] Turner is viewing this culture from an outsider, and potentially ethnocentric, perspective (a flaw which anthropology has worked to diminish over time). As he views this society, he tends to simplify peoples' experiences. So as we use his theory as a basis from which to view Austen's characters, it is important to keep in mind the bias that Turner may have presented in his work.

emphasis on death and rebirth marking the period of transition. These neophytes are also under the complete control of their instructors, the men or women that will teach them more about their role in liminality and in the community. Within this time of liminality, they are not bound by the standard rules that face the rest of society, and because they remain uncategorized, the neophytes can also be imagined as particularly dangerous. As Turner describes:

> One would expect to find that transitional beings are particularly polluting, since they are neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere (in terms of any recognized cultural topography), and are at the very least 'betwixt and between' all the recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification. (97)

Thus, while the neophytes are in a particularly constraining structure, their lack of conformity with the rest of the cultural group gives them a restricted, but very important, power. Although they may not be able to participate in their culture in the same way, they are also in a position to challenge social norms and categorizations that are instrumental to helping the society function properly. Thus, any individual living under the restrictions of the liminal state has an outsider's view of society—a particularly powerful position from which to learn more about the culture.

Turner focuses on this societal education as one of the crucial elements in any neophyte's time of liminality. These liminal individuals are working toward a better understanding of their community before entering into a more permanently fixed role in society. As they are separated in various ways from society, "[d]uring the liminal period, neophytes are alternately forced and encouraged to think about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that generate and sustain them," and it is in this way that "[l]iminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection" (Turner 105). Distinct from society, the neophytes reflect upon their cultural values without

operating under the same restrictions as the rest of community. The ritual aspects of rites of passage force neophytes to face symbolic representations of cultural norms in a way that encourage a better understanding of their society's morals. Thus "[i]t is these [phenomena and processes of mid-transition] . . . that paradoxically expose the basic building blocks of culture just when we pass out of and before we re-enter the structural realm" (Turner 110). The period of limen, faced just before the aggregation and return to society, is thus instrumental in teaching neophytes the standards by which they will be forced to live and the reasons why these standards exist. The emphasis on this aspect of liminality begins to explain why Austen places so many of her characters, particularly her heroines, in the state of liminality. The heroines going through this process are learning about their society, although perhaps in ways that are slightly altered from what Turner describes are customary for the Ndembu.

As they too face the societal restrictions that set off the transitional journey, we should expect to see a certain amount of parallelism between the roles of the marginal Ndembu youth in Turner's study and Austen's heroines. We can come to understand the importance of the role of liminality for these literary individuals and societies. It is important to clarify, however, that while rites of passage need to follow the same stages of separation, limen, and aggregation in order, not all rites of passage place the same amount of importance on every stage. Thus, some rites of passage might not emphasize the postliminal aspect, for instance. It is also necessary to note that not all rites are rites of passage and that rites of passage may incorporate other rites, integrating smaller rites within a larger journey. As such, not all rites of passage will follow the same detailed path. So although Turner lays out a basic structure by which the transitional

journey progresses, it should not be viewed as a strictly formulaic means of understanding transition.[2]

## *Carolyn G Heilbrun's Women's Lives: The View from the Threshold*

Austen appears to be fascinated with this time of liminality as she went through it herself, and likewise appeared to have watched others go through something very similar. Her fascination with this time is therefore important, as it is very telling of her life and authorship. To better understand Austen's background, we might turn to feminist theorists such as Carolyn Heilbrun, who demonstrate the challenges Austen faced and explain how they may have shaped her characters and narration. Heilbrun, although less explicitly discussing the different steps of the transitional journey, emphasizes the restrictions on women throughout time. Heilbrun starts her work by defining liminality in her own way:

> The world 'limen' means 'threshold,' and to be in a state of liminality is to be poised upon uncertain ground, to be leaving one condition or country or self and entering upon another. But the most salient sign of liminality is its unsteadiness, its lack of clarity about exactly where one belongs and what one should be doing, or wants to be doing. (3)

For Heilbrun, the uncertainty—this inability to decide where one fits in or how one should move forward—is the crucial issue that faces liminal women. Here Heilbrun emphasizes an important characteristic of liminality that is crucial to our understanding of Austen, but that is not addressed by Turner. While Turner argues that the beginning and ending points of the transition are relatively fixed and recognizable, Austen's heroines have very uncertain futures. As such,

[2] As such it is not out of the question to expect to see some variation in how Austen portrays her heroines' journeys.

this characterization of uncertainty is a crucial element of the fear and motivation to experience aggregation, to stabilize their role past liminality. Thus, Heilbrun advanced the theory of liminality further to help us more aptly understand the Austen heroine.

Helibrun shows that for women, the experience of liminality is passed from generation to generation between mother and daughter, which can lead to some resentment of the mother figure.[3] As such, it is both the responsibility of women (Austen's female characters included) to put an end to their own liminality, yet also a danger that in their anxiety about uncertainty, they will serve to enforce the role further for the next generation. However, as Heilbrun also points out, it is very important that women are not only restricted by this difficult situation. Liminality can be an important element that shapes women, for "[a]s long as woman was designed to be an appendage to man, with no higher aim in life than to be looked at with pleasure, she hardly seems fit to serve as the protagonist of great literature. Liminality, I assert, is necessary for that destiny" (27). Thus, Helibrun views liminality as an influential time. The fate of liminality does not merely constrict these women, but molds them into strong leaders, worthy members of power. If they were not to undergo the transitional journey, they likewise would not be capable of learning about their societies or instilling social change. Helibrun's work with liminality is therefore particularly important to our understanding of Austen, as it highlights the challenges and rewards of liminality for women—both writers and characters.[4]

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[3] On this note, it is interesting to recognize that there are actually very few maternal figures in Austen's novels. Many heroines go without mothers or, if they do have mothers, they do very little in the novel. Obvious counter-examples include the roles of Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Dashwood and to some extent the surrogate mother Lady Russell, but even these women do very little to support their daughters, throughout the course of the novels, blocking their journey by providing several obstacles to growth.

[4] It is important that we use Heilbrun's analysis to look at Austen's role in authorship, but we will not use her as prominently as other theorists in our main analysis of Austen's characters.

## *JANE AUSTEN'S PERSONAL LIMINALITY*

Austen felt this conflict between what is fitting for the protagonist of great literature, and the restrictions she endured in facing her own liminality, as she grappled with both her role as a woman and an author. She was, in fact, criticized prominently as a result of this difficult balance. Critics from Richard Simpson to Charlotte Brontë have disparaged Austen for her representation of the common and natural—of not *doing* enough with her works to truly make meaningful commentary on the realities of the time. In fact, it is the realistic world in which she lived that inspired Austen to write in the first place. Her literary worlds and characters are defined by her own world. So while Richard Simpson believes her plots all "presuppose an organized society of families, of fathers and mothers long married, whose existence has been fulfilled in having given birth to the heroes and heroines of the stories" (133), these ordinary families are a representation of how Austen saw the world and how she worked to point out crucial social flaws in her own unique representations of society. Much of her writing reflects the society in which she lived and her own position in the world. "She never aspired higher than to paint a system of four or five families revolving round a centre of attraction in a country mansion, or a lodging at Bath, or a house in a country town" (Simpson 129), because for most of her life those were the societies with which she had contact. Therefore, while not truly autobiographical, Austen's works are an accurate depiction of the flaws and triumphs of her own world and especially the position of contemporary women. As Austen lived a life on the cusp of high society, her own experience forced her to live in a liminal position that is reflected and addressed in the lives of the characters in her novels.

## *Austen's life*

> They were not rich, but, aided by Mr. Austen's power of teaching, they had enough to afford a good education to their sons and daughters, to mix in the best society of the neighborhood, and to exercise a liberal hospitality to their own relations and friends. (Austen-Leigh, 52)

While neither Austen nor her heroines were poor, Austen and many of her characters do not truly belong to the class of the wealthy in which every frivolity and whim is easily appeased. In fact, Austen grew up in a family that was forced to take on the education of young boys in order to help supplement the income that they were already receiving through the family parsonage and farm. Even with the hard work that Mr. Austen put forth in his many responsibilities as a clergyman and educator, he struggled his whole life and worked hard to keep his family going. At the same time, Mr. Austen was very kind to his family and sought to aid them in the pursuit of their passions—for Jane this meant that she was never without paper to write her stories.

The education of the Austen girls began in 1783 when Jane was just seven, when she and sister Cassandra Austen (her lifelong companion and confidant) briefly attended a school in Oxford, along with their cousin Jane Cooper.[5] Their education was cut short, however, and the girls were brought back home when typhoid hit the port and all three of them became ill. They were allowed to recover at home but Jane and Cassandra Austen were then sent away again to the Abbey House School in Reading, where they did not learn much, but instead spent most of their afternoons free from studies. Thus, while Jane and her sister attended school, the majority of their education most likely took place with their father, as he was teaching his young

[5] For a timeline with important dates in Austen's life, see Appendix A.

schoolboys. It therefore seems that neither Jane's education, nor her passion for writing were necessarily deterred by economic difficulties, as her father not only taught her but also gave her complete, uncensored access to his library. So, much of Jane Austen's youth was spent in her small country home surrounded by the young boys who were being educated by her father. Claire Tomalin emphasizes that this was probably a strong influence on her writing since "[g]rowing up in a school meant that Jane knew exactly what to expect of boys, and was always at ease with them . . . [She wrote her early works] full of boys' humour, starting with the talk of horses and vehicles, journeys and accidents, all topics young men were . . . obsessed with" (30). These liminal experiences and structures within which Austen was forced to operate, shaped her writing. The experiences Austen endured, both good and bad, found their way into her earliest writings. From the content of her works, to the type of humor they possessed, she wrote about what she knew and, because she went through these various challenges in life, she was able to strongly shape characters and the liminal experience in her novels as a reflection of her own society.

While the Austens tended to live in this simpler country lifestyle they were also connected to a wealthier class of people, which allowed Jane Austen access to the upper-class society that she also includes in her novels. The third eldest Austen brother, Edward, became a source of comfort for the wealthy Thomas and Cassandra Knight, relatives of the family who were without children of their own. The Knights took Edward in, sending him on a Grand Tour of Europe when he was 18 and eventually adopting him, making him the legal heir to their vast estate and fortune. After the death of Thomas Knight, Cassandra Knight left the estate to Edward when she moved to Canterbury. Yet, Edward still remained close with his family even after changing his last name to Knight. He provided Jane and the others access to the high society with

which the Knights were associated and the three vast estates that Edward was to inherit—the libraries of which Jane was particularly fond.

In addition to this means of access to the upper-class society, paternal cousin Eliza de Feuillide introduced the young Jane to a more elegant world. When she was originally married to Count Jean-François Capot de Feuillide, Eliza "crossed the great divide of a woman's life without giving up her own tastes and pleasures" (Tomalin 45). She became a wife and mother while always maintaining an unusual amount of freedom and a childlike dependence upon her own mother.[6] With Eliza, Jane explored dancing, private theatres, and the world of youthful flirtations. After Eliza's husband was beheaded by guillotine during the French Revolution, she became Jane's sister-in-law when she married Henry Austen following a period of flirtation and courtship. Her world of glamour and excess provided an excellent escape for Jane from her dull life at the parsonage. However, even with these superior connections, the Austen family's own lack of wealth moderated their access to this social world. As Claire Tomalin puts it in her biography of Jane Austen, these outsider experiences were vastly important to "an author who took social discomfort as one of her main themes . . . [as] no one observes the manners of a higher social class with more fascination than the person who feels they do not quite belong within the magic circle" (135). It is important to understand, therefore, that not only were the Austens financially in a liminal position, but also in a highly unstable social position—with access to a world beyond their means but without truly belonging to it.

[6] It is not hard to see the parallel between Cousin Eliza and the Austen anti-heroine Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*. In fact, many of Austen's characters are heavily influenced by those people with whom she came in frequent contact. This even caused some tension as people began to see parallels between Austen's villains with real individuals.

Austen's gender and her role as an unmarried woman is also highlighted in her writing, as she often focuses on the liminal time of courtship, when women are given the most power that they will ever be able to wield.[7] As a young woman under the influence of her elegant cousin, Jane began to flirt at various dances and the functions in her more adult world. In her early twenties, she formed an attachment with a man named Tom Lefroy, only to experience potentially one of the first and harshest realizations of her liminality. Although romantically interested in Jane, Lefroy was unable to follow this instinct, as he was financially unstable himself, and therefore could not marry a penniless girl.[8] With this blow and the one her sister Cassandra felt after the death of her fiancé, Tom Fowle, Jane Austen's hope for romance in the world was severely diminished. While Austen also received attention from another young man, whose name has been lost in time but who died shortly after they met, she never married and eventually rejected the proposal she received from Harris Bigg-Wither. Oddly, this attachment to love and marriage was prominent in both her youth, when Austen was preoccupied with this world of marriage and family, and in the romantic plots of her mature novels.

In her eventual position as an unmarried woman, Austen also felt the challenges that face women who remain single—the complete reliance on her father's support that limited the ability for Austen to have personal choice in many matters of living situations. She was thus forced into many experiences in which she was an outsider, or in other ways lacked control over her personal state. This vulnerability includes her experience during the family's move to Bath—a situation in which she could not even find the stability to write—resulting in a nearly decade

[7] This focus on courtship and romance is prevalent from Austen's earliest writings. In her juvenilia Austen frequently criticized the frivolity of young women during their search for prospective husbands.

[8] Again, this difficulty in Austen's own life seems to have influenced her writing—with John Willoughby reminiscent of Tom Lefroy.

long hiatus from her novels and leading to a more mature and reflective tone in her last three novels, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*. With the death of her father, Mrs. Austen, Cassandra, and Jane continued to feel this pressure and instability, perhaps even more strongly than when Mr. Austen was alive. After his death, Frank, James, and Henry Austen provided the small income that the Austen women were allotted, and therefore the women were completely reliant upon the brothers to accept any situation or living arrangement chosen for them. Even as Jane Austen's writing career began to earn a profit, the Austen women lived very modest lives.

## *AUSTEN'S CHARACTERS*

Given Austen's own experiences and how much her literature reflects her views and trials, it is to be expected that the Austen characters will face a similar kind of liminality. Therefore, it is appropriate for us to find patterns in the works of Jane Austen similar to the ones Turner lays out in his study of the Ndembu people. With this framework in mind, we can look more closely at how the journey of Austen's heroines parallels and contrasts with Turner's characterization of liminality. It is also important, however, for us to look at the characters and growth as indicative of larger structures in place, with the transitional journey acting as a means of "expos[ing] the basic building blocks of society" (Turner 110). Thus, we must also reflect upon the social structures in place surrounding the liminal heroines, and how the interplay with society impacts their time of transition.

## *David Monaghan and understanding society*

David Monaghan examines the difficult social restrictions Austen's characters must experience as they attempt to achieve their own growth throughout her novels, relating the special liminal position to the effort made by the characters to attain societal morality. In his work *Jane Austen: Structure and Social Vision,* Monaghan emphasizes how the personal and social growth of the characters is produced through a series of societal rituals:

> The initiation ritual, as Arnold van Gennep points out, is designed to test an individual's worthiness to pass from one relationship with his society to another. However, the society too is implicitly under examination, because it is forced to articulate its values on these occasions. Jane Austen is acutely aware of the reciprocal nature of this process, and her novels progress through an intense interaction between the initiate, always a young woman struggling to make the transition from adolescence into adulthood, and her society, which has often lost sight of the very ideals which it is teaching through its rituals. (11-12)

Thus, in Austen's novels, the ritual lessons that the heroines learn are related to a greater lesson about society. As both Turner and Monaghan draw from Arnold van Gennep's work, both emphasize that much of the social and individual change relies on ritual rites that instigate an emphasis on examining society as it is. However, apart from this initial reference, Monaghan does not engage with van Gennep's liminality or the time of transition directly. Rather, he focuses more on the social structures that surround the heroine and, more specifically on the role of the landed gentry to perpetuate morality. Monaghan, therefore, provides important background on society, and Turner describes the transition of the heroine within this structure.

Monaghan focuses on how the process of growth is reflective and challenges both individuals and society simultaneously. He argues that because "this educational process . . . is two-way, by the time the heroines achieve maturity and marry, not only have they proven themselves worthy of their society, but the society has proven itself worthy of them" (12). Thus, the characters grow to not only understand the functions of society, but also usually seek to correct the immorality prevalent in Austen novels. They must experience a dual growth in order to succeed in their communities.

With heavy influence from Edumund Burke, "the great philosopher of the landed interest" (2), Monaghan emphasizes his interpretation that the gentry are ideally placed to support the moral integrity of the society as a whole. As Monaghan points out, the right of the landed gentry to rule rests on the belief that they are the best suited to live up to the obligation because their position leaves time for leisure and removes them from the competitive world of those seeking to better his individual positions in society. The man who earns a living is caught up in menial tasks of survival. Contrastingly, the landed gentry are only striving to maintain the land that they already own for future generations. They are at their leisure to maintain the morality of society. It is only through the good manners learned from the gentry, that other members of society can hope to live up to the ideals that they set. Monaghan moderates this complex system by explaining that these social exchanges are primarily functioning through rituals that act to moderate personal urges and harmonize cultural life. In Austen's works, these social rituals include events as large as balls and dinner parties, and, I would like to add, as small as individual social interactions. The heroines are held to this standard of propriety associated with the landed gentry and therefore should act to moderate and correct immoral social actions. Thus, by positioning these characters as particularly distinct from society, Austen eventually

emphasizes her specific critical goals: "[h]aving carefully established the social positions of her characters," Monaghan notes, "Jane Austen is able to use them to demonstrate her thesis that the fate of society depends on the ability of the landed classes to live up to their ideal of concern for others, and on the willingness of the other groups to accept this idea" (7). Thus emphasizing that there is a duality in the growth—a growth upon which society must depend to live morally.

I would like to push Monaghan's ideas further to emphasize the role of transition in respect to his arguments about social structure. I think that by relating his theories to those of Turner's we see a complementary understanding of individual and social engagement as the transitional journey from separation, to liminality, to aggregation, leads to a personal growth that must integrate social reform for the heroine to eventually reach the stage of aggregation. It is not merely that the social growth is a byproduct of the role into which the heroine grows, but a key element to help the heroine achieve her new position. Especially in Austen's later works, the liminal heroines must actively engage with their societies and alter the prevalent flaws before they will be able to fully experience any reintegration with society.

## *The liminal heroine*

Jane Austen positions the majority of her heroines in a liminal state either socially, economically, or both. These heroines struggle to establish their roles in society because of these difficult circumstances. Even the characters that appear to be socially and economically elite, like Emma Woodhouse and Anne Elliot, are precariously positioned as they attempt to negotiate this world of the elites with, especially for Anne, a different morality than is expected of them.

In her personal experience as an unsettled, unmarried woman, Austen was able to feel the social woes of lacking a stable place in society. Her focus on this issue is particularly poignant

given the constant reworking of the romantic plot through all six of her completed novels—each manipulating earlier plots and Turner's basic phases toward an elaboration on Austen's understandings of liminality and society. Austen begins with her most conventional depiction of the traditional courtship plots and liminality with the Dashwood and Bennet sisters. Then, over time, she develops her works that move past the simple obstacles in the way of a heroine's happiness and progresses to a more complex courtship and expression of liminality.

I will approach my work by grouping Austen's books into three separate sections: *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, followed by *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park*, and finally *Emma* and *Persuasion*. While Austen's novels pair very well in multiple groupings, this organizational scheme will allow me to analyze the novels not only in the order in which Austen wrote the works, but also, as I perceive it, in an order in which the courtship plots and liminal positioning of the heroines becomes further complicated. This pairing also lends itself to emphasizing similarities in the initial liminality of the heroines and the growth through which they are able to ultimately join their respective heroes. In *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* the Dashwood and Bennet sisters are all facing a particular kind of liminality in which they must marry well or face the terrible consequences of uncertain dependence for survival. Their journeys of transition most closely follow to the conventions established in Turner's "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage,*" and as such the heroines do not challenge their societies in the same way that later heroines will. As they grow to understand more about their societies, these heroines also come to a better understanding of the "basic building blocks of culture" (Turner 110). The next two novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park,* introduce heroines with strong moral sense, but with a naïveté about how to consider and shape others in their respective literary worlds. Thus, in many ways, Catherine Morland and

Fanny Price both experience "stage[s] of reflection" (Turner 105) and grow to understand not only their place in the world, but also how to affect those around them and encourage others to behave in morally upstanding ways. These heroines become agents of change, deviating more from Turner's conventional stages than the previous heroines. In the last pairing, *Emma* and *Persuasion*, Jane Austen chooses to position her heroines in a different social context than in her previous novels, and therefore these women must learn about their worlds in a different manner. This perspective gives an interesting emphasis on how even these young women, in relatively well-off economic and social positions, can face moments of liminality just as trying as Austen's previous liminal heroines. As they come from different social worlds Emma Woodhouse and Anne Elliot's growth takes on different roles in their societies.

The positioning of the heroines, and the structured restrictions of the transitional phases through which these women overcome the odds, complicates their place in the world. The variation in these important elements emphasizes the range of personal and social growth by the end of each of Austen's novels. By looking at Austen's progressively more complex transitional journey, we see that the role of the neophyte challenges the flawed society. My goal is to incorporate anthropological theories of liminality into the analysis of Jane Austen's literature in order to better understand individual and social growth. Through this, I hope to enhance the reader's understanding of how social reform becomes directly tied to the personal growth of the characters. The transitional journey works to teach the heroine about her society and the role she needs to play in it. It acts as both a social criticism but also suggests and implements change. The experience of liminality thus serves as an extraordinarily powerful tool of social reform as Austen's heroines seek to alter the world "within the magic circle" of which they do not quite yet belong (Tomalin 135).

# PART 1: PERSONAL GROWTH

Austen's first two novels begin her exploration into the theme of liminality and the progression of her characters through their respective transitional journeys.[1] While in later novels there is a more intricate interweaving of the characters and their communities, these first two works focus much more heavily on the individuals' flaws and educations. As such, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* hold different appeals to our understanding of liminality and the community. This makes sense as, being Austen's first mature works, she is still exploring the themes of liminality and looking to simpler plots that happen to more closely align with Turner's three transitional phases. As this is the case, it is also unsurprising that these first two works do not strongly engage with the theme of instilling social change. Rather than viewing this as a flaw, as some critics seem to do, it is important to set different expectations for these early novels. We must look to her creation of personal growth as an earlier, and as such slightly less complex, representation of later liminal growth. In fact, while social reform may not hold as prominent of a role in these two novels, the heroines are taking steps toward understanding the "basic building blocks of culture" in their social worlds (Turner 110). This will be the first step that later Austen heroines take before they instill social change. It will be particularly helpful, therefore, to look at the plot structure and complicated personal growth as a foundation from which other novels will develop. By contrasting these earlier novels with later works we can see the progression of the transitional journey as it deviates and aligns itself with Turner's original description.

[1] Though *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* were Austen's first completed novels finished in 1795 and 1797 respectively, they were not published for well over a decade. As such, the versions of these two novels that are commonly circulating among today's readers are actually closer to the versions that were revised in 1809. All of these dates and those for every other novel can be found in Appendix A.

As all of Austen's novels revolve around the romantic pursuits of their respective young heroines, the positioning of these women—both in relation to their undetermined futures and current stages of life—highlights their particularly liminal state. As they leave their world of youthful fancy and enter into the more adult sphere filled with serious decisions about the future, the heroines find themselves as eligible young women ready for marriage, yet are also unable to live life in the same way as they have been accustomed to. The moment at which we meet all of Austen's heroines is always at a potential turning point where they must make important decisions about their futures. During this time, then, they are to leave their settled pasts behind in order to step into the adult world and toward their futures; but as they are all unattached to specific suitors or lifestyles, the heroines are unable to establish a stable place in society. Yet, there is no set way in which all of Austen's heroines are liminal. Indeed, the range of liminality that the Austen's heroines experience demonstrates the different ways these women and literary characters in general may face this phase. In the case of Marianne and Elinor Dashwood and Elizabeth and Jane Bennet, the liminal position specifically focuses on the economic and social instability generated from the respective loss and threat of loss of the provider for these characters. They follow Turner's transitional journey "marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen), and aggregation" without much deviation and use the liminal period as a time to reflect upon their society and learn in order to be an appropriate active part of it by their aggregation (94). Thus, these women are moving from a position in which they are socially unstable to one with a solid future. In many ways, this growth into different sections of society is echoed through the heroines' deepening understanding about social class distinctions.

## *SENSE AND SENSIBILITY*

*Sense and Sensibility,* as Austen's first published novel, demonstrates her attention to detail and the concerns for liminality early in her literary career. She places the Dashwood sisters in a particularly intriguing position in which the growth of the characters is of particular urgency. They are faced from the onset with the challenges of finding an alternative to their previous social world. Even with this prominent urgency for the completion of the rituals that will eventually bring Marianne and Elinor out of liminality, there is distinctively less attention paid to the role of society within this change. Potentially because the Dashwood sisters are in a position of desperation to find stability, they do not marry men with the same kind of social power as can be found in later Austen novels. As their situation is more urgent, the personal growth of the Dashwood sisters is not marked with the same kind of social reform as Austen's later works. It thus seems that in *Sense and Sensibility*, especially compared with her last two novels, Austen is making a first attempt at understanding the time of transition. In doing so, her heroines experience a journey that interestingly aligns relatively well with Turner's period of transition. As such, we can focus on certain aspects of the ritual as more pronounced than others. For instance, the establishment of the Dashwood sisters' position of liminality is prominently featured. This an important element to all of Austen's works and one which will prove particularly fruitful for establishing the importance of the stage of limen for the individual's recognition of flaws and movement toward a more moral life. We should, therefore, treat Austen's first work with the notion that it provides the underlying principles and central concepts of liminality from which we will eventually depart in later novels. Comparatively, the first two novels will be important works to demonstrate the function of Turner's phases.

## *One social world and two views*

While Austen's main heroines are placed in positions with varying degrees of freedom and liminality, in many of her works Austen establishes the restrictions or prospects for her characters from the very beginning of the story. This is especially true in *Sense and Sensibility,* where from the first few sentences the difficult position of the Dashwood sisters emphasizes their state of liminality. The novel opens with a description of Marianne and Elinor Dashwood's position after the death of their benefactor, their late father and husband to Mrs. Dashwood. The narrative closely establishes the pronounced beginning of a transition, as the Dashwoods must face a very different role in society in a moment of change. In the clues provided by a history of the family's estate, we learn that these heroines occupied a fixed societal position until the death of Mr. Henry Dashwood: "The family of Dashwood had long been settled in Sussex. Their estate was large, and their residence was at Norland Park, in the centre of their property, where, for many generations, they had lived in so respectable a manner, as to engage the general good opinion of their surrounding acquaintance" (3). The size of the estate and length of time during which the family inhabited the Park not only suggests a long-standing stable position for the Dashwoods, but also establishes the importance of the family as a central part of the community. We can see from the 'general good opinion' that the Dashwoods have been able to establish, that they are also relatively fit social leaders.

Thus, the Dashwood sisters and family were previously in a very stable and respected position in society. The realization that Marianne and Elinor will not benefit from this fixed position in life is especially poignant and suggests the type of struggle that the Dashwoods will experience as they enter into this uncertain territory. We come to find that the girls' "fortune, independent of what might arise to them from their father's inheriting that property, could be but

small" as they are not the primary beneficiaries of their fathers' estate (3). Thus, they are left with comparatively little and must seek to adjust their way of living after their brother comes to take the property and leaves them with almost nothing to survive upon, forcing the sisters and their mother to establish a new living. As they go through this trial, the Dashwoods experience the first phase of Turner's established three-part journey when they endure "the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions" as they enter their phase of separation (Turner 94). In their separation, the Dashwood sisters must physically face this challenge, as they find a new place to live with less means than they were used to and fewer prospects than ever before. As they enter this uncertain territory Mrs. Dashwood pushes for the marriage of her daughters to secure a new, more stable position for the future, which points to marriage as one means through which these liminal women may establish a more certain future. Thus, the Dashwoods are in a liminal state between their old life, experienced through the established family history, and the potential for a new life and family background, that could either elevate them to a stable position or leave them even worse off than before.

From the moment in which Mr. Dashwood dies, the Dashwood sisters are encouraged to find stability by establishing a relationship with a financially secure husband. While they approach this task differently—Marianne with a more innocent giddy outlook as compared to Elinor's harshly realistic view on their potential as well as the dangers they face—both must focus on their own personal needs rather than on social reform. Even though they are forced to recognize Turner's "basic building blocks of culture" (110) in their brother's easily manipulated dismissal of their needs, Elinor's understanding is from the onset relatively complete (if jaded), and Marianne's journey focuses more on personal growth. As such, by the end of the novel,

although they succeed in establishing more stable positions in the world, their growth is relatively minimal. They must reflect upon their own limits and uncomfortable liminality as the sisters experience love followed by disappointment, as they come to learn that their suitors are connected with other women. The sisters are made to experience their time of limen where "[t]heir condition is one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of customary categories" (Turner 97), and they learn to live under their new rules properly before completing their journey. It is not until both sisters learn how to interact in the world, with both propriety and openness, that they are able to find stability in marriage. In their overall journey, they recognize the difficulties in truly understanding others in their constantly adapting world, and as such, begin to behave more appropriately with those around them. Throughout the course of the novel the sisters go from exposed and potentially destitute women without social power, to women situated in stable marriages with admirable husbands. Yet, they do not succeed in doing much more socially than recognizing the immorality with which those around them behave and the difficulty of interacting in a community full of secrets. As such, by the end of the novel rather than constructing a system of social reform, Marianne and Elinor have grown to recognize their own personal faults and have worked to restore their stable situation in society. In many ways they retreat from the flawed world, solidifying their own places rather than actively challenging their society to improve. And so, although they follow Turner's outline of transition, in doing so the Daswhoods also highlight the flaw of Turner's liminality. Turner's phases operate to reproduce society rather than affect any changes. So, while the Dashwoods function as Turner's neophytes, they do not engage in the same kind of social reform that we see as an important feature in later Austen works. The sisters, however, experience their own journeys in almost completely

opposite ways, gaining what the other one has and minimizing their own flaws. In their journeys Austen establishes the basic progress of the neophyte through the time of limen.

Without a proper guiding force in their mother, the Dashwood sisters are further exposed to the dangers of their circumstances, ultimately forcing the Marianne and Elinor to experience their time of liminality without a proper instructor. Mrs. Dashwood is certainly not looking for anything more than a general admiration to start suggesting marriage prospects. As such, she acts out of the desire for a more stable situation rather than a full progression through transition from separation to aggregation. She would have her daughters return to a stable reintegration without new knowledge or personal growth. For her, "[n]o sooner did she perceive any symptoms of love in [Edward Ferrars's] behaviour to Elinor, than she considered their serious attachment as certain, and looked forward to their marriage as rapidly approaching" (13). Mrs. Dashwood will try to make unsuitable matches or perceive something that may not truly exist in relationships between characters, anxious to stabilize the newly volatile position from which the Dashwood women face the world. Similarly, the sisters' responses to this position represent different approaches to liminality, and as such serves to demonstrate the important element of personal growth before the completion of the transition.

From the very beginning, the two Dashwood sisters act as diametric representations of how to behave in civil society, with Elinor standing out as a true heroine and Marianne as a flawed, selfish, young woman. Because they possess different natures, these two heroines approach their journey in different ways. In so doing they represent several of the different flaws of Austen's heroines and engage with the challenge of what they must learn during their time of

limen.[2] As David Kaufmann describes, from the onset, it is apparent that "Elinor serves as the novel's sentinel of propriety" (386), able to control every situation with the "strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment" (*Sense and Sensibility* 6) that is lacking in her mother and sister. In short progression, the novel establishes a stark contrast as well as the respective strength and weakness of character between the two sisters. Elinor "had an excellent heart; —her disposition was affectionate and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them," while "Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever; but eager in every thing; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation" (*Sense and Sensibility* 6). Thus we see that both sisters have a disposition that allows them a wide emotional range. Yet, while Elinor is able to govern her feelings, suggesting a level of control that coincides with her social actions, Marianne allows her feelings to overflow, affecting not just her life but the primary ways in which she treats others. Elinor, therefore, operates under a system of interaction that is dictated by decorum and controlled emotions for the greater good and Marianne moves along, believing in the strength of her conviction, allowing static first impressions and a firm belief in sentimentality to guide her actions. So while both sisters stand to gain economic and social stability through the completion of their transition, they start in completely different places, suggesting that the journey will not be the same for both of them.

For Elinor, her moral and social sense guides most of her actions, yet she needs to be able to interact with society in a way that benefits herself before she is able to attain what she wants. It is important to note that she is not a faultless character, bur rather, as Susan Morgan describes in "Polite Lies: The Veiled Heroine of Sense and Sensibility," she is "a flawed heroine, not in the

[2] Interestingly, the character flaws of Marianne and Elinor reappear in later Austen novels, suggesting that these are the two problematic views of the world with which Austen is most prominently concerned. Fanny Price, for example has the same calm, proper disengagement as Elinor while Marianne's character reappears in Catherine Morland.

simpler sense of Marianne, through making mistakes and learning to see them, but in the more interesting sense of using an awareness of her own failings as a factor in maintaining a continuing and flexible process of judgment" (200). As a liminal character, Elinor does not attempt to actively engage with the world. Rather, she acknowledges the wants and desires of others as more prominent while accepting the especially restricting binding rules of liminality. She must face the realities of her own needs in order to happily and actively engage with society before she can experience her aggregation. Marianne, on the other hand, needs to learn to truly interact with the world around her, both the positive and negative elements, to see how everything operates (not always in her favor) before she is able to complete her transitional journey. The difference between the two is in degrees of how they let social conventions dictate their interactions with others in relation to their personal desires. Elinor knows her actions operate within the proper sense of decorum, while Marianne's engagement in the world becomes inconsequential because of her inability to truly understand the standards that dictate her world. Still, Elinor's interactions following proper decorum do not amount to much, but the difference is that she holds the understanding of the superficiality of the world, thus recognizing how insincere they are. Susan Morgan describes that both of the sisters "move within conventions . . . [but] the true distinction is that while Marianne believes hers to be real Elinor knows that both are fiction" ("Polite Lies" 198). Elinor, therefore, must fight to function in a world with more meaning, a task that might prove more difficult, as she does not move to ultimately change society but just those closest to her. Whereas, for Marianne, it is this important emotional and personal growth toward realizing the constricting false pretenses of her imagination that marks her final transition and her ultimate removal from the liminal state.

Marianne is a complex character, however, because she has already gone through the process of maturing and thus her behaviors are not for want of awareness, providing a challenge for her ultimate development and stalling her transitional journey. Her growth cannot be said to be of one from ignorance to knowledge but rather is one in which her overall disposition must shift. At the start of the novel, Morgan points out on page 197 of "Polite Lies," Marianne has already "cultivated her qualities of speech for the sake of having what she believes is true sensibility" and thus it is rather her outlook on the world and strategy for dealing with potential conflict and unpleasantness in society that Marianne learns to control by the end of the novel. She needs to acknowledge her position in liminality in order to properly follow her progression, and it is only after she grows to understand her role, as dictated by the separation and limen, that she is able to experience aggregation.

The differing views on the world that characterize the Dashwood sisters are predominantly displayed from the start, with alternative understandings of Edward Ferrars. Elinor approaches her potential relationship with Edward by exercising the utmost caution, even as her mother and sister are confident in the attachment between the two young people, thus establishing her emphasis on propriety rather than superficial gain in her eventual aggregation. As she behaves with proper decorum and restraint, Elinor acknowledges the potential for deception in particular in their flawed society, and works to establish a safe interaction with her superficial world, not taking her experiences with strangers too seriously. She, therefore, sees the danger of behaving inappropriately in her liminal position, as doing so would risk her reintegration into society. Yet, while Elinor remains appropriately cautious, her inability to modify her own sister's behaviors demonstrates the flaws in even Elinor's approach to society, as she does not incite change through her mild manners.

While Elinor tries to mollify Marianne's feelings and to keep her grounded in what she knows to be true, as opposed to allowing her perceptions to run away with her, she does not stand as a prominent leader for change. Although Elinor acknowledges that "[t]he excellence of his understanding and his principles can be concealed only by that shyness which too often keeps him silent," we also learn that she has "studied his sentiments and heard his opinion" as she is forming her own opinion about Edward Ferrars (16).[3] It is thus with this acknowledgement of the time and the progression through different stages (such as those of transition), that Elinor gives her hesitant account of Edward Ferrars. She is never completely fixed on her impressions of others, which can positively allow her to keep a realistic understanding of those around her, but can also be detrimental to one attempting to commit to any sort of change, underlying Elinor's stagnant role. Her inability to take a chance prevents her from acting, as she is "by no means assured of his regard for me . . . [and as such] till his sentiments are fully known, you cannot wonder at my wishing to avoid any encouragement of my own partiality, by believing or calling it more than it is" (17). By at least outwardly limiting her emotions to what she feels propriety can dictate, Elinor protects herself from the extreme emotional harm that may, and in this case does, come when she finds out that Edward is attached to another woman. It also, however, prevents her from making any progress, being paralyzed by propriety and standards of decorum as well as fear, as she remains relatively disengaged with her superficial world and at the mercy of her liminality rather than seeking to directly interact with the world or her role.

[3] Like the later character of Jane Fairfax in *Emma*, Elinor will not reveal too much and risk impropriety, yet also like Jane Fairfax, her companions do not appreciate her for it and would have her say or do more to demonstrate her feelings. So, while she may be acting with propriety, she is not engaging with her community as they would see fit and as such is losing some of her potential for instilling change for the better, and preventing a continued degeneration.

Likewise, Marianne's first interactions with her love interest are very telling about her disposition and faults. They highlight that Marianne does not accept her role of liminality and behaves as though she is a full member of society. Marianne thinks that first impressions are indisputably reliable, yielding static understandings of others, and is thus ultimately fooled by John Willoughby (demonstrating what she must overcome in order to complete her transition). Marianne is almost immediately smitten with Willoughby from the moment that he saves her after she hurts her ankle. Little more was needed than an initial interpretation of Willougbhy's temperament for Marianne to attach herself to the man in extremely intimate terms. While he demonstrates several amiable qualities, Austen underlies the foolish nature of this sensibility, as "[h]e was exactly formed to engage Marianne's heart, for with all this, he joined not only a captivating person, but a natural ardour of mind which was now roused and increased by the example of her own, and which recommended him to her affection beyond every thing else" (37). It is thus Marianne's initial encouragement that really acts to create the connection between the two, even though she does not have the power to behave the same way given her liminal position, exposing Marianne to the dangers originating from imprudently engaging with the world around her. So, while Elinor is too closed to the world to be able to instill social reform or experience personal pleasure, Marianne's abundance of openness promotes her own selfish interests and puts her in risk of losing a great deal in her especially restricting liminal position. Although his character may appear to be less discrete and more open to consideration than Edward's, Marianne still simplifies Willoughby with her view of the world through sensibility. She does concede that she has not known Willoughby for long but demonstrates grand belief, that she thinks herself "much better acquainted with him, than I am with any other creature in the world, except yourself and mama," saying that "It is not time or opportunity that is to determine

intimacy;—it is disposition alone" (44). As such, Marianne exposes herself to distress and a further fall from grace, as she does not approach her world with caution, behaving opposite her sister's disposition. However, both must learn to engage with their society in a way that will not expose them to harm, but will also allow them to challenge it in a constructive manner, if they wish to truly grow on their respective journeys.

A key moment that exemplifies Marianne's stagnant journey is as her foolish visit to Allenham with Willoughby enters into the stream of gossip. With people assuming that if such a bold journey was taken the couple must be engaged, her actions ultimately serve to hurt not only Marianne's reputation but also harming that of her whole family. Rather than acknowledging her potentially compromising position on this excursion and reflecting on her role in relation to the rest of society, Marianne defends her actions with her now famous retort: "if there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time; for we always know when we are acting wrong, and with such conviction I could have had no pleasure" (52). Her attachment to sensibility means that Marianne's firm beliefs about propriety and impropriety do not allow for other people's interpretations of her actions to affect her own feelings. While Marianne is defaming herself the real harm in her actions comes from her refusal to acknowledge and follow the stringent rules binding the liminal individual to certain restrictions. Rather, she is breaking with these societal codes and as such, is being pushed into a far more shameful position that will further impede her liminal growth. As she is refusing to acknowledge the restrictions placed upon her, Marianne is not fulfilling her goal of the liminal period to "think about [her] society . . . and the powers that generate and sustain [it]" (Turner 105). It will not be until she completes this "stage of reflection" that Marianne can overcome her liminality (Turner 105). Likewise, it is not until she recognizes and behaves in a manner that respects her liminal position

that she can go through this reflection. Thus, at this stage in her journey, Marianne's refusal to behave in a manner appropriate to her position marks her stagnant journey. Meanwhile, Elinor is able to properly respond and reflect upon her world but does not actively engage within it.

We come to realize the overwhelming good in Elinor's propensity to withhold final judgment and willing adaptations. As the Dashwoods' society seems to revolve around how little individuals know about each other and the situation of their position in the world, this disposition proves helpful. By remaining open to change, Elinor responds to each interaction with decorum, a difficult task given the challenges she faces as she learns more about Edward Ferrars's engagement. As Susan Morgan acknowledges, "[t]he pervasiveness of mysteries and the limited truth that learning mere facts can provide constantly remind the reader of how difficult it can be to behave sensitively in social situations or to understand others without actually seeing into their minds and hearts" ("Polite Lies" 192). This discrepancy in knowing the full background of characters starts with Edward Ferrars and John Willoughby, but this theme also a continues throughout all of the relationships in the novel. As she continually learns about the world around her, Elinor is open to see Turner's basic building blocks of culture that make up her community. These revelations are relatively impeded, however, by the mystery with which the characters live and the secrecy of their relationships. As the uncomfortable scene in London between Elinor, Lucy, Marianne, and eventually Edward unfolds, we see how integral this overarching motif of mystery and partial truths shapes the drama, given the different positions on how much the characters know about each other or are trying to hide. In this scene Elinor already knows of Lucy and Edward's attachment although Edward may not know that Elinor is aware of the arrangement. Lucy likewise does not know about the previous affection between Elinor and Edward, while Marianne does not know a thing about anything beyond her initial perceptions of

interest between Elinor and Edward. Thus, besides Elinor no one is completely knowledgeable, and as such Elinor acts at the moderator in the situation, furthering her position as the character of propriety. The tangled interaction, where everyone has different levels of background, demonstrates the challenges to the Dashwoods' growth. This also serves, however, to show how strict adherence to society is not always prudent as it leaves Elinor to suffer as others act with their own desires in mind.

As Elinor proceeds with delicacy and tact in this particularly painful moment, her strict adherence to propriety stops her from following her own desires and ultimately prevents her from moving past her economic and social liminality. She will not reveal the relationship with which knowledge she has been trusted even though her place in the same relationship could solidify her role in society. So while her conduct means that Elinor is perhaps the only character to behave appropriately in the time where "[i]t was a very awkward moment; and the countenance of each shewed that it was so," she is sacrificing her own happiness in doing so (180). The mystery and secrecy soon begins to conflict with propriety as the different background knowledge of the members in the room causes a great deal of tension that all but Elinor are unable to move past. As the situation escalates, Elinor is the only one to truly understand Edward's discomfort, Lucy's necessity for discretion, and the insults instilled by Marianne's attempts to discuss a relationship between Elinor and Edward; as such, the responsibility for the continued discretion and morality of the group lies upon Elinor, who continues to converse with the others about things that ought to be discussed, had everybody else been following the proper decorum of pleasant encounters. However, as Elinor does not hold social power she cannot correct the flaws of those around her, and so she must instead act with discretion and guide merely the conversation rather than the society. As she has still not learned

to exercise her power, Elinor cannot expect personal growth, and as such, remains stagnant in liminality, even as she possesses the qualities of a sound moral leader.

As Marianne continues to ignore decorous interactions in her blatant discussion of the blooming relationship between Edward and Elinor (a conversation made all the more inappropriate by Edward's secret engagement to the only other person present), the contrast between the sisters' behavior portrays the difficulties of choosing whether or not to behave with the proper decorum in difficult situations. In this case, although Elinor is the only one acting appropriately, she is the one most hurt by this behavior, suggesting the difficulty for an individual attempting to behave with propriety in a society so dysfunctionally corrupted as the one in which they operate. As such, the scene is set with a conflict between personal growth within the liminal position and the essential social reform. It highlights the necessity for an individual like Elinor, behaving with proper decorum, to gain prominence in order to alleviate the faults in the world. However, as Elinor accepts her liminal role without questioning the society around her or seeking to grow, she is unable to move past her position because she will not challenge the society to improve and as such they will not accept her moral prominence. It is because of this contradiction that, in her later works, Austen reveals altered forms of the transitional structure—ultimately incorporating a level of social reform into the transitional experience. Although Elinor feels great pains for the relationship that makes her both uncomfortable and reminds her of what could have been, she is completely courteous to every party. Marianne, however, completely disregards anything beyond the desires of her own whims and continues to engage in inappropriate topics, ignoring the signs from everyone else of the impropriety of her conversation. Yet, Marianne appears to be the happiest amongst the group in her ignorance. While Marianne's selfish actions are not commendable, in this case she gains the

most joy from the interaction. As such, Marianne continues to remain ignorant and is not yet pushed to change her behavior for the better. She must work toward her growth to understanding and out of her liminal space between the understanding of decorum and disposition to practice it, which is ultimately accompanied by her growth out of economic and social liminality.

## *Loss and exceptional growth*

The extreme test that ultimately instigates Marianne's change highlights the faults in her behavior in the first place. As the relationship she has been attached to crumbles, Marianne must recognize her own liminality and the restrictions she should have acknowledged all along. Her initial reactions make way for the circumstances with which she will be forced to acknowledge her faults and change to behave with more decorum—ultimately acknowledging the restrictions of her liminal position and as such overcoming it. When Willoughby betrays Marianne in attaching himself to the wealthy heiress Sophia Grey, it indicates the flaw with the connection between Marianne and Willoughby in the first place. The match that is not based on strong feelings but rather monetary convenience highlights how Marianne is in a liminal position. Her monetary instability restricts her potential for courtship, especially as she does not offer moral strength, as do some of the other Austen heroines. As soon as Marianne hears of the newly formed relationship, she immediately begs Elinor to leave Mrs. Jennings and to go home, revealing that her only motivation in coming to London was for Willoughby. In doing so, she demonstrates that she cares little for the companionship of Mrs. Jennings or any of her other London acquaintances, as she is willing to disregard social morality and looks to only her own needs and desires. This moment of distress heightens Marianne's impropriety and indicates that

she truly does not understand her world. Unable to expose the basic building blocks of culture, as Turner calls them, she is not properly engaging in her limen.

In an interesting contrast to Marianne's obviously self-centered response to Willoughby's other attachment, Elinor's reaction to finding out that Edward Ferrars has been engaged to Lucy for four years is marked with subdued and controlled emotions—as Elinor continues appropriately behaving with propriety and decorum. Upon hearing the news, Elinor attempts to clarify the information and then contemplates it respectably. Although she is obviously hurt, she does not act out as Marianne does, in fact "[s]he was silent.—Elinor's security sunk; but her self-command did not sink with it" (99). Thus while Marianne responds to her trying news with a selfish dismissal of decorum, Elinor continues to face the conversation with dignity, even as Lucy continues to reveal the information about her long-standing attachment to Edward. Elinor feels the same disposition for anger and self-pity that Marianne does, but this state of grief is almost instantaneously countered by Elinor's consideration for others. She vows to keep Lucy and Edward's secret, even through the painful recollections and comments made by her own sister and mother that imply a continued connection between her and Edward. Although this is the morally just thing for her to do, Elinor's silence is met with great personal suffering. Her behavior thus demonstrates that although her disposition may be one of propriety, as she operates in a world not entirely centered upon this aim, she is the one to suffer silently at the expense of protecting others. Therefore, her experience does not necessarily suggest that her way of accepting the hardship is the most beneficial, given the realities of the society in which she operates. As such, even though Elinor is potentially one of the few characters behaving appropriately throughout the novel, she does not have the social power to create change. While she may act with proper decorum, Elinor is unable to convince others, even for a long time her

own sister, to behave in a proper way. Thus Elinor is caught living in a world that works against the moral code that it professes to hold dear. However, as is demonstrated by her eventual loss, Marianne's selfish behavior guided by ideas of sensibility is also harmful and ineffective in the constantly adapting society full of mysteries and hidden truths.

Her reaction to finding out the truth about Willoughby causes her not only emotional but also eventually bodily harm that results in a near-fatal fever, marking a key turning point in Marianne's understanding of her past behavior and the use of propriety in social engagements. It is only after this illness that she has an open willingness to adapt, moving her closer toward aggregation. In the immediate aftermath of the revelation, Marianne makes herself weak "faint and giddy from a long want of proper rest and food; for it was many days since she had any appetite, and many nights since she had really slept" (137). Rather than behaving with any sense, Marianne's state is one of helplessness and extreme emotion, ultimately forcing Elinor to not only look after her own ailing heart in secret, but also to care for Marianne as they move past the trying time. Marianne continues in her foolish sentimental ways as her grieving continues at Cleveland. By continuing to ignore sensible notions to look after herself, Marianne takes several ill-timed walks to increase the severity of her bodily ailment:

> Two delightful twilight walks . . . all over the grounds, and especially in the most distant parts of them, where there was something more of wildness than in the rest, where the trees were the oldest, and the grass was the longest and wettest, had—assisted by the still greater imprudence of sitting in her wet shoes and stockings—given Marianne a cold so violent, as, though for a day or two trifled with or denied, would force itself by increasing ailments, on the concern of every body, and the notice of herself. (231)

The symbolic representation of the woods in which Marianne has made herself ill add a metaphorical parallel of her behavior and character to the simplistic one of poor decision making.[4] Just as the trees along her path were the oldest and the grass the longest, excess and age mark Marianne's sensibility and thought process—as an older order way of reacting to the world where sentiment and excess of emotions rule the response to every exchange. This therefore highlights that Marianne has not truly accepted her lesser place as distinct from her society in a time of limen. This symbolically old order thought mixed with her indecent decision ails Marianne, marking an emphatic statement about the harm in her way of thinking and acting. She enters into her phase of emotional distress because of her assumption in the stringent power of her ideas and opinions of others. As her surroundings on this walk reflect her internal thought process, it becomes apparent that she is physically affected by these rationales, becoming nearly fatally ill because of her refusal to change or accept something different. She brings both the emotional and physical distress upon herself while the setting highlights the nature of her disposition and the source of her flawed views.

Marianne's sickness is also accompanied by what Susan Morgan feels is "Elinor's most difficult surprise" ("Polite Lies" 204)—the one that challenges her acceptance of her powerless position in liminality, as Willoughby arrives at Cleveland. During their conversation Elinor is faced with a true test for her decorum. She hears Willoughby speak and struggles with how to react; by the end her "heart, which had undergone many changes in the course of this

[4] Particularly pertinent to these first two novels, yet also reflected in Austen's later works, the concept of liminality is represented through symbolic actions. Through the incorporation of symbolic ritual societal practices, individuals are able to express private emotions in a public setting to create their own liminal state between these two spheres of the public and private world, and have very clear symbolic representations surrounding these actions. While the heroines navigate the space between their old and new lives with various social implications, the paths that they take are teeming with this liminal symbolism.

extraordinary conversation, was now softened again;—yet she felt it her duty to check such ideas in her companion as the last" (246). She is able to ultimately control her emotions and find compassion for the man that betrayed her sister and almost led to Marianne's death; this scene acts as a true testament to Elinor's moral character as she faces her biggest challenge, while also signaling an important moment of change. As she must chose to react with decorum but also respond to her own emotions in an appropriate manner, Elinor is forced to actively engage with society in a way that allows her to emphasize her propriety. As Kauffmann describes,

> Elinor's reaction to John Willoughby's confession, her discomfort when she is caught between his debatable merit and his call for her sympathy, marks the residual tension within the notion of manners between the principles of justice and benevolence, between the language of rights and the demands of sympathy. (390)

This scene stands to emphasize the difficulty of behaving in the structured and principled manner through which Elinor interacts with her society. Elinor must grow in her understanding as she is confronted head on by the behavior of Willoughby, whose actions are not guided by the same moral principles but rather something more along the lines of Marianne's indulgence in self interest. It is potentially one of the biggest turning points for Elinor, as she is required to balance propriety with her affectionate disposition and "excellent heart" (6). She is forced to decide how to react to such a complicated issue in the real and challenging world and engage with her own emotional needs at the same time. By acknowledging her own power in the case, she is taking a tentative step toward recognizing the necessary social reform that would complete her transitional journey.[5] In this instance, the society with which she has been struggling recognizes

[5] This social reform is only enacted in a small way as the Dashwoods' community grows to accept them resulting in their ultimate settled marriages, but without vast change in some of the most flawed characters. Thus, as I have said before, this novel has merit as it completes the

its own flaws and as such Elinor is able to react appropriately while using decorum and a moral forgiveness. Simultaneously, as her sense of justice conflicts with her feelings of benevolence, she must take not just the good of the whole but also account for her personal feelings in her judgment of Willoughby's character. This marks a turning point at which Elinor is at once able to act using decorum while also appropriately engage her own feelings in the situation. It could suggest finality to her transition as it stands, but it is only a single incident of the appropriate behavior of society, strengthening Elinor's character yet not removing her completely from her liminal position. She remains somewhat liminal as she has yet to be completely recognized by her society and move out of her social and economic liminality.

Likewise, Marianne's time of illness marks a turning point in her own understanding of the world, resulting in her new determination to behave more like Elinor, but also leading to a general shift of society toward moral improvement. The sickness and return to health acts as a representational rebirth for Marianne. The symbolic ritualistic imagery for Austen's character here ties Marianne's journey to the earlier anthropological theories we discussed. Just as Turner and van Gennep note the death imagery frequent in ritualized stages of liminality, the progress of the Dashwood sisters associated with Marianne's illness marks an emotional or social rebirth. It brings about a shift in Marianne's behavior as well as that of other prominent characters including Elinor, and even Willoughby himself, as they come to true realizations about society. Willoughby recognizes his faults and comes to apologize for the bad fortune his behavior caused; yet, this acknowledgment does not completely alter his character but rather forces him to reflect on a single incident. Therefore, as she recovers from her illness, Marianne learns more about the true nature of Willoughby and knows that she could never be happy with him. She thus comes to

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transitional phases and demonstrates the struggle of the liminal heroine, but without as strong of an engagement in the important altering of a flawed class of social leaders.

set realistic expectations for what she needs in the world, and in doing so eliminates a major barrier to entrance into aggregation. Through this experience she is set on the right track to accept Colonel Brandon's proposal. Her near brush with death gives Marianne the insight needed to truly understand the actions of those around and how she should truly interact with others. Without her close encounter Marianne might never have come to realize the importance of incorporating sense into her unrealistic world of sensibility. The near death and rebirth thus acts, much like Turner describes, to symbolize a reawakening into society.

As she comes out of her sickness Marianne is prepared to see the faults with how she has acted both in the imprudent behavior that brought about her illness, and in her interactions with Willoughby (and ultimately how she treats others):

> "My illness has made me think . . . I saw in my own behavior since the beginning of our acquaintance with him last autumn, nothing but a series of imprudence towards myself, and want of kindness to others. I saw that my own feelings had prepared my sufferings, and that my want of fortitude under them had almost led me to the grave . . . Whenever I looked towards the past, I saw some duty neglected, or some failing indulged. Every body seemed injured by me." (262)

Thus, Marianne comes to appreciate much of what Elinor is trying to teach her throughout the novel, and recognize that it was because of her impropriety that she ultimately became as ill as she did. This moment of self-reflection is an important reoccurring element throughout many of Austen's novels. By looking at her poor behavior when faced with the very physical representation of her deficient decisions, Marianne is able to finally acknowledge her liminal position and sees the danger of being in this state. Just as Elinor is initially hesitant to attach herself too strongly to Edward Ferrars because of her limited power, Marianne sees what she has

done wrong in her behavior with Willoughby. As such, she is learning about decorum and her world, finally uncovering what Turner calls the building blocks of culture. By stepping away from her selfish desires she acknowledges her liminal place, and finally recognizes her relatively powerless role in society. It is because of this transition that she is able to learn more about her society. She sees the true power of economic standing and finally acknowledges the power of Elinor's decorum. For the future, Marianne agrees to behave in a manner more humble, extending pleasant civilities to those around her that she has previously overlooked. This vast moment of change thus gives both Dashwood sisters a new perspective on the best way to behave in their society, and with this new knowledge they are then able to leave the liminal stage of their lives. However, as their journeys are primarily those of self-growth and recognition of societal flaws, rather than social reform, they remain in many ways liminal. They are again stalled as they face a society that does not behave with the propriety and decorum with which they both now strive to live.

As a result of her recovery from illness, Marianne eventually learns to form an attachment again, however this time in a more sensible manner, and this becomes the manifestation of a shift in Marianne's view of the world; her ability to find her place with Colonel Brandon marks a growth in her character by highlighting her education. It allows her to leave the liminal state of life for a fixed position with her new husband. Elinor is likewise rewarded for her perseverance and ability to overcome obstacles by eventually facing a clear path to Edward Ferrars who, no longer engaged to Lucy, becomes Elinor's suitable partner—sharing the same reserved demeanor that characterizes Elinor's behavior. Thus, "[t]he last chapter of the novel provides us with a somewhat surreal spectacle of felicity: *everyone* ends up happy in their marriages, even Lucy Ferrars and John Willoughby" (Kaufmann 393). So, while

Marianne and Elinor are able to learn from each other and from their trying circumstances, they can do so only after facing the harsh realities of their liminality and likewise their limitations in the world. While Elinor grows to acknowledge the importance of her own emotions and Marianne realizes her limited role in her society, both are able to find husbands that are suitable for their economic stability. Yet, they remain unable to produce the kind of social reform that we see in Austen's later works. Potentially because the Dashwoods face the harshest reality of liminality, where they are truly desperate for stability, they do not gain the same kind of prominence in marriage. What they gain from their respective marriages is an acknowledgement of their personal growth and morality, rather than the ability to change their social world through a newly formed position of leadership.

## *Reactions to Sense and Sensibility*

Many critics, including and prominently David Monaghan, find fault with *Sense and Sensibility* partly because these limitations in the social structure are never fully checked. Although both Marianne and Elinor are able to find suitable husbands after their important moments of learning and growth, the eventual resolution is what some critics dislike about *Sense and Sensibility*—that it seems rather inconclusive for the Dashwood women to simply find husbands at this point. David Kaufmann finds the ending satisfactory as "[h]appiness does not demand revolution, but individual moral repair" (402) and as such the resolution is an appropriate response. However, other critics find the ending to be an unrealistic response considering the first half of the novel. Rather than facing the social issues surrounding the Dashwood sisters and changing the actions of others, Elinor and Marianne are able to adjust their own reactions to the world but remain at its mercy by the end of the novel. Although they are

able to force others to momentarily see the errors in their ways, they do not fix their society but the sisters choose instead to create their own smaller societal group. Given their social positions they remain unable to ultimately correct the flaws in their world but rather recognize them and respond by separating themselves, so as to live with the proper decorum not adequately recognized in their grander literary world. As Monaghan describes, "the Barton-Delaford community appears to evolve in isolation from its society rather than by establishing authority over it. Few attempts are made either to influence or to challenge the novel's disruptive forces" (45-46). He additionally feels that the characters (especially the male suitors) are never fully realized in the novel and that this final flaw leaves a discrepancy between what is claimed of the community and what is actually produced. However, even without this alteration in the social makeup of the corrupted society, I feel that the strength of the novel is the ability for the characters to change and ultimately adjust to the flawed world that they are unable to save. We must look to *Sense and Sensibility* as Austen's first work in developing the liminal heroine and journey. While it might not be as connected with society as later stories are, the growth of the individuals does mark definite progress toward the alleviation of liminality that should not go underappreciated. It is, in fact, potentially because of its strict adherence to the transition as Turner lays it out, that there is no social reform. Since Turner sees the function of liminality as a point of learning to reproduce the same culture, social reform does not take a prominent role in his understanding of liminality. Rather, according to Turner's model, the importance of liminality lies in the individual growth and the acknowledgement of the structures of society as they are. In this light, as the Dashwood sisters are able to recognize the social construction of their society they fulfill Turner's transitional journey.

Elinor has learned throughout her journey that rather than accepting the norms of decorum, others may not always be followed their mandates. In response, she has adjusted to fit her own personal needs into the society sometimes too reliant upon personal desires, valuing them over the greater moral good. Instead of seeing this as a fault, I see it as an interesting adaptation to the problems presented by the novel. Elinor "does not mature in this novel, but she is in a constant process of developing her vision," as Morgan describes ("Polite Lies" 203), creating a unique position for herself in Austen literature. The state we come to at the end of the novel with individual but not social growth is, in many ways, the most realistic representation of how individuals (especially those limited for various reasons) are able to succeed in faulty societies. Rather than ignoring the flaws in the world, the Dashwood sisters come to recognize the failures but accept the limitations of what they can really accomplish as liminal individuals.

Further strength in the book lies in the experience that the reader is able to achieve as we follow Elinor and Marianne through their transitional stages—in a literary style that provides us with the same kind of limited access to the information we receive as the Dashwoods. David Kaufmann argues that the world of *Sense and Sensibility* is, in its own way, liminal—as it remains in transition between the old world, and a more modern one. This transition spurs the need for propriety and civility "as the product of the past's inability to reproduce itself" (Kaufmann 399). The conflict indicates the difficulty for society to perpetuate itself and move forward. As Turner's transition is entirely reliant upon reproduction, the tension between the flawed past and propensity for positive change comes to a head, but without a complete progression forward. Thus, in *Sense and Sensibility* these acts of propriety are not simply reminiscent of past tradition but the result of the fortification needed for stability during a new experience of radical change. The book emphasizes the world in transition—modifications to

flaws in the historical transition between old and new; in many ways Elinor's adjustments and Marianne's rigid resistance to change symbolize the old and new orders and stress that they are both vulnerable to the uncertainty of the past. It therefore emphasizes the need to modify the present, to try to adjust the flaws in the failure to mimic the past. The modernity in the work marks openness to the future but also "signals a present moment that is conscious of itself as such but, paradoxically enough, sees itself as empty, transitory and potentially meaningless. Modernity is thus attended by both fear and utopian hope" (Kaufmann 400). The world is in a state of liminality between two phases, which creates a complicated existence for the Dashwood sisters who do not have a firmly established position in either the old nor new states of the world. Marianne's transformation is itself indicative of the transitional state of the world, and as she ends without the total success of her happiness, the novel indicates the difficulty of completing aggregation. The desire to move on from the past finds a true representation in Marianne's rapid change, in her notion of identity and perspective. Meanwhile, Elinor's ability to be in a constant state of adjustment, as she experiences the major shift in her opinions and views on the world, is rather indicative of a lost modern world attempting to find a firm footing—a position comfortably removed from liminality. As neither of the heroines succeed at instilling social reform, and in light of Kaufmann's model of the liminal world, it seems that the Dashwoods' society does not experience aggregation at the end of the novel, and as such, their aggregation is less powerful than that of later heroines. Thus, when looked at from a perspective emphasizing the role of personal growth in the transitional phases, *Sense and Sensibility* successfully engages with liminality as Turner presents it, and even exemplifies the struggles of the liminal heroine in her own liminal world.

## *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

*Pride and Prejudice* is the second work that Austen began and it promotes a growth, although a not complete overhaul of society. Although the version we see today is very different from Austen's original draft, due to the more than 15-year gap between when the work was originally written and when it was finally published, it does represent a progression from *Sense and Sensibility*.[6] The ending of the novel does not represent the same flawed jump that critics see in the narrative disjunction in *Sense and Sensibility*. Yet, as *Pride and Prejudice* begins to interact with both individuals and society, interweaving personal and social growth, it does not engage with these topics to the same extent as some of Austen's later novels. Austen's second work, therefore, does begin to engage with the process of liminality in a way that represents a more complete understanding of the complicated social worlds surrounding these characters. Yet, we must not forget the contributions made by *Sense and Sensibility*, as we can most prominently see a connection between the two works in their positioning of liminal individuals. Austen, yet again, establishes the struggles of liminality for the Bennet women and follows Turner's transitional phases relatively closely.

Just like the Dashwoods, the Bennet sisters are also threatened with a future of instability with the looming risk, or at least as Mrs. Bennet sees it, of losing a home after the death of Mr. Bennet. Although the novel resolves without the Bennet women facing the same unfortunate fate, Mrs. Bennet articulates that the threat upon them all is very real. Just as the opening of *Sense and Sensibility* emphasizes the turmoil that the Dashwood women will face throughout the novel, the frequently analyzed opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice,* "It is a truth universally

[6] In fact, the original draft of *Pride and Prejudice* was titled 'First Impressions' and was written entirely in the form of letter correspondence, rather than narrative. When Austen revised the work in 1809, she changed the form of the novel.

acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife," suggests the ultimate goal of Mrs. Bennet for her daughters (1). The first sentence predicts the fates and objects of many of the leading heroes, heroines and antiheroes. Although the satirical tone of Austen's narration is apparent, the structure of the plot reveals that undeniable truth about the overarching societal measure of success and stability, most frequently achieved through connecting young men and women in marriage. It becomes apparent that this structure makes up the building blocks of society, and as such, is the ultimate goal and measure of success for the Bennets. Thus, the narration follows more conventional courtship plots that parallel Turner's transitional journey, while underlying the cynical view of the societal convention to focus on marriage as a necessary ritual task for young adults.

*Pride and Prejudice* begins to make a shift toward social reform but without the same kind of strength as Austen's later works. As the system in place is not the subject of correction, so much as the individuals are, Elizabeth Bennet's journey closely aligns with the three phases of transition. In narrative tone, *Pride and Prejudice* begins to criticize this convention, suggesting that without being led by moral goals, the transition is not a powerful means of maintaining propriety in society. In this novel it appears that the flaws in the system do not necessitate a complete overhaul, and as such a reproduction of society (with the minor change in the inclusion of a bettered Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy) is all that is necessary for the aggregation.

## *The Bennets' liminality*

Teasing characterizes Austen's presentation of marriage, but the harsh undertones of the reality that the Bennet women would face given the death of Mr. Bennet are eventually revealed. This gives some credence to Mrs. Bennet's fixation with establishing her daughters in stable

relationships, highlighting her concern for their liminality.[7] As they become older, reaching the age of marriageability, the Bennet women face a time that holds the potential for great change. They are between their past lives and the social roles established by their family background, and their possible futures dictated by the social world of their husbands. Therefore, as they are pushed into liminality they must work toward the education that will guide their personal growth. To further complicate this position, it becomes evident that the Bennet daughters are in real danger of being forced into the same difficult liminal situation that the Dashwood sisters are when their father is gone. Economically speaking, the situation of the Bennet women aligns with the Dashwoods', with an established role in society at the present, yet with little hope for the future, since

> Mr. Bennet's property consisted almost entirely in an estate of two thousand a year, which, unfortunately for his daughters, was entailed in default of heirs male, on a distant relation; and their mother's fortune, though ample for her situation in life, could but ill supply the deficiency of his. (20)

Thus, Mrs. Bennet's silly whims are in some ways warranted by a real impending threat to the Bennet women's economic and social stability. If Mr. Collins wanted, in the future he would be in the same position as Mr. John Dashwood, the selfish brother that turned Marianne and Elinor out with little financial support.[8] As such, he represents the mechanism through which the

[7] Just like Mrs. Dashwood before her, Mrs. Bennet's fixation on marriage emphasizes the fears that earlier generations of women have for their daughters. Just as Heilbrun discusses, these women both perpetuate and attempt to end their daughter's difficult situations.

[8] Mr. Collins represents a fascinating lens through which to look at the immoral behavior of the Bennet family, most particularly Mrs. Bennet but also to some extent in his teasing ways Mr. Bennet. He is also, however, an immensely fascinating character himself, reflecting flaws upon his own society. Unfortunately, however, he is not as central to my project as would be necessary for me to fully acknowledge his characterization and role. To read more about Mr. Collins and

Bennet women would be pushed into a position of extreme instability. Therefore, his threatening position prompts Mrs. Bennet to react with an improper social response, more akin to Marianne's character guided by rash personal desires than Elinor's level-headed call upon decorum.

We also see the social position of the Bennets as particularly liminal when compared with the individuals around them, most particularly the potential suitors for the eldest Bennet daughters. The Bennets have access to certain privileges of wealth that would place them in a higher standing than common shopkeepers. The family is landed gentry, owning their own estate, and keeping several servants in their household. They can spend money on non-necessity goods and services, an attribute with which the Bennet sisters, especially Kitty and Lydia, are accredited. These young Bennets take full advantage of their location "only one mile from Meryton," as they act upon the ample opportunity to be "tempted thither three or four times a week, to pay their duty to their aunt and to a milliner's shop just over the way" (20). On a small scale they are able to spend money on frivolous goods such as ribbons and bonnets, and although they frequently exceed their allowances, the girls still purchase goods simply for the fun of the experience, establishing their financial stability. The Bennets are also able to hold a cook so that the Bennet women do not have to work in the kitchen; a luxury with which Mr. Collins makes the mistake to assume the Bennets are without as he tried to compliment his cousins by asking which one was responsible for his excellent meal. This is a blunder of which he is immediately "set right by Mrs. Bennet, who assured him with some asperity that they were very well able to keep a good cook, and that her daughters had nothing to do in the kitchen" (*Pride and Prejudice* 49); we can see how important it is to the Bennets, particularly Mrs. Bennet, that others know their elevated position amongst other country families. As such, Mrs. Bennet's underlying

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the role of the more minor characters in general, I recommend Ivor Morris' *Mr. Collins Considered: Approaches to Jane Austen*.

anxieties are actually further highlighted, serving to undercut her message and emphasize their particular danger.

However, as Jane and Elizabeth enter the liminal space of courtship with men of particularly prominent standing, the limitations of Longbourn's income is in many ways highlighted. Their economic position and the time of courtship, therefore, push them into the separation phase of Turner's transition. As they are not only between a single and married state, but also one that may dictate a slight class-change, the Bennets must cautiously approach their new social roles. Given the comparison with Rosings and Pemberley, the Bennets' estate is rendered less grand. Although Elizabeth's "courage did not fail her" during her visit to Rosings with Mr. Collins and the Lucas family, she alone acts calmly while Maria operates under increasing alarm and "Sir William was so completely awed, by the grandeur surrounding him, that he had but just courage enough to make a very low bow, and take his seat" (124). The overwhelming splendor of the estate renders the Lucases inactive while Elizabeth examines Lady Catherine, rather than her overwhelming surroundings. In contrast, even Elizabeth is overtaken by the beauty and magnificence of Pemberley when she visits with her aunt and uncle. As soon as they enter the grounds "Elizabeth's mind was too full for conversation, but she saw and admired every remarkable spot and point of view" (185). As they travel on through the estate Elizabeth continues to not only marvel at the "handsome" structure of the house, but also the rooms that are "lofty and handsome, and their furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor . . . [with] real elegance" (185-6). Thus, the astonishment of the houseguests at both Rosings and Pemberley emphasizes the different worlds from which the visitors and proprietors of the houses come. This serves to underline Elizabeth's particularly liminal state as she enters into a complicated courtship with Mr. Darcy—with the ability to change her economic and social

status, and the looming threat ever presented by her mother of the potential devastation in the eventual loss of Longbourn. Elizabeth faces a difficult crossroads in her life as she experiences the different worlds during her liminal phase. Through her time of limen, Elizabeth grows to see the building blocks of culture, such as the roles different members play and the true nature of other classes of society.

### *The mature yet flawed hero and heroine*

The general plot structure of Austen novels, as is demonstrated by the Dashwood sisters and particularly Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*, tends to feature the hero and heroine separated by the immaturity. *Pride and Prejudice* presents a similar structure, but the immaturity is of a more specific kind than the obvious disregard of social graces that Marianne presents—one with a hero and heroine flawed not as a whole, but in their relationships specifically with each other. Elizabeth Bennet is gifted with the quick observation of others that allows her to see the true nature of Mr. Bingley's sisters far before her sister. She is also able to demonstrate her morally sound judgment through her thoughtful analysis of social structure and the role of marriage. However, like Marianne Dashwood, and to some extent Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth Bennet, is fixed in her opinion of a different class based on stereotypes and an ill-presented introduction to this new world. Thus, although both hero and heroine are relatively mature when they first meet, the environments in which they were raised do not allow for an initial open connection between the two characters, leading to a disdainful first impression and solidifying their fate to struggle with these opinions and perceptions throughout the course of the novel.

Darcy is also respectable, benefiting from a similar level of intelligence and decorum. Mr. Darcy's propriety, as we can later see in how he manages his estate and servants, underlies

the worthy characteristics that make him an eligible bachelor. Yet, the interaction between Darcy and Elizabeth does not demonstrate their good traits. Their encounters are rather marked with a level of immaturity derived from a lack of knowledge about the other's world and social circle. As they are lacking in experience, Monaghan explains that "each relies on stereotypes; Elizabeth accepts the common view that aristocrats are worthless snobs, and Darcy believes that anyone connected with trade must be vulgar and unworthy of respect" (66). Unfortunately for everyone involved, these stereotypes are confirmed upon their first impressions and thus the lovers must uncover the truth throughout the rest of the novel, accepting the faults in their perceptions in order to truly understand each other. As their altered perceptions grow, Elizabeth continues to reject Darcy as an unworthy suitor "creat[ing] an extremely frustrating situation . . . that cannot be resolved until each has come to a better understanding of the other's social group" (Monaghan 67). So, the transitional journey for these two characters is marked by the search for a better understanding of the other, and their respective society. Elizabeth and Darcy experience a shift away from liminality when they are truly able to understand the world from which the other comes. They will face their time of limen as outsiders, learning about their larger social world. Although both Elizabeth and Darcy are initially led astray, the final conclusion comes after Elizabeth undergoes a humbling education during liminality, leading to her eventual aggregation.

While I agree with Monaghan's overall analysis about the interesting relationship flaws between Darcy and Elizabeth, he applies them to certain elements of their interactions in a way with which I cannot agree. As Monaghan continues to examine social structures, I believe he may exaggerate an underlying emotional struggle. Monaghan assumes that Elizabeth's repeated rebuffs of Mr. Darcy's advances are centered upon "deep emotional roots. And, indeed, it seems likely that it derives from an unconscious need to deny that, for all his faults, she finds Darcy

attractive" (66). While I do acknowledge the potential for deeply seated feelings before Elizabeth feels free to accept them, I think there is the much bigger issue at play. Elizabeth's prejudice and desire to protect her family dominates the conflict between the lovers. In this argument about rejection attraction, Monaghan's own examination seems to be disconnected from his general argument about the moral growth of characters and class analysis. It also acts to underemphasize the important element of personal growth toward a better understanding of social structures, which is consistent with the characteristics of the general liminal experience (as well as Elizabeth's actions).[9] At the beginning of the novel, although Elizabeth is able to acknowledge the faults and follies in her mother and younger sisters, she feels a proud connection to her father and older sister Jane. In his disapproval, Darcy demonstrates a threat to Elizabeth's impression of her social world in his judgmental actions regarding her family. As Turner acknowledges, neophytes are best able to learn about their society because they are in a position outside of the general social structure; Elizabeth is an outsider to Darcy's social circle but an insider to her own and is therefore more protective of the people around her. In turn, she resists the lessons about their flaws much more strongly and has a difficult time changing her opinions about her society. She is unable to see the truly irresponsible nature of her father and the shy interactions of her sister, preventing her from fully engaging in her world, like Elinor Dashwood. Even those members of her family that she acknowledges as generally silly are more important to her, and she has a hard time realizing the potential depth of the faults of her family life until Lydia runs away with Wickham. It is apparent to me that, rather than the threat of extreme feelings of passion, what is more at the heart of the resistance is the protection and personal pride that

[9] Monaghan's emphasis on emotional conflict underscores the differences between our arguments. As I rely more upon theories of liminality my understanding aligns more with the transitional journey rather than individual desires.

Elizabeth feels for her family. Elizabeth is in the midst of discovering the truth about her family—a prospect that is particularly disturbing to her sense of self, morality, and class structures. From their first encounter, Darcy challenges the merit of her social world in these very ways.

The central conflict between the characters is established in their first encounter at the Meryton ball. While she is forced to sit out for several dances due to the limited supply of gentlemen, Darcy obstinately refuses to dance with anybody outside of his small social circle. During this time, Elizabeth overhears an exchange that reinforces her already negative view on Darcy's society. He begins by disregarding the entire class of people present as he obstinately refuses Bingley's requests to see him dance: "I certainly shall not . . . At such an assembly as this, it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room, whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with" (7). Thus, from the very beginning Darcy criticizes Elizabeth, her family and friends, and essentially the world in which she lives and functions. His cold manner toward strangers of a lower class emphasizes the importance Darcy places on social standing. Yet, rather than emphasizing the role of class as a means of perpetuating propriety, as Darcy would have it be, in behaving as he does Darcy merely highlights the impropriety of his own actions, reflecting poorly on himself as he disregards those around him. Mrs. Bennet in particular, as always the outspoken judge of characters, harshly characterizes him as "a most disagreeable, horrid man, not at all worth pleasing. So high and so conceited that there was no enduring him!" (9). Darcy's behavior clearly acknowledges that he sets his social class as separate from the rest of the Meryton society. He therefore acts in an immoral and distasteful way, demonstrating the bad behavior that may be perceived of people in his social position, and thus establishing Elizabeth's first opinion of him as not only an

unsuitable match but also as an abominable man. As he articulates his distaste for her society, Elizabeth catches Darcy in the exact act of snobbery she was trained to expect from him, perpetuating her belief in the behavior of the elite. She has, Elizabeth believes, already uncovered the basic building blocks of Darcy's culture, confirmed in his behavior at the ball. Thus, part of Elizabeth's challenge is learning to see beyond her initial impression of snobbery and conceit.

Likewise, Darcy's stereotypical opinions of the cultural building blocks of the class of gentry at the ball were solidified mostly through Elizabeth's family. In Mrs. Bennet, Lydia, and Kitty's irrational behavior and frivolity, Darcy sees the base and crude conduct that gives him his strong distaste for Elizabeth's social class. Soon, however, Darcy grows to admire Elizabeth as different than he expected, smart, and lively. He sees her individual merits but continues to show distain for the other people in Meryton, especially the Bennet family. He thus proves himself not only unworthy of the relationship, but also continues to impress upon Elizabeth the egotism and pride she had originally noticed in his character. Darcy's refusal to completely recommit to understanding her social class prevents their relationship from developing. Unfortunately, Elizabeth is continually faced with members of the social elite similarly flawed: the manipulative Miss Caroline Bingley, and judgmental and pushy Lady Catherine de Bourgh, which works to perpetuate her assessment about the overall impression she has been given of Darcy's social class and circle. Elizabeth, therefore, does not seek to join the ranks of the wealthier visitors as she deems their morality unappealing.

Thus, when the time comes for Darcy's first proposal he has, to at least some extent, grown to understand Elizabeth's own nature. Yet, as he does not truly understand her world, she must reject his offer. As Elizabeth has not seen any change in Darcy's underlying faults, and as

his proposal continues to undermine her community, Elizabeth's opinion of Darcy has not changed. Since neither of them have experienced the stage of reflection that will prompt their personal growth, they are not yet ready to be united in an effort to create social reform. Even though, as Monaghan states, "[m]atrimony is not something Elizabeth can afford to take lightly, because failure to find a husband will leave her in a state of relative poverty," she is both unwilling and, due to her experience in the phase of liminality, unable to accept Darcy's offer (78). In order for her aggregation to be successful, both Elizabeth and Darcy must grow with, but also slightly reshape societal views about their respective roles in order to join together in the end as equals. Without this equality, Elizabeth will not truly experience aggregation, as she will always be an outsider amongst Darcy's society. Thus, it is impossible for Elizabeth to accept his offer at this time in their journeys.[10]

Therefore, rather than bringing the two together, the proposal highlights the lessons they need to learn before the couple may come together. Darcy's judgment of the impropriety that would come with connecting himself to her family, as well as his manners that while "[h]e *spoke* of apprehension and anxiety . . . his countenance expressed real security" demonstrates his perceived superiority over Elizabeth's world and the general snobbery of his social circle (145). More importantly, he has not truly accepted Elizabeth's role in this world. He demonstrates this flaw in his fight with social convention, beginning his proposal describing his turmoil: "In vain

[10] The acknowledgement of propriety within the proposal and rejection emphasizes that both characters are conscious of the social standards with which such an engagement should take place, and sets this proposal apart from others received by Elizabeth Bennet and other Austen heroines. For instance, Mr. Collins's proposal is tainted with his absurd language and perceived expectations, underscoring how unfit he is for marriage to Elizabeth. Likewise, the proposal received by Fanny Price from Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park* is not dictated by an acknowledgement of the greater social structure. As such, it seems apparent that the successful union must occur between individuals who both understand and acknowledge their respective worlds completely.

have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you" (145). While he has grown to understand Elizabeth's personal worth, he still separates her from this world as he consciously acknowledges her values despite these negative attributes surrounding her position, thus refusing to attempt to truly "expose the basic building blocks of [her] culture" (Turner 110). Without accepting both her and her social world, Darcy is not prepared to marry Elizabeth. As Monaghan acknowledges: "instead of re-examining her milieu in the light of the fact that it has produced at least one admirable person, he simply tries to isolate Elizabeth from her background" (66). Darcy still has to grow to accept the other people with whom Elizabeth is acquainted before he is able to fully accept and understand Elizabeth, and thus become a worthy hero. Elizabeth, however, also demonstrates the same level of incivility that she received, reemphasizing what Darcy has grown to expect from Elizabeth's class of people. Thus, rather than being what Turner would call a successful "stage of reflection" and moment of growth for the characters (105), Darcy's initial proposal emphasizes and perpetuates the ways in which the characters expect the other to behave. Given the potential that Darcy might have stopped pursuing Elizabeth, she risks perpetuating her liminality for morality, potentially cementing her desperate position. However, the acknowledgment of the faults in their behavior and Darcy's explanation initiates the letter that acts as an important turning point in the behavior and knowledge of both of the characters.

## *A time for growth*

Darcy's letter begins to push both characters toward their path of discovery, and acts to initiate a moment of growth for Elizabeth. In her personal reflections upon the letter Elizabeth is forced to face her potential fault as well as struggle with the realization that her own judgments

are, in many ways, clouded. Darcy's letter serves as a crucial tool for growth, challenging Elizabeth and what she thinks she knows. As she is forced to acknowledge the flaws in her own world, Elizabeth begins her true journey out of liminality.

Up until this point, Elizabeth's view of the world was shaped partially by her dislike for Darcy, and disbelief in anything that has been associated with him. She readily believes Wickham's lies and finds a strong sense of sympathy with the man that Darcy has supposedly wronged. The truths revealed in the letter, however, adjust Elizabeth's perception of not only the man she detested, but also the way in which she was obscuring her judgment of the world. In her piece "Jane Austen's Subdued Heroines" Valerie Shaw describes that as the truth becomes painfully obvious, Elizabeth "reasserts standards that have slipped" (287) and, once again shifts to allow her own excellent skills of observation guide her through Darcy's accounts. In her reaction, however, we still see Elizabeth's strong attachment to Jane, emphasizing that her resistance against Darcy is a matter of disapproving anyone who would object to the family and community to which she is diligently loyal.[11] As she reads and re-reads the letter we see the transition in her reaction, from aggressive resentment of Darcy's meddling in Jane and Bingley's relationship, to slow understanding and, with resistance, we see Elizabeth come to a realization about Darcy's behaviors with Wickham. This serves to open the way for Elizabeth to accept Darcy as an honest man and begins Elizabeth's more enlightened view of the things around her. The moment of realization brings a painful assessment of how Elizabeth has previously acted, as she is now able to acknowledge her own faults:

> She grew absolutely ashamed of herself . . . 'How despicably have I acted!' she cried.—'I, who have prided myself on my discernment!—I, who have valued myself on my

[11] This acts to strengthen my argument that, rather than led by underlying emotions of love, Elizabeth was guided more by her strong defensive feelings for her family and community.

> abilities! Who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity, in useless or blamable distrust.—How humiliating is this discovery!—Yet, how just a humiliation!—Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly . . . Till this moment, I never knew myself. (159)

Elizabeth comes to discover the flaws in her past, pushing her to reshape her interpretations of her knowledge of Darcy and her own self. Her acknowledgement "[t]ill this moment, I never knew myself," emphasizes the power of this letter to instigate Elizabeth's transition—describing that this new self-knowledge is crucial in her ultimate removal from liminality. So, as she experiences Turner's important stage of reflection, she is able to experience personal growth. When originally unaware of her prejudices, she did not give Darcy the opportunity to demonstrate his true morality and strength of character. She has undergone her phase as a neophyte thus far unable to see the fault with which she may have understood herself and society. With this ritual moment of understanding, she is able to move on to the final stage of her transition to apply what she has learned even further and eventually leave her liminal place. This moment of realization acts as a transition in Elizabeth's view of her own world, thus opening her view of the faults with which Darcy came to criticize her family and community. She begins to be more critical of the world in a less biased way, and as such more capable of interacting with it to better the community as a whole. With this impartial view Darcy becomes more worthy of affection, and those Elizabeth held to so strongly, particularly her father, are recognized for their faults to which she was previously blind.

The hint at the impropriety of her family, as suggested in Darcy's first proposal, should strike Elizabeth as the first clue about the nature of her beloved family, however it still remains a difficult fault to acknowledge given the means through which Darcy introduces the concept; yet,

after this letter Elizabeth is more prepared to see the flaws in her society rather than protect it with a blind prejudice. Upon her return home, Elizabeth is faced almost immediately with precisely the ill behavior to which Darcy is referring. With her newfound conception of self and others, Elizabeth is more aware of her younger sisters' impropriety. She thus sees the building blocks of her world as Darcy originally saw it, which challenges Elizabeth's conception of her own family. As Elizabeth and Jane return home, their younger sisters Lydia and Kitty come to town to meet and subsequently treat their eldest sisters to lunch. However, their selfish frivolity becomes almost immediately apparent as Lydia describes their morning and plan: "'And we mean to treat you all . . . but you must lend us the money, for we have just spent ours at the shop out there.' Then shewing her purchases: 'Look here, I have bought this bonnet. I do not think it is very pretty; but I thought I might as well buy it as not'" (*Pride and Prejudice* 167). While Lydia acknowledges the appropriate social behavior, to treat her sisters after their journey, her frivolity in purchasing the ugly bonnet prevents her intentions from becoming actions. The girls therefore demonstrate their understanding for social acts of decorum and propriety, but do not make an effort to actually put them into practice. Additionally, by purchasing the bonnet simply because she can, Lydia demonstrates that she does not truly understand anything beyond the superficial level of public performance and display—denying the responsibility of behaving with morality that comes with her moneyed privileges. She emphasizes the danger of immorality in the landed gentry, as they depart from the moral obligation to lead their society to propriety in favor of personal pleasure. This is, in fact, a serious issue that leads to the moral disintegration of culture, and one that can be countered by the transition of Austen's heroines.

Lydia goes on with her impropriety as she does not regard morality and decorum, gossiping about Wickham in front of the waiter, and even going so far as to laugh at Jane and

Elizabeth who feel the necessity to send the young man away. Because of her impropriety Lydia will soon harm her own public image, and put the entire family's worth at risk, but Lydia continues to completely disregard the propriety with which she should behave in favor of her own personal desires and fun. However, while this may be harmful for her society, this behavior prompts Elizabeth to recognize the severity of the faults in her family. Finally, after Lydia makes a nasty statement about Mary King, Elizabeth is further forced to realize and reflect on her sister's actions as she "was shocked to think that, however incapable of such coarseness of *expression* herself, the coarseness of the *sentiment* was little other than her own breast had formerly harboured and fancied liberal" (168). Elizabeth is both appalled at what her sister feels comfortable vocalizing and recognizes that she is starting to change herself—seeing similar actions in her own past. Her realizations about the impropriety practiced by the rest of her family marks the true growth and recognition of what Darcy implied as he criticized their match during his proposal.

Elizabeth begins to see the faults in herself and her family as she recognizes her admiration of Darcy. As such, her growth out of liminality is heavily marked by personal discovery. She is moving away from her family as they represent impropriety, and toward her role as a social leader. Elizabeth first expresses her desire for Darcy as she conveys her reaction to his estate, an extension of Darcy's own representation, symbolizing a perfect melding of nature and culture. As she rounds the bend from Pemberley Woods to Pemberley House, Elizabeth is impressed:

> It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills;—and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal,

> nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. (185)

The estate compliments its beautiful natural surroundings and exists as an extension of the land, rather than marring its beauty. As such, Pemberley is a perfect melding of the natural world and the world of high society, without seeming to settle in either one or the other. Darcy's existence is therefore represented as a position in between these two contradictory states. Rather than placing him in a negative liminal situation, however, this position encourages Elizabeth to explore this place more thoroughly and suggests a softness associated with Darcy that is contradictory to Elizabeth's first impression of his character. This symbolic representation of Darcy allows Elizabeth to begin to truly reflect upon her initial reactions, growing to learn with a more open and nonjudgmental disposition than she had when she first decided her feelings for Darcy. Thus, she begins to approach her tangible reward for the journey as she enacts the lessons she has learned about proper judgment rather than prejudicial views.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth continues to learn about the impropriety of her family—growing to discover more about her own social circle as she becomes more open to Darcy's. This give and take acknowledges Elizabeth's growth and respective opening of opinions, a trait with which she has already prided herself, only this time producing a fairer assessment. Lydia's flight, running away with Wickham to elope, is a final demonstration of Lydia's true character, and the way that she responds to the aftermath further suggests her childish understandings of the world. As she treats their escape as a frivolity to be laughed at, it becomes apparent that Lydia does not understand the severity of her behavior; we see that her perception of the world is very small and guided by the trifling desire to be married, just as her mother has done before her. In the note

Lydia has left behind for her friend Harriet, her lack of maturity and propriety is demonstrated repeatedly by the silly details upon which she concentrates and the overall tone of joviality. Her language of laughing and joking demonstrates that Lydia's goal in life is simply to be married, unlike Elizabeth who has already declined two offers of marriage because of a lack of moral sense connecting her to a potential husband. In her flippant nature, Lydia is demonstrating that she thinks of very little besides the personal amusement she will receive from the aftermath of the endeavor, rather unlike Elizabeth's firm perspective on the overall morality of the act. Indeed, she never truly understands the impropriety of her actions, treating her return home as a means of bragging and showing off her rights as a married woman. Lydia, it is apparent, does not strive for the same morality and decency as Elizabeth. As Lloyd W. Brown discusses in "Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition," rather than being guided by what is right and good, Lydia, as well as Miss Bingley and Kitty "are all sex-seekers, determined to complete their identity within a narrow concept of sexual roles—a concept that is embodied, on a parental level, by Mrs. Bennet, whose 'business' in life is getting her daughters married" (330). Thus, they all fulfill Darcy's original notion of the shallowness and vulgarity of Elizabeth's class of people. Lloyd W. Brown seems to appreciate the same problems Monaghan articulates, as the social class fit to lead ignores the moral obligations that come with the privileges of their position.

The disaster with Lydia emphatically highlights other faults that Elizabeth has hitherto chosen to ignore or explain away, thus pushing her onwards into a more complete understanding of her society. The action proves to be a key experience, compelling Elizabeth to look at the basic building blocks of her society and consider its propriety. Previously, Elizabeth was able to recognize the embarrassing and unbecoming actions of her mother and younger sisters, yet it is through this disaster that Elizabeth is forced to look deeper into those flaws and acknowledge the

pervasiveness of her family's offensive behavior. It becomes obvious, in her extreme dismissal of decorum, that Lydia was raised with an acceptance for impropriety—that if not actively being responsible for Lydia's actions, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet did nothing to rein in their daughter's fanciful improprieties. Lydia's lack of education and focus on marriage is firmly fixed upon her relationship with, and the actions of, her mother: "Mrs. Bennet is the conventionally educated woman whose sex-oriented view of women's roles limits her ambitions in her own marriage, and, eventually, in the marriages of her daughters" (Brown 337). Thus, because of the frivolity of their mother, the younger Bennet girls have not been forced to take their life prospects more seriously. As such, they have become childish in their wishes for life, seeking only what their mother was able to achieve—a marriage without a great deal of affection or moral guidance. This conflict is, in fact, one that Heilbrun has acknowledged in the struggles of the female novelist. Even Mary, self-educated and pious, is very flawed from the lack of guidance from either of her parents, displaying her little knowledge with such ritualistic formality that she seems to lack a true understanding of the lessons that she has learned.

More pressing, and to Elizabeth more difficult to accept, are the flaws in her beloved father's behavior, recognition of which removes the final barrier for Elizabeth's journey toward understanding. Although Elizabeth does acknowledge faults in her father after rediscovering and grounding herself in response to Darcy's letter, his role in Lydia's actions further condemns the lovable Mr. Bennet. Before Lydia's grand gesture of impropriety, Elizabeth recognizes the human faults in her parents' relationship, formed because of the weakness of her father in determining her mother's character before their marriage; rather, her father: "captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour, which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind, had very early in their marriage

put an end to all real affection for her" (180). Thus Elizabeth, unlike Lydia, understands that her parents' marriage is not a model after which she should strive. But her realization about the role that Mr. Bennet plays in shaping Lydia's impropriety, or rather his lack of shaping her propriety, still comes as a great disappointment to Elizabeth. As she tries to convince him of the danger of sending Lydia away, relatively unsupervised to a Brighton full of soldiers, Mr. Bennet's response is rather unconcerned with the trouble that will come—a trouble of which he full-well acknowledges the potential (although probably not predicted to the extremity of the situation that would actually arise). He silences Elizabeth's protests saying: "Lydia will never be easy till she has exposed herself in some public place or other, and we can never expect her to do it with so little expense or inconvenience to her family as under the present circumstances" (176). He therefore acknowledges the silly behavior of his daughter and willfully sends her out to perform in such a way, seeing it as the least inconvenient means through which to satisfy his daughter's desires. Elizabeth begins to realize, therefore, that true harm that results from their her father's neglect and her mother's meddling:

> [S]he had never felt so strongly as now, the disadvantages which must attend the children of so unsuitable a marriage, nor ever been so fully aware of the evils arising from so ill-judged a direction of talents; talents which rightly used, might at least have preserved the respectability of his daughters, even if incapable of enlarging the mind of his wife. (181)

This crushing realization comes to a full when Lydia runs off with Wickham—an act that could have easily been prevented had her father not been so neglectful. Mr. Bennet is then paralyzed by the inability to efficiently act in a way to save his daughter and family from the crippling gossip stemming from Lydia's elopement. It is, in fact, a newly educated Mr. Darcy that must step in to save the Bennet family from any more public embarrassment. Thus, especially in comparison,

Elizabeth sees the flaws with her father's flippant nature and disengagement with society, as well as Darcy's strength and willingness to protect her family.

Mr. Darcy's involvement in rescuing Lydia and Wickham, arranging their marriage and living, and attempting to completely remove a trace of his own actions from the proceedings, marks the final stage in Darcy's journey to come to understand the truth about Elizabeth's world. As Elizabeth has been growing, coming to realize the faults of her community and seeing the true value of Mr. Darcy, he also comes to a deeper understanding of Elizabeth through attempting to examine her world rather than removing her from his imagined perception of her social grouping. Darcy's view of the Elizabeth's community is broadened in his meetings with the Collinses and Lucases and then further by his interactions with the Gardiners—a couple Darcy had originally voiced disgust toward, simply based on his assumptions about people from Cheapside. As he discoveres more about the people in Elizabeth's life, the more worthy Darcy becomes to be the true hero of the story; when he happens to return to Pemberley earlier than expected to find Elizabeth touring his estate with her aunt and uncle, Darcy demonstrates his changed opinion of the Gardiners, taking special care to treat both of them with the utmost respect. With Darcy's introduction to the more moral and controlled of Elizabeth's equals, Darcy begins to transform his understanding of the building blocks of Elizabeth's world, thus becoming a worthy suitor just as Elizabeth is coming to discover the truths about her own world and recognize the potential of his. Thus, Mr. Darcy has humbled himself and demonstrated his worth to Elizabeth, who now recognizes the errors in her past judgments and actions, as Darcy saves the family from Lydia's embarrassment and corrects his previous error in judgment, encouraging Mr. Bingley to once again consider Jane. It is important to acknowledge that for Elizabeth and Darcy their transitional journeys take different forms, particularly as they have to face different

challenges to achieve their overall growth. These different obstacles come from their different positions; both economically and strictly in terms of gender, Elizabeth and Darcy have different perspectives on the world. As such, they must overcome different barriers. This highlights what we will see in our continued examination of the process of transition—that each character experiences growth in a different way although through a similar transitional process, deviating more or less from Turner's three phases.

Like Darcy, Elizabeth too must face her final test to demonstrate that she is fully able to understand her new perspective of the world and reintegrate out of her position of limen. This challenge comes with Lady Catherine de Bourgh's visit to her family, an experience in which she must come in direct confrontation with Darcy's social circle and demonstrate her understanding of their relationship. This scene is heavily marked with symbolic undertones about liminality—further emphasizing its position as the final step for Elizabeth's removal from the uncertain place. The social ritual of the visit bestowed upon the Bennets by Lady Catherine is marked with a symbolism of a space between nature and culture.[12] While the call is supposedly one of civility, it is really a means through which Lady Catherine seeks to break with the social convention of not speaking of courtship to demand of Elizabeth whether or not she would accept an offer of marriage if Darcy were to propose. Yet the location of the conversation is indicative of this breech with convention, as Dennis Allen notes in "No love for Lydia: The Fate of Desire in Pride and Prejudice," "[w]hen Lady Catherine suggests a walk, she asks Elizabeth to show her the 'prettyish kind of a little wilderness' on one side of the house. Literally on the verge of the lawn, where domesticated nature meets the wild, the area is itself thoroughly oxymoronic" (433). The space acts as a place in which Lady Catherine can speak openly about the social structure she

[12] This distinction between nature and culture is reminiscent of Mr. Darcy's estate and his ability to meld the two.

wishes to uncover—one that she has long ago established for her family. It also marks the location of Elizabeth's defiant resistance to Lady Catherine's characterization of the Bennets as separate from her social class. As she becomes more infuriated with Lady Catherine's insulting characterization of her family, Elizabeth shows her equality with Darcy—a distinction she has never articulated until this point and which acts as a final realization about their worthiness of each other. Elizabeth declares: "In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere [in which she has been brought up]. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal" (272). The confrontation, as experienced outside the normal structure of the ritualistic courtship, is placed in liminal surroundings, emphasizing not only the position of the heroine but also the position of the relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth in a mixed social world.

As they have both striven to move past their faults and accomplished their final test, Elizabeth and Darcy are ready for marriage. Humbled and apologetic, the two find themselves on a walk where they take turns revealing their newly self-discovered faults, demonstrating that both took what the other had critiqued in them to heart, experienced the stage of reflection, and are now both made worthy of each other as equals. Darcy recognizes his fault, just before he addresses her about the topic describing the reasons for his desire to help Lydia: "But your *family* owe me nothing. Much as I respect them, I believe, I thought only of *you*," to which Elizabeth humbly declares her change in opinion and the lovers agree to an engagement (280). As they proceed through the woods as a couple, Elizabeth and Darcy reveal their new perspective and rejoice in the freedom with which they are now able to communicate—a freedom solidified by their completed aggregation.

## *Personal growth acknowledging social flaws*

In their journeys to becoming worthy of each other as heroine and hero of the novel, Elizabeth and Darcy operate under the presentation of truths that must be accepted to replace the preconceptions that both lovers originally hold dear. They need to learn about the respective world of the other, and also a good deal about their own, before they are capable of truly being worthy. Rather than simply relying upon their predispositions to judge the others' world as different and in some way flawed, they are able to look instead at individuals and proceed with judgment and actions based in their firm understanding of morality. They both grow to see the faults in their worlds as well as their own nature, and seek to challenge these problems before coming together. Through this series of difficult realizations of successive truths, Elizabeth and Darcy experience self-reflection that prompts a deeper understanding for the building blocks of culture. They experience personal growth and "come to recognise society as a network of interconnections broad enough to embrace Darcys, Bingleys, and Bennets, and thereby clear the way for personal reconciliation" (Monaghan 81). It is therefore through this discovery of openness and how they can become relatable that the other, that the two seemingly different characters are able to ultimately operate in the world as husband and wife.

The journey within *Pride and Prejudice* is, like *Sense and Sensibility,* closely aligned with Turner's stages of transition. They experience a relatively simple demonstration of Turner's phases: their separation is prompted at their first encounter, with a potential for romance destabilizing both of their positions; the liminality teaching them the valuable information they needed to learn about both themselves and their communities; and a sense of aggregation and reintegration at their final acceptance of each other and their new knowledge. Importantly, however, this progression also involves the beginning signs of social growth, if not yet reform.

Elizabeth goes on a journey that is ultimately paralleled by her understanding of the flawed social world occupied by her family, and in this recognition she seeks to remove herself from the same impropriety. She grows from her less tangible separation at the entrance of her love interest, to a more distinct separation as she seeks to differentiate herself from the impropriety of her family. Therefore, as she faces liminality, Elizabeth learns about and seeks to alter her surroundings. She experiences the aggregation to reenters society as a full member with a better understanding of, and more power in, her societal role. Darcy's role in this growth demonstrates the ways in which both heroes and heroines must be taught to understand more about their society before they are able to be released from the liminal state—a crucial task for Turner's neophytes.

While less financially and socially liminal, Darcy must still learn to grow before he is fully worthy of Elizabeth, as she cannot accept his proposal when he is not morally fit. When he acknowledges the accomplishments of the Gardiners as moral people, this transformation goes farther as the class of people he initially detested based on prejudicial stereotypes become individuals suited to their own individual judgment. It is, in fact, how the gentry and social elite react to the middle and lower class characters that shows how truly virtuous they are—this behavior becoming an important indicator of character. Thus, J.A. Downie describes in his work on the social and political context of Austen's novels, "[i]t is a signal indication of the layers of conscious irony at work in Austen's fiction that the final sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* concerns the Gardiners, because they complicate the novel's social hierarchy in an important way" (72). It is a true demonstration of the successful growth of both the characters that the last sentences of *Pride and Prejudice* regards Elizabeth's aunt and uncle: "With the Gardiners, they were always on the most intimate terms. Darcy, as well as Elizabeth, really loved them; and they

were both ever sensible of the warmest gratitude towards the persons who, by bringing her into Derbyshire, had been the means of uniting them" (297-298). Their role as the force that made it possible for these differing young people to finally come together, suggests the morality as represented by the individuals rather than the collective social class. However, it is not necessarily as Monaghan claims that though "[t]his union of aristocracy and gentry-middle class is not achieved easily . . . it is possible, Jane Austen claims, because, despite their different social roles, the two groups are united by a shared ideal of concern for others" (92). For, rather than completely altering the social structure, it is more prominently the personal growth of the heroine to an understanding of the flaws of her world that dictates the final aggregation. Just like in *Sense and Sensibility,* Elizabeth faces the flaws of her world but does not alter them, but rather, in aggregation accepts a new social role to remove herself from the impropriety presented by her family. It is again Turner's three-phase journey toward personal growth, not social reform, that is at the center of Elizabeth Bennet's journey.

# PART 2: MORAL BASE IN IMMORAL SOCIETY

In *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* the heroines are in economically vulnerable positions yet these characters, especially Elinor Dashwood and Elizabeth Bennet are in some ways stronger than the heroines in Austen's next two novels. Catherine Morland and Fanny Price face weaknesses of a different sort, not of morality but rather personality traits and social class. Both behave as relative outsiders and exhibit character flaws that prevent them from being truly powerful members of their communities. However, these heroines must both act as unlikely agents of social reform before their novels conclude. They must not only figure out how to maintain their own sense of morality, but also encourage others to do the same in order for their aggregation—their reintroduction into society—to be successful. Given their moral superiority, Catherine and Fanny face worlds too broken to go unchanged and, as such, Turner's phases that perpetuate, but do not alter, society are not wholly adequate for their respective transitional journeys. If they yield to the communities as they exist at the beginning of their novels, the heroines need to compromise their morality—a fate neither Catherine nor Fanny is willing to accept. The novels are therefore similar; at the beginning of the novel both heroines share similar initial liminality and by the end of the novel, social reform, not just personal growth, must be included to complete the heroine's transition. In *Northanger Abbey* this behavior is less pronounced and as such the plot follows more closely to Turner's three phases. Yet it still suggests the need for greater social, rather than just simply personal, change. By the time Austen writes *Mansfield Park* however, her understanding of the importance of liminality in a flawed society becomes more powerful. While Catherine Morland may succeed in experiencing aggregation by the end of her novel, without extreme social reform, Fanny Price's

barriers to entrance prevent her from succeeding without complete social reform. So, what was merely a problem in *Northanger Abbey* becomes the whole point of *Mansfield Park*.

## *NORTHANGER ABBEY*

*Northanger Abbey* begins at a time during which the heroine, Catherine Morland, is at a particularly important pivotal point in her life—one where she may learn to become more like the novel's antiheros and heroines, the Thorpes, or grow to become a responsible member of the community, behaving in a way expected of her by society, like the Tilneys. She is experiencing a time of liminality, during a crossroads in her life that is particularly important in shaping her future. From the start, Catherine is attributed with a solid mixture of negative and positive traits, and a background that shows her vital moment in time. Her liminal state, as she enters a new world and the time of eligibility for marriage, means that she is both vulnerable to negative changes and capable of positive ones (as she has the propensity within her to theoretically choose either path). Catherine's "heart was affectionate, her disposition cheerful and open, without conceit or affection of any kind" (8-9) with a likewise "respectable man" for a father and a women of "useful plain sense, with good temper, and . . . a good constitution" for a mother and therefore was raised well (5). Yet, as she enters the new world of Bath, her upbringing is tested.

Depending upon whom Catherine relies most in her journey at Bath, she could be persuaded to move away from her moral upbringing to a world of fancy. It is only as she grows to make her own decisions, that she is able to determine her future. Catherine is on the brink of a positive disposition and has attributes that, if molded correctly, could lead to successful admission into moral society. However, with "her mind about as ignorant and uninformed as the female mind at seventeen usually is," conflict arises as the Thorpes take advantage of her

vulnerability, creating an immediate challenge for her potential role as a moral community leader (9). Catherine's initial naïve willingness to believe the Thorpes, and her eventual awakening to accepting her own understanding of their improprieties, marks the important progress of her journey. As Susan Morgan points at in *In the Meantime: Characters and Perception in Jane Austen's Fiction*: "[t]he problem of understanding others, of accounting for the unaccountable, is what Catherine is in the novel to learn" (58). The novel is therefore, first and foremost, a story about the journey of Catherine from a state of ignorance and naïveté to comprehension and responsibility. Her transition takes her from the uninformed "female mind at seventeen," into a deeper understanding of the basic building blocks of her culture, as she enters the adult world of personal decision making and learning to search for the true nature of others. She is not a flawed character in her morality, but rather in whom she puts her trust. Most prominently, Catherine's lack of confidence in her own opinions or the power to assert their validity is what she must overcome if she is to cause the necessary changes in her society. As Monaghan underlines: "her task is not so much to improve her own performance, which is always motivated by a keen concern for propriety" (16); rather, I assert, that it is to follow the correct instructor and guidance, some of which must come from a strengthening of character and understanding within herself. Therefore, in some ways Catherine's journey is a growth into accepting the proper transitional journey—in choosing her path in the time of limen that will promote her to appropriate aggregation. However, as she focuses on this aspect of the journey, her ability to enact social reform is minimal, just like the Dashwoods, and Elizabeth Bennet before her.

## *Making a choice*

Catherine's time of transition is marked with an important physical removal from her family as she moves first to Bath and then to Northanger Abbey, signifying the stages of her transitional journey. She begins with Turner's first phase of transition, separation, a crucial element that will be echoed later in the novel with similar results of social growth, ultimately leading Catherine out of the liminal position. Once in Bath, Catherine meets the friends who will act as potential guides for her transition, the most important of which are members from two distinct families. In a very formulaic way, the behavior of these two families suggests the two paths open for Catherine to take that dictate the way that she will behave for the rest of her life.

From her first encounter with Henry Tilney, Catherine is challenged to understand what he is honestly telling her, emphasizing her limitations but establishing the capacity to remove herself from childish views. They begin their conversation with a more natural exchange demonstrating the genuine type of interactions for which Catherine should be striving, but then Henry Tilney shifts the conversation. He "suddenly addressed her" with a completely altered disposition, shifting his presentation to one of obvious forced mannerisms "forming his features into a set smile, and affectedly softening his voice" speaking in a "simpering air" about frivolous topics with no real substance (14). Thus, Henry Tilney introduces himself with an intelligent use of wit that will challenge Catherine's interpretation of what is around her and will teach her to start to think and interpret for herself. As Henry changes his demeanor when he models himself satirically as a "Bath beaux" (Burlin 92), he simultaneously represents and confronts the frivolity of his society. In his performance, Henry is mimicking the society that Catherine is in a very real danger of joining if she does not choose the right instructor and correct community in which to grow. His distinct method of shifting attitudes in the middle of their exchange highlights the

satire of the actual behavior of many of the social exchanges that exist in Bath, and suggests the potential for critique of this new lifestyle for Catherine. Furthermore, his discussion of the different perspectives from which Catherine might view Henry in her journaling continues what Katrin Burlin describes in "'The pen of the contriver': the four fictions of *Northanger Abbey"* as Catherine's "introduction to irony" (93). It gives her the first suggestion that people may be viewed from different perspectives, hinting that Catherine might have to look into the genuine nature of her new friends. He mimics their behavior in creating connections on a surface-level—connections that are quickly abandoned in favor of personal pleasure and vanity. Through his use of what Burlin describes as "witty fictions to introduce Catherine to the complexities of the real world and the abuses of the Thorpes" (97), Henry will ultimately prove to be her rightful moral guide throughout the novel. In this role, he will challenge her to act appropriately in her community, and eventually break her last strands of naïve childlike disposition of clinging to the gothic narrative.

While the role of the instructor is important in Turner's phases of transition, acting to guide the liminal individuals toward the discovery of the building blocks of culture, Henry's position differs slightly from Turner's traditional role of the instructor. Henry does bring Catherine into the adult world of responsibility, personal judgment, and morality, shaping her into a fit moral leader, yet is in some ways flawed.[1] Additionally, he does not have the complete control as Turner attributes to the instructor within the "structure of a very simple kind . . . [in which] between instructors and neophytes there is often complete authority and complete submission" (99). Part of this deviation stems from Catherine's position as a less submissive

[1] With the prominent role of the neophyte's instructor, *Northanger Abbey* highlights the important role of society's involvement during Catherine's apparently separate time of liminality.

neophyte, taking a more active role in her time of liminality. She is actively attentive to the world around her, and although she is very easily influenced, she engages with her own decision in the faulty as well as moral aspects of her world. This proves to teach Catherine important, and sometimes painful, lessons about her society, but in many ways deviates from Turner's phases as she is more engaged with her own liminality at the beginning. As Catherine eventually learns to view her world critically and to choose Henry as her proper instructor, she returns to a more accurate depiction of Turner's transitional journey.

Even Henry's altered role of instructor, however, is almost immediately challenged as Catherine is introduced to Isabella Thorpe—offering an immediate counter-example of how Catherine may grow to live her life. Thus, we see that her more active engagement in her society during the journey, although ultimately leading to important social reform, can also be dangerous as she is easily led astray. Catherine's first meeting with Isabella is markedly different from that with Henry. Their encounter is a sincere attempt at the conversations that Henry mockingly introduced in the midst of his genuine conversation with Catherine. After the introductions are made "many obliging things were said by the Miss Thorpes of their wish of being better acquainted with her; of being considered as already friends, through the friendship of their brothers, &c. which Catherine heard with pleasure, and answered with all the pretty expressions she could command" (20). The satirical tone with which these pleasantries are expressed emphasizes Austen's view of the conversation, criticizing the ritualized aspects and contrived nature of the exchange; the &c. suggests a choreographed frivolity which only apparent acts of decorum care to expand upon and Catherine's mere "pretty expressions" emphasizing the potential danger in this relationship for Catherine's growth in connection with the Thorpes. As such, the majority of their interaction is a mock demonstration of friendship rather than a genuine

attempt to press the other for personal growth as Henry has done with Catherine in their first exchange.

Isabella immediately begins to influence Catherine toward the negative, highlighting the very real danger that Catherine could be led astray. She fills Catherine's head with superficial things of Bath and Catherine, not knowing any better and believing Isabella superior "being four years older than Miss Morland, and at least four years better informed," gives her views more weight, believing in Isabella's "decided advantage in discussing such points" (20). Isabella's brother, John Thorpe, is an even more pronounced representation of the same kind of personal vanity and manipulation Catherine can expect from this new friendship. He spearheads some of Catherine's largest moments of realization as his actions lack the decorum and morality with which Catherine would expect to engage. Thus, the Thorpes are the antiheroes opposite the rightful instructor role the Tilneys will play. While it is obvious that Catherine is pulled between these two potential instructors and the transition and aggregation that they will encourage, the reason that she is in this situation at all deviates from the general structure of Turner's liminality. What Catherine must learn by the end of her journey, most prominently, is to be confident in her own decisions, to allow her strong sense of morality to lead her to the right path. When she allows herself to be manipulated by Isabella, Catherine demonstrates how dangerous her belief in the good will of others can be in shaping her own personal and social growth. Therefore, by following her own sense of propriety rather than strictly learning about the building blocks of her culture (both good and bad) as Turner's journey dictates, Catherine can and does become an agent of change. However, her lack of confidence to believe that she is right, although maybe different from others, will eventually need to change if she is to bring about an end to her liminality, cause social reform, and become a prominent figure in society. While this activity

represents a distinct departure for Turner's phase of limen, it is an important element of Catherine's journey and personal growth and is perhaps importantly distinct because of the flawed social world in which she operates. Without actively seeking her own path, Catherine will not learn about both the propensity of good and bad, and as such, never truly see the complexity of the world around her. It is her deviation from the path that not only forces her to enact social reform, but also that allows her to most accurately see the need for change.

Throughout her interactions with the Thorpes and the Tilneys, Catherine learns to discern for herself the propriety of some characters over others, but it takes several missteps for Catherine to reach this point. In her original state, Catherine is easily (and dangerously) manipulated by the negative influences around her. For instance, although Catherine has a very unpleasant first encounter with John Thorpe, because of her naïveté she is quickly persuaded to change her own opinion of John in favor of those expressed by others. In doing so, Catherine is demonstrating the danger of following false guides, and the immoral perpetuation if Turner's liminality is applied to flawed societies. Therefore, we see that the journey that she must make—not only in discerning the nature of those around her, but also in becoming confident enough in her own opinions to be able to assert their validity. Catherine still does not allow herself and her own views to hold weight over those of others. At this point in her journey, Catherine has demonstrated her capacity for doing good and has begun her minor introduction to seeing the society's failings, yet does not trust her own potential to hold differing opinions to those around her. Catherine is still in the first stages of her transitional journey but we see her established in a position to learn through her trying experiences. Just like Elinor Dashwood, at this point in the story Catherine is in a troubled position where she has a strong moral compass and a desire to follow the proper decorous interactions dictated by society, yet her society does not live by the

proper interactions that Catherine imagines. However, while Elinor is fully aware of the flaws in her society, Catherine must learn to make her own choices before completing her path away from her liminal position of ignorance, which prevents her from adequately interacting with her surroundings in a way that would allow her to grow and learn. She therefore relies upon her newly formed friends to guide her and ultimately teach her the harsh reality of their false vanity.

As Catherine meets the Thorpes and Tilneys, they are distinctly separated by time and space strictly by happenstance, but as the novel progresses, the physical separation between the two families further suggests that there is a distinct difference between their two manners of living. Rather than being able to enjoy both the responsible world of the Tilneys and superficial joys of the Thorpes, Catherine must choose between the two ways of life before moving in her transition on the right path to aggregation. These options suggest that, unlike Turner's transitional phases, there is a more complicated path for Catherine in which multiple futures are possible, while only one will adequately lead to her aggregation and perpetuate a morally sound society. As Monaghan describes, this magnification of the physical separation between the two families "from accidental separations into direct conflict further suggests that once moral discriminations have been established, absolute choices must be made" (20). It does take Catherine some time to understand that those around her are not always truly good and honest, and she is therefore easily fooled at first. Rather than understanding the different intentions between herself and the Tilneys, Catherine believes that they hold the same motives and accepts their interpretation, stunting her own growth and preventing this conscious process of choosing between worlds.

Catherine faces her first introduction to this harsh reality when she must turn down Henry Tilney's invitation to dance in favor of an engagement already arranged with John Thorpe. As

John Thorpe's own personal agenda does not prioritize the commitment, Catherine is left waiting. Likewise, Thorpe's sister also begins to show her selfishness; though declaring that "nothing . . . should induce her to join the set before her dear Catherine could join it too," Isabella only waits for a few more minutes before leaving Catherine alone (35). Left to "the mercy of Mrs. Thorpe and Mrs. Allen . . . [she becomes] aware that, as the real dignity of her situation could not be known, she was sharing with the scores of other young ladies still sitting down all the discredit of wanting a partner" (36).[2] In this we see how unlikely of an agent for social reform Catherine is at the onset of the novel. Her weakness of character, contrary to the powerful Elizabeth Bennet, means that she is at the mercy of the impropriety of others and as such is left with even less visible social power. Yet, these moments of discomfort are incredibly powerful moments of learning for Catherine. She is forced to suffer alone until she is met with the Tilneys, and even then, because of her tie to another, the "compliment" of being asked to dance is marred with "sorrow on the occasion so very much as if she really felt it" (37), indicating that Catherine is growing to learn more about her Bath society. For potentially the first time, she realizes that she has been wronged and that society and its members do not always act with the proper ideals. Catherine experiences a small stage of reflection as she realizes the impropriety with which she has been treated but is unable to break with her own moral guides to dance with Henry Tilney. She must wait for John Thorpe to join in the festivities, although even as she is finally able to dance, she does not enjoy her partner. This scene stands to contrast the

[2] Elizabeth Bennet's similar experience of embarrassment and humiliation occurring at a dance scene suggests that, although not necessarily *crucial* to general transitional growth, in Austen's novels the humiliation found in realizations seems to act as a critical point of growth. Just as Elizabeth may not have initially seen this challenging moment as the beginning of her journey, Catherine experiences this moment with shame and it acts as a catalyst for her changing interactions between herself and the Thorpes, yet she does not outwardly acknowledge her new education. I will further expand upon the role of embarrassment in the transitional journey later.

decorum and behaviors of the two potential suitors, exemplifying the good in the Tilneys and the bad in the Thorpes. In short, Catherine begins to learn the ways of her new Bath world. In order for her to become a full member, she must choose the right society to follow, and in so doing acts to move her society toward social reform to better Turner's basic building blocks of their culture. Without making the right choice, Catherine might be perpetually liminal, unable to act with her morality in a flawed world and therefore never completely included amongst her community.

Catherine slowly adjusts to her world, by the third ball beginning to discriminate between the Thorpes and Tilneys and avoiding the same excruciating discomfort of not having her preferred partner. She is realizing, as Monaghan puts it, that "[i]n this world, it is not sufficient just to be invited to dance; one must choose the right partner" (35). Catherine, however, remains stalled in a liminal state without much growth as she merely adjusts her behavior with the Thorpes slowly and specifically to each growing scenario—demonstrating that she does not grasp the extremity of the flawed social world. She has yet to face the crucial challenge to her understanding of her community that will allow her to completely understand the falsities of the world in which she operates.

Catherine goes through another trial, prompting a deeper understanding of the flaws in her society, as she is tricked to break engagements with the Tilneys in favor of the Thorpes. Like her growth to understanding with the balls, Catherine must learn through an agonizing failure which community to choose. As she has proven herself uneducated as of yet, the Thorpes use their fictions to manipulate their worlds and Catherine, demonstrating how important it is that she complete her journey ultimately with the self-confidence and ability to discern between the good and bad. The Thorpes and Catherine's brother James would have her dismiss propriety for

their own enjoyment, as Catherine attempts to hold to an engagement she has previously made with the Tilneys. They attempt to convince her to come on their adventure instead, "vehemently talk[ing] down [her excuses] as no reason at all" and continuing to tell her of their plans (59). With a firm grasp on the morality of keeping her promise to the Tilneys, Catherine demonstrates her propensity for good yet the danger of her confidence in others. As the Thorpes convince her that the Tilneys will not be coming, lying and saying that they saw them elsewise occupied, Catherine agrees to join the other outing. She is unable to follow this inner moral guide to respect the initial commitment because she is unable to distinguish fantasy from reality. We thus see, again, an example of what is to come from a character with morality yet no knowledge of the workings of the world around her.

However, Catherine is not simply misguided by the immoral instructors around her, but also the elaborate gothic fictions she enjoys reading.[3] As she drives away with John Thorpe, Catherine's musings point to her unrealistic understanding of her world as she conflates it with her favorite gothic novels: "Thorpe talked to his horse, and she meditated, by turns, on broken promises and broken arches, phaetons and false hangings, Tilneys and trap-doors" (61). In her drifting musings Catherine has a difficult time differentiating between the real world and the fantastic qualities of the world of gothic novels. By the time she comes to realize the false nature of Thorpes' excuse, it is too late and she is trapped in his carriage, kidnapped like a true gothic heroine. So, while her open nature leads her to unfit guides, this immaturity about decision making in a complicated world is exasperated by her reliance on gothic fiction to interpret the world. As she is driven away, Catherine is left only able to protest John Thorpe's lies, and reflect upon her situation. Her moral power, therefore, falls short of what she wishes to do as she is left

[3] Jane Austen mimics the work of Ann Radcliffe, a prominent gothic writer, in her presentation of Catherine's love for gothic fiction and disengagement with the world.

with empty and lackluster means of chastising the flawed John Thorpe and eventually apologizing to the hurt Tilneys—behaving in a fashion that emphasizes her desire to always behave with propriety toward everybody. As she learns from her negative experiences, at this point Catherine may be able to judge right from wrong but is not strong enough to teach others to behave in the same way. Instead, Catherine is still subject to the delusion that others hold the same moral grounding with which she would seek to live. Thus, she has her pleasure taken away and, in the harsh lesson of this experience, comes to learn a little bit more about the world—that the driving motives of others are not always unselfish and genuine. She is therefore prepared for the next time she will be faced with such a choice. Although Catherine still demonstrates uncertainty in her own perceptions of the world around her, she also displays enough awareness to be a good student, to educate herself from her personal experience and thus to learn to follow the right path out of liminality.

## *Personal growth*

The next time that Catherine is faced with pressure from the Thorpes she refuses to break her engagements with the Tilneys, demonstrating a level of growth in Catherine's judgment of character and ability to follow her own moral guidance rather than being easily persuaded by others. Again, the Thorpes and her brother James seek to take her away from a previous engagement with the Tilneys, using every means they can think of to convince Catherine of the superiority in their scheme, trying to persuade her to reschedule with Miss Tilney. This time, however, determined to hold her promise "Catherine was distressed, but not subdued" (70). When facing James's claims of her obstinate character, Catherine is able to continue on, maintaining her own perspective on the matter rather than being easily swayed by the others

declaring: "[i]f I am wrong, I am doing what I believe to be right" (72). Thus, Catherine is beginning to be able to act upon her conviction even when faced with harsh resistance, suggesting a certain level of growth on her part to allow her own moral guidance to lead her.

Catherine demonstrates her commitment to the moral codes underlying interactions in Bath in standing true to her engagement with Miss Tilney against the most determined odds. Her physical break with the Thorpes and James, is also a very symbolic break from their style of living and self-indulgent vanity toward the proper world of the Tilneys—even making first attempts at teaching proper morality to others in her defiance and conviction against the Thorpes' insistence. In some ways, Catherine has completed that challenge of her transition, the one that proves itself very different from Turner's outline. She has, in fact, chosen the correct instructors to take her the rest of the way on her journey. For Catherine, Monaghan explains, "the transition from childhood involves not merely entering the adult world, but searching out those parts of it which can provide scope for the expression of sound morality and the pursuit of personal happiness" (35). It is not enough for her to experience Turner's three simple steps to end her transitional journey; rather, she must find the correct society with which she may grow. As she succeeds in this task, Catherine can now focus on learning and growing, as she has been able to discern the correct path toward moral aggregation. Yet, even with this conscious choice in companionship, Catherine still has much to learn about the true nature of the world around her—particularly about how others operate in this world.

By accompanying the Tilneys on a walk around Beechen Cliff, Catherine has chosen to dissociate from the Thorpes, showing her capacity of learning. Yet, on her outing with the Tilneys, she demonstrates her remaining naïveté. She still allows herself to be ruled by the fictions and exaggerations of others, unable to truly understand Henry's hyperbole and thus as

Susan Morgan's *In the Meantime* emphasizes, "[w]e laugh when Catherine rejects all of Bath as unworthy to form a landscape because she has absorbed her lesson so well as actually to have learned nothing at all" (71). Thus, just as we see Catherine take a definite move toward defending what she knows to be right from the self-satisfying goals of the Thorpes, she continues to face more complex challenges that still prove too much for her to overcome completely. While she has gained strength in her conviction of what, and more specifically who, is right, her naïveté and lack of experience with the real world now holds her back from aggregation.

Going to Northanger Abbey, therefore, proves to be a new type of test in a different location, as Catherine is further pushed to face reality. This last phase is marked again by a physical separation, this time from Bath, highlighting that she has completed some of her necessary growth and that this journey will be, in many ways, new. Catherine's second move highlights the multiple journeys one might take in phases of transition (as described in van Gennep's work). While she has succeeded in some respects, Catherine has much to learn still and, just like her earlier separation from her home, the physical change of space instigates a new phase of learning and growth. The location of Northanger physically establishes that Catherine is not truly a part of the Tilneys' world, as she is between a complete understanding of their world and the innocence with which she began her journey at Bath.

Catherine's final test takes place as she is forced to see the ridiculous nature of her outlandish conflation between reality and her favorite gothic fictions. Although up to this point Catherine has shown herself worthy of aggregation, at least on some level, she has not proven herself as a master of irony. As Henry describes Northanger from a gothic lens and fails to fully signal the satire, Catherine is enchanted by the story and once again enters a space without a complete recognition of what to expect from this new location. We have seen from her earlier

errors in judgment that Catherine has learned to adjust her behavior at the balls and in respect to accepting the Thorpes' lies. But when she misinterprets Henry's satirical description of the Abbey, Catherine demonstrates that she still has some learning to do and, surprisingly, that Henry must also learn to control himself and learn to appropriately act as an instructor for Catherine, a path which he has stepped away from with this last moment of satire.[4] So, as Burlin points out, "when Henry tries through his last fiction to laugh Catherine out of her romantic expectations of the Abbey, he succeeds instead in inadvertently persuading her of the truth . . . [as he] yields to the temptation to go beyond his parodic intent" (100). In some ways, this demonstrates that he too must learn to see the consequences of attempting to utilize such extreme control. By taking advantage of Catherine's naïveté, Henry Tilney sinks to the level of the manipulative Thorpes, and must therefore engage with his own growth if the couple is to end up together.

Catherine becomes almost immediately obsessed with the gothic nature of the Abbey and starts to elaborate upon Henry's story so that, in the words of Burlin, his fiction begins to "break loose and invade[] the rest of the novel" (101). She creates a gothic story for the home with General Tilney central to the plot, misinterpreting his attempts at control as a sinister nature indicating that he is capable of murdering his wife. Catherine is, however, merely misinterpreting General Tilney just as she did with the Thorpes earlier, because she does not truly understand his goals. This is therefore merely a more pronounced example of the misinterpretations that Catherine has been operating under throughout the novel. Her reaction to it prompts the ultimate stage of reflection that completes her education, and shortly thereafter her liminality. With her

[4] Just like Darcy, therefore, Henry is not without flaws that need fixing, and must experience his own form of growth in repairing his mistakes before he is worthy to be the hero to Catherine's heroine.

final movement away from her original naïveté Catherine becomes a part of the moral social world of the Tilneys. As such her last mistake is the biggest and ultimately her reinterpretation helps her toward deeper understanding; seeing the General in a new way helps Catherine to more appropriately read people. Catherine and General Tilney are unable to communicate because they have such different motivations.[5] Although Catherine has learned to deal with polite society at Bath, she has yet to truly understand the personalities of those around her and thus continues to clash with others, as her idealized standards do not match with the individual desires of everyone else in the community. She has yet to adjust to the whole flawed and complicated world, and instead has just adapted to individuals and still sees herself as a growing heroine in the gothic novel, rather than the real world.

Her decision to physically act upon her misinterpretations is the ultimate key moment that triggers this instance of learning. As Catherine's suspicions about foul-play surrounding Mrs. Tilney's death grow even stronger, she seeks out Mrs. Tilney's bedroom for signs of this misadventure. It is ultimately this endeavor of acting upon her flawed assumptions that puts an end to her misunderstandings. Rather than being an exciting moment revealing the gothic nature of the Abbey and its inhabitants, this moment turns into a great point of learning for Catherine. As Henry catches her in the act and deduces Catherine's assumptions, he must proceed to set her straight, not only about her misjudgments of his family, but also how she sees the world. Henry urges her to think about what she is doing, "Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained," and prompts her to "[c]onsult your own understanding,

[5] Interestingly, Katherine Kickel argues that Catherine's naïveté makes her incapable of recognizing the larger social structures at work; rather "[w]hen Catherine expects the General's home to operate according to the code of good manners rather than merely the ethic of profitable work, she misses Austen's point about the transformation of the gentry and the new pressures that they face" (168).

your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you . . . dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?" (145). Leaving this moment of recognition with "tears of shame," Catherine is violently forced to the realization about what she had previously thought and finally "[t]he visions of romance were over. Catherine was completely awakened" (146). Like Marianne after her sickness and Elizabeth after she reads Darcy's letter, Catherine too faces a harsh reality. She experiences Turner's stage of reflection in a moment of personal growth that acts to break from the delusions that have blocked her transitional journey. Her earlier realizations that progressed up to this point (from learning the truth about dance partners to understanding the lies and improprieties in the Thorpes) have been painful lessons to learn, but this break and stage of reflection is one of the most painful, and also most powerful. In her newfound understanding, Catherine realizes the implications of her previous fancies, not only about her own understandings but also about those surrounding her in the Abbey and "[m]ost grievously was she humbled. Most bitterly did she cry" (146).

Once again, this extreme experience of embarrassment during the moment of personal growth emphasizes the importance of humiliation in the liminal phase. By embarrassing the liminal heroine, the act serves as the ultimate reminder that they are outsiders, emphasizing their position of liminality. The humiliation associated with a surprise works as an indicator that the heroine does not truly understand what was happening around her, and therefore does not quite belong. Thus, humiliation serves as a signal for liminality and forces the heroines to externalize their individual moments and reflect upon the society with which they are surrounded. This extreme break from romance to reality acts as the final tipping point in the novel, after which Catherine can apply the lessons she has learned to new situations without being taught about them (as was necessary with her earlier discoveries about the Thorpes). Her growing self-

confidence and the new understanding gained from her moment of embarrassment at the Abbey join together, as she must face her final task and prove that she has completely grown to understand her lessons.

Catherine now comes to recognize the true nature of the people and the world around her, as she begins to read her surroundings and make guesses and observations for herself. She contemplates the General's behavior from a new perspective, observing his operations and beginning to openly see the contradictions in his speech of which she was previously ignorant. Seeing more deeply beyond his particular habits, she can, with "her own unassisted observations . . . [contemplate] why he should say one thing so positively, and mean another all the while" (156). Catherine begins to realize the complexities of this newfound understanding of the world, questioning "How were people, at that rate, to be understood?" (156). Although she is not yet as capable of reading his social cues, Catherine is able to understand the difficulty of living in a world where nobody says what they mean. At this point, Catherine is able to act more responsibly toward society and chooses to take action, both things that will remove her from liminality. Yet, she still remains a relative outsider, operating between worlds, as she does not have the full power to practice her newfound understanding.

With her new rational view of the world, Catherine is able to now perceive the truth behind old and new relationships, behaving more appropriately in relation to the things around her. She is able to see that in Isabella's communications "[s]uch a strain of shallow artifice [that] could not impose even upon Catherine. Its inconsistencies, her contradictions, and falsehood, struck her from the very first" (160). This test of Catherine's newfound outlook suggests that she truly has altered her perspective on the world and is no longer easily fooled into seeing the false narratives of others, but rather seeks to find her own sense of truth; these new experiences serve

as a stepping stone to Catherine's newest and biggest test to her new intelligence—her sudden, inexplicable dismissal from the Abbey. Interestingly enough, General Tilney uses the excuse of a previous engagement in Hereford as a means to dismiss Catherine from Northanger Abbey—an act that would not be out of place in the behavior of the Thorpes. Here, rather than believing the lie put forth by the General, Catherine is able to understand the ill-will that the General has for her, and sees the true unwarranted nature of the dismissal. By realizing that the "manner in which it was done was so grossly uncivil," Catherine demonstrates her recognition of General Tilney's character (167). Instead of relying upon the assumptions that others operate under the same codes of propriety and believing her own opinion to be flawed as she did with her impressions of John Thorpe, she sees the General's act through its thinly veiled disguise. As Catherine thinks about the reason for the General's unmannerly actions, we see her processing the world at the Abbey in a new way, taking simply the facts and a more realistic view of the behaviors of herself and others into account in her contemplations. Thus, Catherine has learned her lesson from Henry well. Her ability to behave with continued propriety and kindness toward the Tilneys even after her rejection emphasizes that, rather than perpetuating the flaws, Catherine seeks to be an agent of social reform. This act stands as more powerful than even her rejection of the Thorpes because, here, Catherine has been faced by a direct challenge to her worth and strives to maintain her ethical guidance, even as she may be experiencing her own disappointments.

Upon her return home, Catherine continues to show her newly matured sense of the world around her. Even as she has left her place of education and the instructor, she silences her parents' anger about what has happened and stews in mournful contemplation until her questions are answered by the arrival of Henry, which acts as her ultimate reward for learning her lesson well. When Henry goes after Catherine against his father's wishes he makes an active assertion

of her growth and importance. As Monaghan describes, he "acknowledges that Catherine is finally worthy to be admitted into the adult world. Furthermore, he forms a bond that promises well for the future of his society" (41). Henry has served as Catherine's instructor as she learned to see the true impropriety in the behavior of those around her, and to apply her understanding of the world to the new situations she must face. Catherine has completed her education and is thus able to release herself from her liminal position, and eventually marry into stability with a true understanding of the complex nature of the world in which she was so easily manipulated at the beginning of the novel. This adult world gives her the responsibility to make decisions for herself and begins to hold her responsible for her actions (as she is forced to deal with the consequences of her decisions), demonstrating the proper way to operate in society by holding herself accountable to a moral grounding and serving as a potential guide for others. We also see that Henry Tilney has grown from his overzealous attempts at teaching Catherine, allowing her to learn from her own experience rather than through his educational tricks and manipulations. Ultimately, Catherine's successful admittance into the Tilneys' world gives her the position of a morally sound individually in the crucial position of the landed gentry, which will help to strengthen the moral integrity of her society. While she will not hold the same moral power as Elizabeth Bennet, as she will not take on as powerful of a role as the mistress of Pemberley, Catherine can guide her society toward just actions and discern between the just and ill-mannered acts of those around her. Her weaker power, however, is highlighted by General Tilney's continuing crude emphasis on money. However, by actively taking a role and making choices in her transition, Catherine has become more responsible for the society and company she has chosen and, to some extent, may enact social change. Her journey ultimately allows

Catherine to learn what needs to be fixed by teaching her the slippery slope of what immoral selfish indulgence can do to others.

Although she does go through multiple phases of the stages of her journey, the mixture of the role of social reform and Turner's more traditional transitional journey undercuts the complete realization of both goals. By engaging with her own journey and manipulating her perception of the world so strongly, Catherine has taken an active hand in shaping her community and in this way she does not follow the traditional transitional phases. However, because she is attempting to correct rather than replicate certain aspects of her social world, Catherine must undergo several periods of separation and limen, moving from place to place and learning only part of her lessons rather than managing to complete her journey in one phase of continuous growth. Although she may not be aware of her actions at the time, her involvement in choosing her own liminal path creates a stronger and more moral landed gentry in the end, while her relatively close reflection of Turner's transitional journey does not allow her to completely alter her society. She has not only exposed, but also reshaped the basic building blocks of her culture multiple times throughout her journey.

## *An exploration of liminality and social change*

*Northanger Abbey* acts as a work that simultaneously follows, and seeks to deviate from, Turner's transitional phases. Catherine experiences the same kind of separation, limen, and aggregation as the Dashwood sisters and Elizabeth Bennet, but her more active role in her transitional journey suggests that Austen is shifting in her opinion about how to experience growth in flawed societies. Throughout the novel, Catherine is in danger of falling from her strong personal morality if she is to follow the wrong instructors, or even risk living perpetually

in a state of liminality as she leaves Northanger having rejected the immorality of the Thorpes, and been, in turn, rejected from the Abbey's world by General Tilney. Yet, because Catherine has the strong morality from which she originally enters Bath, her own personal growth cannot reach aggregation without some amount of social reform. In her liminality therefore, Catherine is seeking to alter the social world rather than perpetuate it, and as such must deviate from Turner's three phases. She forces society to reflect upon its actions, rejecting the Thorpes in their impropriety and even forcing Henry Tilney to alter his understanding of proper interactions. However, it is also apparent that Catherine is unable to completely reform her society as General Tilney, perhaps one of the most prominently flawed members of the landed gentry, has not been convinced to change his attitude. Her journey is complicated as she struggles between the different expectations that come from her multiple roles, as the liminal neophyte and an agent of social change. In these two positions she must experience her own growth while incorporating her valuable qualities into the flawed society. We see that she takes a more active role in her period of limen, and because of it accumulates more risks. *Northanger Abbey* thus actively engages with both Turner's phases of transition, and the necessity to engage with and eventually change the social world of the novel, critiquing the flawed society and challenging the surroundings rather than complacently perpetuating them.

## *DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES*

We are starting to see that all of Austen's novels connect in interesting and important ways, with each one developing unique variations to the courtship plotline but with echoes of former works and characters still driving the plot along. In many ways *Northanger Abbey* is an earlier rendition of *Mansfield Park.* Just as there are parallels between *Sense and Sensibility* and

*Pride and Prejudice,* the connection between these next two novels emphasizes Jane Austen's preference to developing similar plots with new interactions and manipulations to expand upon previous themes. Both *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park* emphasize specific shifts in knowledge and social position through the movement between physical spaces. Just as Catherine Morland's time at the Abbey was particularly impactful in shaping her growth, we will see that as Fanny is sent back home to Portsmouth for a time, she grows to learn more about her true place in the world and the differences between her two 'families.' Similarly, strong connections in disposition link the characters of *Northanger Abbey* with *Mansfield Park*, particularly in the role of the liminal heroines. Catherine is an unlikely agent of change and, while Fanny Price is not morally weak, in the case of her personality and social class she is considered lesser than the rest of the inhabitants at the Park. It is therefore no surprise that in many ways Catherine Morland and Fanny Price share in a similar pattern of growth; both Catherine and Fanny are in some ways antiheroines as they are still trying to make sense of self and society, which leads to a great deal of pain and confusion on the parts of both heroines.

However, rather than duplicating her old plot, Austen is able to build upon the characters and situations to make each novel distinctive from the next. Each heroine stands out with "qualities of the mind," and face what Susan Morgan describes as "problems of understanding and behavior which distinguish them in essential ways from characters in previous fiction" (*Meantime* 133). Thus, we will see that throughout Fanny's journey she will deal with her particular form of liminality in a unique manner. In comparison to Catherine's journey based primarily upon discovery, Fanny is a more educated young woman that is able to perceive the manipulations of others. She, however, struggles to learn how to react to the immorality that she already knows exists. Like Catherine, her flawed society persistently prevents her own growth

and involvement in her world, but in *Mansfield Park* this situation has grown so severe that it is not merely small alterations in her community but grander amendments that truly correct her community as a whole, dismissing those unworthy and correcting those willing to be taught.[6] Fanny Price, therefore, truly acts to gain not only personal growth but to expose the basic building blocks of her culture and change the flaws for the better—emphasizing the act of social reform in her journey. As such, her transition deviates quite distinctly from Turner's three phases, yet still parallels the process rather interestingly.

## *MANSFIELD PARK*

Fanny Price begins her journey to the new place as a strict outsider, having spent the first ten years of her life in a home less privileged than Mansfield Park, with a family that separated itself from the lifestyle of those at the Park. Fanny's mother, rather than following in the footsteps of her sister who positioned herself well off, "married, in the common phrase, to disoblige her family, and by fixing on a Lieutenant of Marines, without education, fortune, or connections, did it very thoroughly" (3). She married so that she dissociated herself from her family by social class and economic means, so that when Fanny was brought to Mansfield it was treated as an act of charity; by no means was Fanny allowed to forget that she was a lesser cousin as "Mrs. Norris had been talking to her the whole way from Northampton of her wonderful good fortune, and the extraordinary degree of gratitude and good behaviour which it ought to produce"

[6] Austen finished *Northanger Abbey* in 1799, just before she turned 25, but most likely did not start, and certainly did not finish, *Mansfield Park* until well over a decade later, completing the novel in June 1813. Thus, the distinct shift in Austen's inclusion of social reform may have stemmed from her very different position in life between the times in which she wrote the novels.

(11). Thus, Fanny finds herself in a liminal state, not a member of her family at a home that is so far away, but not a full member of the family at Mansfield.

However, although we see a distinct separation at the onset of the novel, Fanny Price is especially different in her transitional journey because she is never truly a member of the Mansfield community to start with. Rather, through her time growing up at Mansfield Park she becomes acclimated to that society and begins to see the basic building blocks of their culture, clearly adhering to mandates of decorum and morality more strenuously than her cousins, but without associating it as her own community. While Fanny never really strives to be a full member of the Mansfield community until near the end of the novel, it becomes where she truly belongs. However, as she does not completely recognize her place, she plays a different role, socially subservient to most of the members at Mansfield but morally superior. She is, in many respects, positioned as a liminal heroine in relation to the Mansfield society, but without seeing it herself she takes more prominent action than a traditional neophyte. Because Fanny does not understand that she is working her way toward inclusion in the Mansfield community, she acts as more of an instructor for the Park, rather than a neophyte. While she does eventually realize her desire to be a part of the Mansfield community, and at that time faces a transition more traditionally like the one Turner lays out, most of her time focuses more on morality as she does not truly accept her transitional journey. She behaves instead as a spectator, and eventually an agent of social reform, before consciously taking on the role of liminal neophyte.

## *Finding her place*

Coming from a different background and with constant reminders from Mrs. Norris of her status, Fanny begins her journey as a distinct outsider from the rest of the Bertram family and

struggles throughout *Mansfield Park* to find her place within the family while still holding her own ideals. As Shaw points out, "Fanny Price is isolated from the start because of her situation, and at first sight she seems a very conventional heroine" (291). Fanny's journey differs from those of the Austen heroines before her as the people in charge of her education behave distinctly worse than she does, complicating Fanny's liminal education and focusing this novel on the deeper understanding of social reform and not just on personal growth (although both goals are accomplished in *Mansfield Park*). As she is distinctly separate from the Bertram family by moral and economic standing, they ultimately become more obviously the ones who are in need of personal growth.

Fanny's struggle throughout the novel is therefore one of liminality, and it is marked with similar sets of trials as those faced by other Austen heroines; however, Fanny's struggles are based upon her own understanding of how much she must contribute to her social community rather than a search for knowledge about her surroundings. Still, Fanny must gain self-confidence in her morality, just as Catherine Morland needs to grow to recognize the importance of her own beliefs, and therefore the two heroines are tied in their moral strength and also their social weakness. Fanny grows up seeing the frivolity of the spoiled Julia and Maria only seeking entertainment rather than proper education and Tom's extravagance and "cheerful selfishness" (*Mansfield Park* 19). Although she is an outsider, Fanny has grown to understand the proper behavior for the Bertram family but is set apart by this very behavior in an unexpected way. Her only close ally in the world of propriety is Sir Thomas' younger son, Edmund, who must chose his own path to survive and seeks to take his orders to eventually lead his own parsonage. Thus he, like Fanny Price, remains grounded on morality and the betterment of the community rather than selfish pleasure. While her cousins spend their time in leisure, Fanny is called upon to help

Lady Bertram, quietly living her life under the thumb of her relatives. As the story skips ahead several years, we see that thus far in her eight years at Mansfield, although Fanny has learned the behavior of polite society, she has done very little to remove herself from her liminal state and does not yet recognize that she has grown to become a part of this world. Fanny does not truly begin her journey until newcomers to Mansfield seek to challenge the domestic order.

In Sir Thomas's absence, the Crawford siblings descend upon Mansfield, influencing the easily manipulated Bertram sisters and their fancy-following older brother Tom, causing chaos. Sir Thomas' physical absence highlights the true lack of moral integrity and control he instills upon his family, as they almost immediately start misbehaving. Monaghan believes that it is, in fact, "[b]ecause of the deficiencies of its leader, [that] landed society in *Mansfield Park* is ripe for corruption. Maria and Julia Bertram and their brother Tom are particularly vulnerable. None of them has been taught the active principles that should underlie a concern with propriety" (94). Because she is an outsider that has not experienced the same privileged life as the Bertram children, only Fanny Price is able to clearly see what the proper performance of Mansfield ideals and morality should be, and the Park slowly descends into chaos. As the Crawfords work to dismantle the Bertrams', although superficially frivolous, mannered lives, Fanny realizes the true faults with the newcomers yet does nothing to attempt to warn her cousins. In maintaining her simple position as helper she allows the moral degradation of Mansfield, and thus demonstrates the area in need of growth that must accompany her transitional journey. Even Edmund, who normally has a firm moral grounding like Fanny, is taken in by the charms of Mary Crawford and proceeds to act without his normal sense of decorum—thus isolating Fanny even more as her normal ally abandons her for the Crawfords' immoral but lively prospects.

The Crawfords are mixed characters that understand some the morality that the community should value, but with a general impropriety mimicking Austen's previous flawed characters and complicating their depiction. Their blind desire for entertainment ignores many moral structures, underlying not only their own faults but also the faults at Mansfield Park. The Crawfords therefore represent how important it is for Fanny to serve as a moral guide for the Bertrams. Their presence at Mansfield Park challenges Fanny's complacency with her position, and ultimately triggers her journey out of her spectator position of the group to a more central role in the Bertram family as she attempts to save them from the Crawfords' impropriety. In so doing, she grows to recognize her role as a part of the community, although still liminal, but actively searching to be included amongst the society of the Park. The Crawfords present a particularly dangerous challenge for Mansfield Park as they lead life with selfish desires that, although thrilling, are not acted out with moral integrity—behavior which Monaghan feels is required from the landed gentry as they serve to guide the rest of society. As such, the Crawfords are clearly aligned with the Thorpes, yet in this instance Fanny must engage with their flaws more specifically rather than simply recognize their inadequacies.

Both Crawford siblings see the world as a place to be manipulated for their own gain and success, while Fanny sees the absolute values that should govern daily activities whether they lead to personal pleasure or not. Henry's interest in the engaged Maria Bertram because, a woman engaged "feels that she may exert all her powers of pleasing without suspicion," reveals his flippant disregard for important social structures, such as the bonds of engagement and marriage (36). He therefore recognizes the moral and social attitudes that dictate proper life at Mansfield, yet chooses to be guided by amusement rather than morality. It is not for the same lack of understanding as the Bertrams have in the proper social dictates, but rather a selfish

disregard for his social duties that leads Henry Crawford away from propriety. Therefore, he represents a truly dangerous individual to the Bertrams and Fanny Price, as he knowingly challenges their world without remorse. It is this direct affront to her ingrained morality that will eventually move Fanny into action. This distinction emphasizes that Fanny should be the moral instructor, yet also suggests that social power is necessary to hold this position—thus emphasizing Fanny's challenge as she sees the Crawfords for what they are, but does not have the social standing to enact change. As such, in her liminality Fanny is met with what Turner describes as the particularly restricting binding rules. She must fight these restraints to save her community, ultimately suggesting that her transitional journey must break from Turner's three-phase structure and mandates. As the Bertrams are too flawed to adequately educate her on the proper basic building blocks of culture, they cannot be appropriate guides for her during her time of liminality. So, Fanny must remove herself from this liminal position to fix her society, but as she does so she risks her ultimate aggregation, removing herself from the important stages that would allow her to become a full member of the society she seeks to correct.

Likewise, Mary Crawford's self-interested vanity in her desire to retrieve her harp, though it is harvest time and all modes of transportation are in use by farmers for that purpose, demonstrates a lack of respect for the priorities in the world surrounding her. Rather than truly understanding the needs of society, Mary Crawford's corrupted sense of the world guided by personal desire taints her complaints about the difficulty in retrieving her harp. She is exasperated as she describes to Fanny and Edmund that:

> To want a horse and cart in the country seems impossible, so I told my maid to speak for one directly . . . I thought it would be only ask and have, and was rather grieved that I could not give the advantage to all. Guess my surprise, when I found that I had been

> asking the most unreasonable, most impossible thing in the world, had offended all the farmers, all the labourers, all the hay in the parish. (46)

In her personal desire, Mary refuses to consider the needs of others; however, rather than regretting her indiscretion Mary continues to complain about the difficulty she has faced and the relief she will feel when she does finally get her harp—an object of simple self-amusement during a time with workers laboring all around. Just as her brother does, Mary Crawford seeks to disregard the propriety that should guide residence of Mansfield in favor of her own personal desires. Although Edmund recognizes her impropriety, especially in the case of her selfish desire for her harp, his fascination with Mary overpowers his generally sound judgment as the two spend more and more time together. Eventually, he is subdued by his attachments, leaving Fanny as the lone voice of reason amongst her world at Mansfield that is slowly breaking away from all of the domestic codes of conduct she holds so dear.

Because she is an outsider, Fanny does not succumb to the Crawfords' flirtations and charms, but sees as her relatives are manipulated and is thus pushed further into a liminality that threatens to increase her outsider status. As Edmund forges on ahead with Mary Crawford when the group reaches the gate on Rushworth's estate, he leaves Fanny behind in more way than one. While "[s]he watched them till they had turned the corner, and listened till all sound of them had ceased" (76) she experiences a shift in her position both literally and symbolically. From this point, Fanny has not only physically, but also emotionally lost the support of Edmund, as he is too transfixed with Mary Crawford. Thus, she is set alone against the world, with nobody to speak for her as her ideals come under attack. Previously, Fanny was able to hold her moral ground without actively instructing her society by staying behind Edmund's strong verbal calls for morality. But without Edmund holding his morality in defense of the impropriety of the

Crawfords, from now on Fanny must step up and speak on her own. While the confidence in her morality does not waver, the confidence in her need to assert her dominance does, and she begins to see the importance of participating in society in order to induce others to behave in the proper manner.

## *Finding her voice*

As the world around her is changing, Fanny's position as an outsider (one of which she is constantly reminded) allows her to maintain her moral grounding, but she is challenged in her silent acceptance when the Crawfords introduce the idea of putting on the risqué play, *Lover's Vows*. The indelicate nature of the play acts as a means through which the Park's moral integrity rapidly disintegrates, as the characters and world of the play allow the Bertrams and Crawfords to continue on in their improper flirtations. Even Edmund is drawn in, though he initially points out the improprieties of the play, saying that "it would be very wrong. In a *general* light" but more specifically as the group is "circumstanced, I must think it would be highly injudicious . . . [and] imprudent, I think, with regard to Maria, whose situation is a very delicate one, considering every thing, extremely delicate" (99). Yet Edmund does not take strong direct action against the production. Not only does he fail to intervene to help Fanny defend herself against demands that she participate, but he also falls victim to Mary Crawford's prodding and is eventually drawn into the theatrical world himself; thus, Fanny is set alone against the rest of the household in a more extremely moral manner than ever before. However, her insistence upon remaining separate from this group, of not interacting with the impropriety of the play, is not strong enough to influence anyone else.

While she refuses to be involved, since Fanny does not assert her prominent moral position, nobody else follows suit, and as such, her strong morality does not lead her community to appropriate propriety. Thus, by separating herself from her community, she is unable to save them from their immorality, and she ultimately puts herself at risk. We see the flaws in committing to following her own moral guidance but not asking it of others, and the weakness of Fanny's outsider position as her attempts to assert her own propriety are met with severe bullying and the condemnation of her character. Tom calls upon Fanny to join the play and, hearing her continued resistance to the idea:

> Mrs. Norris completed the whole, by thus addressing her in a whisper at once angry and audible: 'What a piece of work here is about nothing,—I am quite ashamed of you, Fanny, to make such a difficulty of obliging your cousins in a trifle of this sort,—so kind as they are to you!' . . . 'I shall think her a very obstinate, ungrateful girl, if she does not do what her aunt and cousins wish her—very ungrateful indeed, considering who and what she is.' (116)

Without exerting her moral superiority, Fanny is reminded of her liminality and remains stagnant in her position. In this complicated engagement in the world, Fanny's passage is blocked in a specific and unique way as she has grown to become more moral than those who are intended to be her instructors. Thus, in order to find any stability in aggregation, her status as a neophyte becomes particularly complicated and deviates from the traditional path that Turner lays out. While Fanny does need to experience her own personal growth before her aggregation, the majority of her fault lies not with understanding the basic building blocks of her society, but convincing others of their importance and propriety. She must act, in many ways, as the instructor for Mansfield while continuing to experience her own form of liminality. The

complications she faces in the impropriety of her society, force a deviation from the traditional three-phase journey. Thus, it is only through taking on conflicting positions of instructor and neophyte that Fanny is able to complete her transition.

Fanny is losing control over the ordered domestic world of the decorous landed gentry in which she thrives, yet has no power to perpetuate herself. Thus, faced with a direct attack, Shaw notes that "Fanny's inner upheaval is clearly intended to parallel the disturbance of domestic peace caused by the theatricals" (293). Her emotional distress, face reddening from the agitation, highlights the particular problem and path she must discover as her inner moral grounding is challenged by what is going on around her, yet she is not yet confident enough to stand up to the impropriety. Thus, Fanny's attempts to remain strong in her resistance against the play mark her first act of stepping into society. Unfortunately, this engagement is not an entirely successful one. Fanny is unable to remove herself from the play and at the persistence of her community, she cracks under the pressure, though is saved from ever having to rehearse her part. Fanny fails to directly stop the play and it is only Sir Thomas's return that puts a stop to the production. Fanny fails in her first conflict with the immorality of her society as she is unable to take the action necessary to prevent the play from proceeding. Without a more direct incorporation into society her cries are superficial and inefficient. She is forced to see why she must engage with her community. Fanny learns that she must gain the confidence to behave differently in order confront the flaws in her society before her final aggregation.

Upon Sir Thomas's return Fanny becomes a central character at Mansfield, pushing her into more direct conflict with the immorality that challenges the proper social order. With Maria gone and Julia off visiting her, the older inhabitants of Mansfield start prizing Fanny more than ever before. She is, therefore, acknowledged as an active participant at Mansfield Park and

becomes more involved in the community. With this further activity she gains some social status, highlighting that she belongs at the Park. As she must further engage with this society, she is challenged to truly correct the immorality at play. So, as she becomes less liminal in the sense that she gains social power, she becomes more liminal as her disposition alienates her from the rest of her society. However, her incorporation also aids her ability to act as a guide for social reform. This process helps Fanny for "Fanny's self confidence increases in proportion to the increased consequence granted her" (Monaghan 103). As she gains confidence, Fanny's determination in her morality increases and she begins to set the same standards for the other members at Mansfield. Thus, as she is encouraged into a more prominent role in society, her newfound power propels Fanny into the role of instructor. This newfound position may be detrimental to her growth out of liminality, however, if she does not complete her education or fix the flaws in her society. Just because she has gained social prominence, does not mean that she has the full power she should, or that Mansfield is ready to truly treat her as a full member of their society.

Without appropriately completing the steps of Turner's transitional journey, Fanny cannot wield her newfound power completely no matter what apparent privileges she has gained. Without an altered society, Fanny will be forced back into liminality, a position made even more threatening as she will have further to fall. We see how important it is for Fanny to stand with her conviction especially because her relatives, although welcoming her into a more central role, have not actively changed to align more with her values. While she does not necessarily show signs of succumbing to the negative attributes of this new world, it is important to recognize that, like Catherine Morland's choice in the Tilneys, Fanny Price does not face a completely open path into this new position. Rather, she faces new challenges where she is in the position to be

heard but she must now substantially exert her opinions or risk entering into a world that can only cause her harm. As she is growing into her social world, she is also forced to exert her moral standpoint—doing so as she first reveals her anger about the play when Henry Crawford persists in criticizing her uncle for stopping it. Speaking up, Fanny declares: "As far as *I* am concerned, sir, I would not have delayed his return for a day. My uncle disapproved it all so entirely when he did arrive, that in my opinion, every thing had gone quite far enough" (177). Thus, Fanny takes her first small steps, pronouncing her indignity at the immoral actions of Henry Crawford. As she is accepted into the community but can see the flawed behavior of her new social world, Fanny's journey highlights the necessity for a dual growth with the individual and society in order for her final aggregation. For, without the members at Mansfield coming to recognize their immorality, Fanny will always have a different understanding of society.

Fanny's confidence continues to increase with the inclusion of her brother William to the party at Mansfield, allowing her to strengthen her role as the moral guide. This form of support from Fanny's home world, of which she has idealized ever since she left at the age of ten, allows Fanny to be more connected with her intuitive moral understanding. Fanny still does not completely feel like a member of Mansfield and thus aligns herself more with the social position of William than that of her cousins. With the support of another Mansfield outsider, Fanny is able to reconnect with what she sees as her true place in the world, at Portsmouth, and reaffirms her concept of morality. She is able to find a new ally in the physical presence of William as the inhabitants of the Park continue to give her more attention. Her inclusion in this society reaches its climax as Sir Thomas throws a ball at Mansfield almost entirely in her honor, which marks Fanny's full entrance into the Mansfield society. Gaining admittance into the community thus

forces her to assert her moral standings and opinions more openly as she faces further conflict—almost immediately presented in the form of Henry Crawford's proposal.

## *Struggling to keep morality*

Henry Crawford begins pursuing Fanny, challenging her complacency even further. Yet it is not a genuine interest in her morality but rather a continuation of his games and tricks "on the days that I do not hunt" (179) that intrigues Henry. As such, he acts as an active challenge for Fanny in her newfound position. As Henry continues, revealing that it is, in fact, her dislike of him that drives his desire to woo her even more: "I must try to get the better of this. Her looks say, 'I will not like you, I am determined not to like you,' and I say, she shall" (180). Thus, the effort to start demonstrating her resistance to immorality in her newfound role will prove particularly difficult for Fanny, as she is directly pitted against the immorality with which Henry chooses to live and that she utterly despises. Her defiance stands against the simple favorable forms of vanity and pleasure that tempt the landed gentry, and rather promotes the importance for this group to provide moral leadership to the community in order to perpetuate the overall propriety of their world. Because of the weight it holds, this engagement could be particularly damaging for Fanny's role in the Mansfield family. As Monaghan points out: "To marry a man whom she does not love would destroy her chances of emotional fulfillment. Furthermore, Crawford is so corrupt he would prevent Fanny exercising any moral influence on her society" (107). Thus, Fanny is directly confronted with the difficulty presented by the conflict between moral influence and inclusion in polite society. Although she initially resists Henry Crawford's attention, she eventually subtly softens toward him as she sees his attempts to change to please her. Although she still continues to rebuff his advances, Fanny's altered view acknowledges the

difficult choice and conscious effort that this class of people (and particularly Fanny as she is attempting to alter their behavior) must make in order to remain truly fit leaders. Henry's eventual proposal is one of Fanny's first strong acts of direct resistance to the impropriety of the Mansfield community, and is met with direct confrontation from those with which she seeks to associate. Her defiance in this matter challenges the community at Mansfield, and eventually prompts the important changes that will bring Fanny's journey to aggregation with a moral society.

While Monaghan finds Fanny's position at Mansfield to be "worse than ever, because she is now being tempted and pressured to exchange her most important values for prestige, security and wealth" (108), I believe that Fanny's social growth leading up to this point indicates that this type of conflict would eventually arise, and that her society has truly prepared Fanny for the challenge. Fanny patiently waits at Portsmouth and, although she finds the experience unpleasant, it marks Fanny's realization about her true home. However, she still does not show signs that she will give in. While, as Monaghan points out, the novel ends by suggesting that Fanny could have married Henry Crawford, I believe the fact that she does not makes all the difference. If she had succumbed, Fanny would not have been able to truly succeed in completing her transitional journey, as she would have had to change her standards and could not have been the proper moral leader she was set out to become at the beginning of the novel. In fact, according to Monaghan:

> By remaining still, Fanny demands of Henry Crawford that he display qualities of perseverance and moral commitment that are alien to his nature and to the world from which he derives. A situation is thus created which almost guarantees that, so long as

> Fanny does not die under the harsh conditions of life in Portsmouth, Mansfield Park will be saved. (112-13)

As Fanny has now been fully admitted into the Mansfield society, she is also in the perfect position for the outcome of this standoff to conclude in a moral victory in her favor, which includes the spreading of her understandings to those around her. [7]

Sir Thomas's attempts to convince Fanny to change her mind highlight the true importance Fanny must place on making her decision about Henry Crawford. With her now prominent position in the family, Fanny must stand strong, holding to her moral and social codes as others attempt to criticize her actions. She is in the position to truly make an impact as she holds the power to demonstrate her strong opinions of proper domestic life in this potentially turbulent time. Fanny is torn as she continues defending her rejection of Henry's proposal, adding her doubts about "his principles" (248) but is unable to criticize what he has done without implicating the behavior of the whole family, particularly Maria and Julia. She must choose between her newfound place in the family, with loyalty to the Bertrams, and voicing her own opinion against the immoral behavior that has taken over Mansfield; Sir Thomas, however, does not care to hear her out, and rather criticizes her attempts to stand up for herself as she does so. He berates her for demonstrating "that you can be willful and perverse, that you can and will decide for yourself, without consideration or defense for those who have surely some right to guide you—without even asking their advice" (249). She has thus risked her new role in the

[7] While Fanny is relatively fully incorporated into the family at this point, marrying Henry Crawford would truly make her one of the group and thus permanently remove her from her vulnerable liminal position. However, as the society at Mansfield needs to grow morally before Fanny can rightfully accept her place there, Fanny's transitional journey is stalled—deviating from Turner's simple steps while exemplifying van Gennep's understanding that the transition can take place as stops and starts with several smaller journeys within the larger period of limen and reintegration.

community for the greater goal of improving the morality of Mansfield, and as such the society as a whole.

In this criticism, Sir Thomas attacks the very thing that Fanny has been desperately working toward—articulating a voice of her own. The conflict serves to mark a moment of progress away from her weaknesses not, as Sir Thomas suggests, a negative change in character. As she has yet to outwardly acknowledge her interest in joining the community, Fanny does not find her position as much at risk as an insider might. Because Fanny believes that she is waiting to be reincorporated into her true society at Portsmouth, she does not see any risk in her demands that Mansfield uphold its moral integrity. Rather, she serves to enforce morality at Mansfield out of a genuine interest in correcting the world. Fanny does not actively seek to gain admittance to the community, but is consciously shaping Mansfield into the society in which she will hold a superior moral and social position. This engagement works so that by the time she does realize her desire to be at Mansfield, the community has been prepared to behave with the moral integrity necessary for her to be rightly admitted. She acts as the instructor for the community rather than being swayed by the vain and selfish whims of her relatives. Interestingly enough, Sir Thomas also attempts to enforce his role as an instructor for Fanny upon this journey but, given his flawed understanding of the society itself, his advice fails to truly help Fanny in her growth.[8] She must, in turn, become the guide for the Bertrams, holding out against the Crawfords to prevent the perpetuation of their flawed interactions that are acting to scar the behavior and position of the landed gentry. Fanny enjoys her new place of privilege in the Mansfield family,

[8] Just as the Thorpes are flawed guides in *Northanger Abbey*, Sir Thomas looks toward his potential for that role, yet both do not fulfill what would be truly required to lead the heroines out of their liminal state. However, Sir Thomas will eventually learn and grow where the Thorpes know of their own impropriety yet do not care to improve themselves. As such, these two groups represent different types of active engagement in leading the heroine astray.

yet her attempts to hold the values that should characterize the landed gentry ironically prevent her from becoming one of them. So, in her progression toward personal growth, it is the flawed Bertrams that prevent her full admittance and thus prevent her passage.

Sir Thomas further demonstrates how he does not truly understand the moral guidance that Fanny provides to Mansfield in how he views her prospects with Henry Crawford. He reveals his ignorance when he seeks to call her attention to the material and monetary gains that a marriage to Henry Crawford may provide for Fanny and her family. As such, Sir Thomas has missed the true nature of her objection, not against what good Henry Crawford could bring her, but the negative ramifications a bond with him could cause—the things that it would stand against. Fanny refuses to submit and therefore faces harsh criticism of her character, even as she has proven herself to be the moral guide for the rest of Mansfield. Her position is therefore further destabilized, and by standing up for her principles she risks losing everything she has just worked to gain. As Fanny was never included amongst this society to begin with, her time of growth toward acceptance into the society is more perilous; she has further to fall if she does not experience aggregation with this group. Even Edmund does not truly understand what there is at risk for Fanny's acceptance of the immoral man without a sign that he may change. As such, Mansfield has been lost to Fanny as a place that can be rectified and she must leave in order to truly maintain her moral grounding. Yet, as she faces what will be her last test of liminality, she grows to learn that her true position in the world is quite different than what she would have assumed.

Her removal from Mansfield Park and back to Portsmouth moves Fanny into her final transitional phase, as a standoff between Henry and Fanny persists and she grows to realize the truth about her liminal position. Fanny is removed from Mansfield Park after she continues to

refuse Henry Crawford's proposal—a situation that Sir Thomas thinks will persuade her to accept by the very visual reminders of what she has to gain from the marriage. Yet this removal prompts the experience that will complete Fanny's education as a neophyte in which she uncovers new and important aspects of the community. The act reminds her why she must stand firm in her decision. Additionally, her return home places Fanny amongst a community of which she was a part by birth. Thus, this physical separation in many ways removes Fanny from the position in which she found herself most out of place—most liminal; however, she also learns more about her true place than she had originally thought. As she has never felt truly like a member of Mansfield, Fanny views her return to Portsmouth as a chance to reincorporate herself into the society fitting to her position. She believes that this will be a removal from her awkward liminal position back to an established place, but is forced to accept that since she has been brought up in Mansfield she has become more fitting to be a member of her relatives' community rather than that of her immediate family. However, rather than accepting a reintegration and ultimate aggregation, this physical removal teaches her about her role and reiterates why she must demand social reform at Mansfield—otherwise she will be returning to a flawed place and will always remain liminal, never fitting with the social standing of her Portsmouth family but not holding the same values as her Mansfield community. While Henry offers to bring her back to Mansfield at the first sign of her own personal distress, Fanny refuses the offer and accepts her place at Portsmouth. Her refusal ultimately acts as the final rejection of his proposal, as her communication with him dies down and Henry ultimately betrays her and the rest of the Bertrams in his elopement with Maria.

As Fanny holds strong to her social ideals, the physical chaos of Portsmouth indicates that Mansfield is the place where Fanny truly belongs, ultimately aligning her with the world of

the gentry. It is important to realize that, as Moler describes in "The two voices of Fanny Price," up until this point, "Fanny cherishes, quite unrealistically, an image of her paternal home at Portsmouth as a paradise in which true affection makes the artificial 'manner' of Mansfield unnecessary" and that it is therefore *Fanny* and not Austen who has treasured an idealized working class world (172). Fanny comes to realize the polite decorum of Mansfield is far pleasanter than in Portsmouth where "every sense is assaulted by the noisy, constricted, slovenly chaos in which her parents and the other children live," by constant reminders of her other life "through letters, visitors and even the newspaper" (Brissenden 157). The physical bustle of Portsmouth does not allow for the time to receive and give the pleasantries of Mansfield and Fanny finds herself unfit for life with her immediate family—the life of which she had longed for ever since her first journey to Mansfield Park. Therefore, Fanny comes to realize that she does truly belong at the Park: "When she has been coming to Portsmouth, she had loved to call it her home, had been fond of saying that she was going home; the word had been dear to her; and so it still was, but it must be applied to Mansfield. *That* was now the home. Portsmouth was Portsmouth; Mansfield was home" (338). However, she is unable to accept Henry's offer of marriage as her acceptance of his impropriety would further exacerbate the issue. In this final step she is, interestingly, experiencing Turner's transitional phases more accurately than ever before. Her return to Portsmouth acts as her separation, her behavior as compared to her family creates a situation of limen where she does not quite belong, and she must wait until Mansfield truly accepts her before her aggregation. The heavy deviation from the transitional journey up to this point is centered on Fanny's involvement in her own liminality seeking to actively engage with her community. She now accepts her liminal place because she is refusing to admit herself in this immoral society until she sees substantial changes that prevent the mechanisms for

necessary social growth. Thus, rather than strictly following the transitional process, Fanny deviates from Turner's phases because she needs to act as an agent of social reform. She demonstrates that the society itself is flawed, and that the structure needs a strong moral guide for the neophyte to experience growth in his or her time of limen. This suggests, therefore, that the neophyte's departure from her position in Turner's liminal process can occur in a dire circumstance where the society itself is in crucial need of correction. This specific situation is particularly odd because the liminal individual acts as the instructor rather than the educated, thus the stall in the liminal process occurs without a moral individual to fill that role. The final phases of the process come in direct confrontation with a flawed society, and thus the journey must come to a stand still until society rectifies itself. Ultimately, this deviation in the normal progression of transition underlines the importance of the concept of liminality as a force of growth for both the individual and the community. Until Mansfield is corrected Fanny cannot complete her transition and reincorporate into the community.

While mentally achieving the final task to overcome her liminality, Fanny is to continue to live in Portsmouth until the time comes for the Bertrams to call her back. Her situation presents a problem, emphasizing that while she may not belong in Portsmouth, even Mansfield is unattainable as it continues to lack understanding of the importance of morality—leaving her more liminal than ever before. Now she is an outsider in every place she has ever called home, but she holds the potential power to make a huge difference in the role of the landed gentry. Fanny waits to be admitted into society until the time comes that the community is able to respond to her moral guidance. Her prolonged limen is eventually alleviated by the strongest indication yet of how much the Bertrams need Fanny's moral guidance at Mansfield, with the scandal between Maria and Henry that will ruin the family and the subsequent elopement

between Julia and Yates.[9] The revelation of Maria and Henry's elopement, as Brissenden emphasizes, is an interesting moment in which the visual turmoil around Fanny mimics the grave news. While Fanny looks out the window, thinking of Mansfield yet seeing Portsmouth, the sunlight's glare "bring[s] forward stains and dirt that might otherwise have slept" (345) just as her father comes to discover the news of Maria and Henry in his newspaper. Thus, soon after Fanny makes the realization about her real home, Mansfield comes to understand her true place there and Edmund immediately sets out to bring her back to where she belongs.

Fanny's eventual readmission into the physical space of Mansfield marks her full acceptance into the group, and is made all the more important by the moral strength with which she is able to fill an important position in their society. Fanny has not only faced her aggregation, but also has taken on a prominent role as a leader of her society. Thus, rather than perpetuating her position as a member of the community, Fanny has reestablished order and gained prominence as she does not follow the traditional transitional journey. She seeks to provide social reform rather than Turner's transitional phases, which seek to reestablish the same roles and order. It is therefore fitting that this victory of morality also highlights the end of Fanny's liminality. Fanny becomes a full member of this society while also maintaining her moral grounding in doing so, a fate that would have been impossible had she agreed to marry Henry Crawford. Ultimately, Fanny succeeds in growing to become a part of the society with which she was originally liminally positioned while maintaining her sense of propriety. Given the faults and follies of others, Fanny stands out as the morally superior person at Mansfield, while others that are too late to be saved must fall. Sir Thomas learns what his harsh rule did to his children:

[9] Yates was yet another character of questionable moral grounding and early contributor to the encouragement for the performance of *Lover's Vows*.

> too late he became aware how unfavourable to the character of any young people, must be the totally opposite treatment which Maria and Julia had been always experiencing at home, where the excessive indulgence and flattery of their aunt had been continually contrasted with his own severity. (363)[10]

In this realization, Sir Thomas is prompted to take action to dismiss the unworthy members of the Mansfield community. As such, Fanny Price is able to instill greater social change where Sir Thomas, unlike General Tilney, adjusts his behavior in the end. While succeeding in becoming admitted into the Mansfield Park family, Fanny is also able to point out the flaws and follies of the Crawfords who are appropriately dismissed from the Park without accomplishing their respective goals of marriage. Ultimately, this accomplishment marks a victory of old moral grounds with proper rules of decorum and propriety over the games and manipulations with which the Crawfords live their lives.

Eventually Edmund comes to realize that, besides being able to love a woman other than Mary Crawford, "a very different kind of woman might not do just as well—or a great deal better" (369). He begins to see Fanny as a potential wife and the couple is eventually married as equals, positioned to continue to challenge Mansfield to behave properly. Thus, the community of Mansfield has grown smaller but wiser and as the two young cousins connect in marriage Mansfield is once again restored to a place of domestic order.[11] Susan Morgan's *In the Meantime* emphasizes that "[m]oving to a parsonage . . . for the Bertrams is a commitment to the useful

[10] This passage is very reminiscent of Elizabeth's realization about what children of unfit parents must endure, even down to the conflicting guidance from a father and mother figure. However, an important distinction comes in that the parent, Sir Thomas, is able to see his own personal faults in this instance.

[11] Like the retreat away from society in *Sense and Sensibility*, by the ending of *Mansfield Park* the immoral members of the community have been banished. As such, Austen progresses her plot to now include a correction of some of the initially flawed earlier members.

responsible life" (136) and it in turn completes the picture of domestic bliss provided to the deserving hero and heroine.

### *The landed gentry's strength and weakness*

It is important to note that Fanny is in no way a perfect character. Her journey and uniquely precise understanding for the proper way to conduct affairs in the moral life of the landed gentry are what is truly important. Although she acts in many ways with moral guidance, Fanny is physically very shy and weak—attributes unbecoming for a heroine. She is also flawed in her thoughts of others and she can even be self-deceptively humble, but it is her moral guidance that still correctly leads the Bertrams. Thus, at the beginning of the novel Fanny appears to be an unlikely agent of social reform, just like Catherine Morland. More than simply changing her society, however, Fanny is able to learn from her mistakes and, as Susan Morgan points out: "It is the energy, open to us all, to struggle against selfishness, toward self-knowledge and that generosity of mind which should illuminate our view of the people around us" (*Meantime* 155). Likewise, Austen does not seek to imply that Fanny's frailty is in any way responsible for her success, rather that she is able to succeed despite her disposition. Yet, through her experience she does demonstrate an understanding for the morally correct course of action and seeks to correct her ill-mannered behaviors. Still, *Mansfield Park* stands as an ideal representation for the role of the landed gentry in society as well as the potential power established through the liminal state.

Because Fanny Price is an outsider to the social group around her and is continually willing to grow and learn, she is perfectly positioned to realize the ill nature and inappropriateness of the subject of the play and the actors in *Lover's Vows*. Without experiencing

the same perspectives on the act and by not being directly tempted by the Crawford's attempts to woo Fanny's unsuspecting cousins, she can clearly see the problems with the play and remains capable of removing herself from its performance. It is interesting too that this invasion of immorality also acts as the crucial element that will push Fanny down the path away from her liminality. Thus, as Fanny has not been spoiled and let run free like Maria, Julia, and Tom have, she has been able to truly learn the lessons of the requirements for propriety that should be in place at Mansfield. With Mrs. Norris constantly reminding her of her great fortune to be there, Fanny does not become complacent with her privileges as her cousins have and is thus situated to maintain her morality even as the Crawfords challenge Mansfield's residents. However, as her guidance becomes what is truly needed to save Mansfield from corruption, Fanny begins to make progress toward leaving her liminal position, thus working her way to join the group as a full member. Still, Fanny must complete several tests and learn valuable lessons before she is truly able to become a part of the family. Until then she remains, in several ways, a liminal outsider. Her journey inside the family is marked by her increasing knowledge about the importance of spreading her moral guidance to benefit those around her, so that the gentry is able to provide the positive reference for the whole society. As Fanny saves Mansfield, her journey serves as a pointed reminder about what may be risked given the complacency of the landed gentry if they are to not truly understand or act upon their social obligation to perform with the utmost morality.

As Fanny rejects Henry Crawford's proposal, she establishes not only her moral standpoint, and the one that the inhabitants of Mansfield should follow, but also the consequences of those who shirk their social responsibilities in favor of personal pleasure or gain. It is an important message about how the morally superior characters, like Fanny and to

some extent Edmund, have suffered the most but are the ones that are properly rewarded, while the characters who are unable to learn their lesson fast enough, like Maria and the Crawfords, are punished for their corruption and ultimately get their due. Thus, Fanny is able to maintain her firm moral grounding and reap the rewards with her eventual marriage to the man she has loved all along, Edmund, ultimately establishing her true place in the family.

Overall, *Mansfield Park* serves as a warning about flawed people who are responsible for the community, just as *Northanger Abbey* ultimately does. Again, rather than criticizing the structure as a whole, Austen is criticizing the individuals that are not taking the responsibility that they should for their actions. The novel serves as a reminder of the responsibility of the landed gentry to stand as moral guides for the community and the potential for complete chaos if those with the privileged life do not also behave with proper decorum. Fanny cannot allow for a perpetuation of the same kind of flawed community in Mansfield and must experience aggregation while maintaining the characteristics that should accompany her place in the landed gentry. Her deviation from Turner's phases of transition is both the product of the social world and the only way of correcting the community that is morally weaker than the heroine. It is because she does not actually want to become a member of the community that she does not recognize her perilous position. As Fanny finally realizes her liminality and the dangerous restrictions that come with the role, she has already laid the appropriate groundwork so that she is capable of rejoining Mansfield only after they adjust their behavior and recognize her morality. Because she deviates from Turner's stages and does not recognize the importance of her restrictions and powerlessness, Fanny does not realize what she has to lose, and as such is able to gain so much more by the end of her journey.

# PART 3: A NEW KIND OF LIMINALITY

Although the impending marriage plot is similar for all of Austen's completed novels, the heroines in Jane Austen's last two novels are in many ways very different than those of her first four.[1] Emma Woodhouse and Anne Elliot come from the ideal family backgrounds that provide them with the economic means and the societal class that the Dashwood sisters and Fanny Price strive to be included amongst. Even the casual reader would recognize a very different type of heroine in these novels than what is established at the onset of Austen's earlier works. The opening lines of *Emma* suggest that Emma Woodhouse has had "very little to distress or vex her" (5) throughout her short life; she is a privileged elite with few struggles in life, which ultimately prevents her from establishing the same kind of sound moral integrity as Fanny Price. Emma also establishes her differences from the other heroines as, at the beginning of the novel, she asserts that she has neither the need to nor the intention of marrying anyone. Thus, rather than her own courtship, the courtship of others is at the center of the plot in *Emma* until she too acknowledges her need for love. Likewise, Anne Elliot comes from a very different background than the heroines of Austen's first four completed works. The Elliot name holds its own weight, so much so that the beginning of *Persuasion* emphasizes not only the family history, but also the self-important attention to this name. Sir Walter Elliot holds a special pride in his established family history, focusing intently on what it entitles him to have rather than what responsibilities it obligates him to enact.

Thus, these two women add an interesting progression to the plots of Austen's liminal heroines. Intriguingly, these heroines, even though they experience their worlds very differently,

[1] These last two novels were written later in Austen's life between 1814 and 1816.

still follow journeys that align with Turner's phases to an extent. Therefore, we can examine these later novels as the exploration of a very different kind of transition. The heroines will still experience the three phases and face several important stages of reflection. Emma and Anne even seek to alter their understanding of the basic building blocks of culture and in some ways cause social reform even more powerful than what occurs in Austen's earlier works. They must learn about their respective worlds in an altered manner as they see the building blocks of culture from a different position. Because of their social standing, these heroines are more prominently responsible for the overall propriety of their society. However, given this different perspective, their inability to perpetuate propriety is also more damaging for society as a whole. This placement complicates Austen's creation of liminality while it also underlines the potential for liminality in all walks of life.

Even when Austen's heroines are positioned in higher levels of society, or seem to be more stable in other ways, they are not completely free from that restrictive liminal placement. While they do not face the same traumatic fate as Austen's earlier heroines if they do not find suitable husbands, Emma Woodhouse and Anne Elliot each face an interesting kind of liminality that they must overcome before becoming full and productive members of society. Emma is still holding on to a level of ignorance of her own feelings and how society functions. She is situated in a liminal state where she is economically and socially a member of the gentry but not fully aware of what this role means. Therefore, Emma cannot act as a full member of her surroundings in an appropriate manner until she comes to honor her responsibilities alongside her privileges. Emma's behavior further complicates her position as she comes into contact with and manipulates several other characters that are more traditionally liminal. Harriet Smith and Jane Fairfax thus serve as characters that are integral to Emma's personal growth, suggesting the

importance of liminality in the growth of not only individuals but also the society around them. Ultimately, this dual growth highlights the paralleled importance of personal growth and social reform in the transitions of heroines that grow in flawed societies.

On the other hand, Anne Elliot is less accepted in the community than her counterpart, Emma. While she belongs to the Elliot family that holds the land and family history to support their position as landed gentry, her family is experiencing financial troubles that threaten their position. More seriously, however, Anne in particular does not fit into her society as she holds a different moral code than those around her. Like Fanny Price, her struggle comes from trying to instill morality into the gentry and she must find her true respected place amongst her equals rather than being an outsider permitted to stay due to family history. Thus, her transitional journey will likewise deviate from Turner's traditional phases as she faces a community in which social reform is more necessary than personal growth.

## *EMMA*

Emma Woodhouse is a flawed character to say the least. Austen wrote of her that she is a heroine "whom no one would like but herself" (Austen-Leigh 306) and it is not hard to see why this might be. Emma is especially exposed to criticism as compared to Jane Fairfax, who is in a very obviously liminal state yet acts with far greater propriety than Emma, and who is far less spoiled than our heroine. Unlike Jane, rather than growing to become accepted amongst the landed gentry, Emma must learn to be socially responsible and grow to become worthy of the position with which she has been privileged by birth. Thus, her important social reform ultimately necessitates a personal growth in a different iteration than is presented in *Northanger Abbey* and *Mansfield Park*. Given her powerful position in Highbury, as Emma experiences

personal growth, her stages of reflection also prompt social reform. Her individual behavior changes instigate the necessary social reform, emphasizing the power of her position. This is especially prominent when it is contrasted to how Fanny Price has to work so hard to instill what she know to be right all along. As Monaghan emphasizes, as a member of the landed gentry the responsibility for the moral integrity falls upon Emma Woodhouse and her close community. However, it is important that we understand why it is Emma alongside her respective hero George Knightley that must end the novel as the morally fit leaders of Highbury, not just the landed gentry in general.[2] Their ultimate success points us toward understanding how social reform works in the way that it does and why Austen characterizes her heroine's change so specifically as she grows to become a social leader.

Jane Austen's undercutting narration of Emma's own actions and position provide a subtle commentary about how Emma should really be viewed. From the beginning of the novel we learn that Emma has had too many unchecked privileges in life, and that this will ultimately lead to complications once she is forced to face a less accommodating world. In fact, "[t]he real evils indeed of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments" (5). Thus, the reader is set to understand Emma's flaws and see that she is unknowingly in a liminal place as she is without the knowledge she must attain to truly begin to understand her place and privilege—to ultimately find her true happiness.

[2] This exploration of the character Emma specifically is important within the context of social reform and I plan to explore this concept as I expand upon Monaghan's theories to present a more complete picture of why Emma must go through her very specific and different transitional journey.

## *Privilege without responsibility*

It is easy to understand why Emma might have a faulty view of the world from the very beginning. She is "handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition" and thus she seemingly has everything any heroine could desire (5). With "a most affectionate, indulgent father" who constantly promotes Emma's self worth, and a governess whose "mildness of her temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint," Emma has been spoiled and catered to from a young age (5).[3] As she grows older not much changes, besides potentially an even more self-important understanding of herself. After the early passing of her mother and marriage of her older sister, Emma takes on the position of the woman of the household. Thus, according to Monaghan's understanding of social structure, Emma is in the perfect position to be a moral guide for her community. Due to her position as a leader in the landed gentry, Emma is looked to for guidance and is responsible for the moral integrity of society as a whole.

Unfortunately, Emma proves to be a flawed leader and her transitional journey is especially important for the overall success of society. This kind of upbringing has spoiled Emma into not truly understanding the sense of moral obligation that is attached with her privileged lifestyle. As Joseph M. Duffy Jr. describes, Emma has had "an excessively long extension of infancy" (42) in her upbringing and thus the story is one of her growing to understand the world around her more completely. In other words, she has experienced a prolonged phase of pre-liminal livelihood with nothing to challenge her position and because of this, nothing to push her toward personal or social growth. While she does see her importance in society, considering herself as the center of Highbury, she is totally ignorant of her responsibility

[3] Interestingly, Emma represents yet another heroine that does not have a true mother figure. This, in the perspective of Heilbrun's work, adds an interesting element to Emma's characterization.

toward the rest of her community and rather thinks that her frivolous rule will suffice to maintain order in her world. Thus, going into the novel we see that Emma would seek to perpetuate society, suggesting that potentially Turner's phases of liminality may be appropriate in her situation. However, it becomes apparent from the very beginning that the morality of her society depends more prominently on the type of social reform that is met in previous novels with a deviation from Turner's traditional transitional stages. These two objectives are at odds until Emma can grow to see her own flaws and seek societal reform. Unlike the Bertram sisters who have grown up with the same frivolity, however, Emma is given the opportunity to learn before it becomes too late. While her father is too indulgent and stands to support a strict convention to detrimental social hierarchies, Emma is still able to potentially break free from this world. In fact "[t]he person who suffers most from the excessive conservatism of Highbury society is Emma Woodhouse" (Monaghan 117), and thus it is not only her responsibility but also her prerogative to make these changes. She must attack the structure of her social system for, "[t]he way in which life is organized in Highbury not only makes things dull from Emma, it also deprives her of opportunities to achieve personal growth" (Monahan 118). Monaghan even goes as far as to claim that the structure of Highbury "guarantees that Emma remains a child" (118), echoing Duffy, and suggesting that Emma's liminality is not one of economic restrictions but one in which mental and emotional growth are very necessary.[4]

Emma is physically and by categories of age and social standing in a position of authority, and one upon which society's moral and social codes of conduct depend; however, Emma is not knowledgeable enough to behave properly in her role due to her lack of exposure

[4] It will be important in our analysis that we look not just at the necessity of growth but specifically what Emma's growth will do for the society as a whole once her journey is complete.

about how the world truly works. Emma will learn to become a productive member of society and moral guide to those around her with the guidance of Mr. John Knightley and with the discovery of her own limits through her failed meddling. Just as Turner predicts, she will end by leaving this place of limen and experiencing full aggregation into society. Throughout the novel Knightley acts as Emma's guide and challenges her faulty perceptions. His visits prove to be "intellectually vigorous and morally demanding" (Monaghan 118), emphasizing a different kind of challenge and different standards for Emma than those ever required of her by her father or governess. Ironically, "Emma, who must become [the] pupil, insists on acting as teacher" throughout the majority of the novel (Hughes 70). Thus, as we will see by the end, it is part of her journey to appreciate not only Mr. Knightley as a potential suitor but also as a teacher. His role in her growth will compliment her outlook on society as Knightley serves to ground Emma to the necessary social structures of their social world. This parallel is interesting as Emma does not initially see the need for either a spouse or an instructor but will eventually see that she needs both. Her growth in understanding about the one aspect mimics the other, and ultimately the parallel serves to demonstrate that Knightley is a worthy suitor almost entirely because he has been such an influential teacher. Ultimately it is his ability to balance Emma's views of society with his own that completes her transition and establishes them as the moral leaders of Highbury. Her growth can be marked by her recognition of Mr. Knightley's role throughout the novel.

Emma's first major disappointment in life does not come as a hard blow, as the marriage of Miss Taylor only moderately changes her world and therefore cannot set her on the journey that will alter her understanding of the basic building blocks of culture. This does not truly affect Emma's life as much as even Emma, and far less than Mr. Woodhouse, perceives it might. At first Emma understands the potential danger that she faces as Miss Taylor becomes Mrs. Weston

and moves roughly half a mile away, but she also has a deeper sympathy toward the improvement this arrangement must have on Miss Taylor's life. Even while Mr. Woodhouse laments that Mr. Weston ever showed an interest in Miss Taylor, Emma corrects her unreasonable father declaring: "I cannot agree with you, papa; you know I cannot. Mr. Weston is such a good-humoured, pleasant, excellent man, that he thoroughly deserves a good wife;—and you would not have had Miss Taylor live with us for ever and bear all my odd humours, when she might have a house of her own?" (7). The even greater ignorance of her father suggests the danger of parents not learning to teach their children properly.[5] It also shows how Emma must balance the very strict conservative views of her father in order to progress her society onward.

Thus, despite her faults Emma accepts Miss Taylor's desire to marry even though it leaves her without amusement—an action which serves to complicate Emma's characterization. As such, through her behaviors with those closest to her, Austen presents a mixed character in Emma with both the propensity for good and obvious faults. As she begins her journey Emma is primarily flawed because she has not had enough experience in the world to teach her what is required of her. However, despite her many faults, Emma is not completely misguided. She holds several important societal principles dear that allow her to eventually be shaped in the right direction and emphasize that she does, at least to some extent, hold and maintain a sense of morality. Emma is strongly attached to an ideal domesticity as she acknowledges the power of Miss Taylor's marriage and aids her father, recognizing and respecting some of the less glamorous social obligations of which she must partake. Thus, Austen presents Emma's complicated knowledge and propriety. It is thus not a distaste for doing good but the ignorance

[5] Thus, Mr. Woodhouse stands, yet again, as a negligent parent. Following in the legacy of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and Sir Thomas Bertram, Mr. Woodhouse does not properly raise his daughter and both Emma and society must suffer for his discrepancy.

that Emma has about her own position in society that stands as her biggest barrier to leadership. As such, she needs to be prompted to explore personal growth rather than seek it out, but as she does this it will not only complete Emma's liminality but also better her community.

The removal of her governess triggers Emma's adventure in which she will, for the first time, see the challenges in her social structure. This journey will eventually lead her to a better understanding of her role in society and how she is to behave toward others. It is this necessary change that is what truly pushes Emma toward a deeper understanding, setting off her transitional journey just as she seeks to find a new way to live. Emma is primed to experience personal growth and ultimately enact social reform by this subtle change in her social structure—a shift in the building blocks of her little Highbury culture. Although she does not experience a separation in Turner's traditional view of the phase, the moment at which Miss Taylor leaves her stands to represent Emma's separation. She is, in fact, separated from the social structure with which she has been acquainted all her life and it is because of this change that Emma needs to subsequently find alternative sources of amusement. Her separation, therefore, reflects an emotional separation as one of the most influential individuals within her social sphere has experienced her own aggregation and must change her position in the world. Although Miss Taylor does maintain an active place in Emma's life as she takes on the responsibilities of being Mrs. Weston, when she leaves Emma seeks to arrange another marriage (for she thinks that she arranged the relationship between Mr. Weston and Miss Taylor). Her desire for simplistic amusement for her own sake rather than for any moral or other purpose aligns Emma with Henry Crawford. However, her selfish temperament is different from his as he is set in his ways, knowing his impropriety but preferring it to what is expected of him, while Emma has yet to have really grown to understand how her actions might negatively affect others. In this way, I

would argue, she is a little bit more like Catherine Morland, with a distorted vision of the world that negatively impacts her treatment of others.

Even though she has no plans to marry for herself, Emma finds enjoyment in introducing the possibility of courtship amongst her acquaintances. This discrepancy between her desire to remain unmarried and that to connect those around her in marriage underlies her faulty understanding of society. She brushes the idea of her own marriage aside when Harriet voices concern:

> "Never mind, Harriet, I shall not be a poor old maid; and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public! A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable, old maid! the proper sport of boys and girls; but a single woman, of good fortune, is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else." (68-69)[6]

Emma thus vehemently holds a liberal, but flawed view of society. Although Emma does acknowledge the need for young people to marry, she does not recognize the social obligation that accompanies such a bond. Thus, although she thinks she understands society's basic building blocks of culture, her confident yet flawed views dictate what she must alter in her journey. She must grow to accept her own imperfections and adjust her views before she is truly able to engage with society as a proper moral leader. Emma's experiences as she attempts to interact with the world using her flawed views ultimately work to correct her behavior and teach Emma about the reality of her world and her obligation within the social structure.

[6] The last line of this quote ironically parallels the opening line of *Pride and Prejudice* which not only suggests the importance of monetary stability but also the ignorance and frivolity of Emma Woodhouse, just as *Pride and Prejudice* playfully mocks society, and particularly Mrs. Bennet's view of an eligible young bachelor.

Emma exemplifies her own experience in marriage and negotiating the liminality of those women surrounding her as she attempts to take Harriet out of her lower class station and forces her into a liminal position through attempting to connect her with people of higher station and means. As she does this, Emma claims an authorial voice, creating a layered critique among the already complicated social structure of Highbury. Emma "takes up Harriet in order to enjoy through her an experimental relationship with a man" (Duffy 45)—to participate in the ritual of courtship without having to risk her own feelings. In order to truly understand the potential problems with the rigid class distinctions that govern both her father's and to some extent Emma's own actions (as we will see later with her condemnation of the Coles), Jane Austen allows Emma to explore the views and constraints of society through Harriet Smith's flirtations. Emma, therefore, experiences liminality not for herself but in her manipulations in Harriet as she comes across restrictions in her attempts to find a match for her new friend. So, while Emma experiences a form of aggregation in her changing social circle, she does not experience liminality in quite the same way. As she is, incapable of seeing her own ignorance, Emma does not recognize her own liminality. Instead, Emma experiences the limits of transition and the ramifications of trying to break from the restricting liminal process by forcing Harriet into a phase of liminality. William Magee describes Emma's experience of liminality through Harriet from the perspective of authorship. He explains that Emma creates an interesting new twist on viewing the societal restrictions with which Austen herself was grappling in her previous works. Magee argues, "Jane Austen created a surrogate author in Emma whose turn it was to struggle with its rigidity" as an extension of earlier plots (202). Emma plays the matchmaker and acts like an author attempting to create fantasy couples with the individuals around her, but she is forced to deal with the restrictions and true operations of society when her schemes frequently backfire.

As Magee observes, she takes on this task from a relatively flawed perspective as "Emma in fact tries to impose purely bookish versions of the courtship convention on the life of Highbury, and for that Jane Austen makes fun of her while teaching her to be more practical" (203). There is a continuation of this authorial role as Emma's manipulations parallel her character voice and the narrative voice. If this is the case, "[i]n a sense, Emma learns what every good novel reader ultimately learns: how to see beyond her own mental confines by imitating the narrator's ability to incorporate others' consciousnesses into her own" (Oberman 6). Austen is taking an interesting new perspective on liminality and societal structures as the ignorant heroine learns through her own role as matchmaker and orchestrator of the novel's romantic plots. Rather than following the basic phases as Turner describes them, therefore, Emma learns of the limitations of her society and the faults within herself almost simultaneously as she begins to fail in her manipulations.

As she does not quite face the same societal restrictions, and rather is working with a different kind of transition, Emma's journey presents a new kind of liminality. Emma's experience is unique amongst Austen heroines as she works with liminality through the act of trying to manipulate those around her without the proper credence paid to social standing. So, as Susan Morgan describes, "[f]or most of the story Emma is incapable of seeing or understanding other people except in relation to her own concerns. She cannot, in imagination, put herself in someone else's place, because she has yet to imagine that others have a place" (*Meantime* 28). This view is confirmed with a closer examination of Emma's thoughts about Harriet. After first meeting Harriet Emma is distracted even amongst her company as "[s]he was so busy in admiring those soft blue eyes, in talking and listening, and forming all these schemes in the in-betweens, that the evening flew away at a very unusual rate" (20). It is apparent that Emma is

planning on manipulating Harriet and her surroundings as a means of entertainment now that she no longer has Miss Taylor always by her side.

In her attempts to form a relationship between Harriet and the perfect suitor, Emma proves herself ignorant of the true standing of her new friend and thus continues to demonstrate the limitations on her understanding of the world. Her difficulties in this endeavor give her the first real challenge to her own power and push her toward a better understanding of society. Perhaps the first fault in her scheme is picking Harriet as her new companion. She proves to be a girl unworthy of the role into which Emma is attempting to force her. Harriet, in fact, "certainly was not clever" and we are warned her "strength of understanding must not be expected" (21). Yet, although Harriet Smith is not "exactly the young friend she wanted" for Emma, she was "exactly the something which her home required" (21). As Emma believes in her own powers of manipulation, Harriet, or rather the Harriet that Emma will seek to make her, suits Emma's needs. The heroine is willing to manipulate what she sees to fit her scheme to match Harriet with well-bred potential suitors even though Harriet is clearly ill fit for Emma's world.

Emma seeks to create her own perfect maiden out of Harriet even though she knows well enough of Harriet's social standing. Because Harriet has mysterious parentage, however, Emma sees a chance to manipulate her understanding of Harriet's role. As she is first getting to know Harriet "she is able to spend much of the evening within the confines of her imagination" (Monaghan 124), creating her own highly fictitious new background for Harriet that will make her agreeable to the circumstances. Thus, as it suits her whims Emma will allow Harriet's entrance into the landed elite of Highbury in a selfish moment that will eventually backfire. It is, in fact, her eventual understanding about the severity of the consequences for her social scheming that will prove to be Emma's biggest challenge. The ramifications of her experience

with Harriet prove to be her biggest lesson as she learns that this kind of behavior may undercut the propriety and sanctity of the landed gentry. However, this conflict is one that Emma will not fully understand until later, and she ignores the warnings of both Mr. Woodhouse and Mr. Knightley who feel that not only will it put their society at risk but also it will also be detrimental to Harriet as "[s]he will grow just refined enough to be uncomfortable with those among whom her birth and circumstances have placed her home" (31).[7] By taking Harriet in as a new project, Emma is damaging her social world (and as such calling into question her own position) while also forcing her new friend into a position of liminality between her true place and the place at which Emma wants to imagine her.

When she persuades Harriet to reject Robert Martin's proposal Emma demonstrates her own ignorance of Harriet's true social standing. She plunges Harriet forward into a precarious state of liminality as she continues on, thoughtlessly disregarding the advice of Mr. Knightley as well as what appear to be Harriet's own feelings on the matter. Emma demonstrates her attempts to alter the building blocks of society as she manipulates her friend, dismantling what Emma will eventually realize are important restrictions that will help to strengthen her social world and maintain morality in the community. Thus, Emma's manipulations, especially highlighted here in her conversation with Harriet, demonstrate the problems with the way she behaves in her powerful position and what she must learn and overcome before aggregation. When Harriet first describes Robert Martin's home situation as comfortable and is excited by her interactions with him, Emma emphasizes that he is not a true gentleman—not a suitor that Emma would consider and, in her new scheme, not one which she would advise Harriet to accept. This demonstrates

[7] What Mr. Knightley warns for Harriet is, in fact, what happens to Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* and therefore we can see the real repercussions that face a member brought up in a class socially superior to them. Just like Fanny Price, Harriet is in danger of becoming unfit for both her original position in the world and her new one.

Emma's attempts to turn the focus away from what Harriet would seek out of a relationship and toward what Emma would want for herself. Although Harriet proves to be easily manipulated as she seeks approval from Emma, the way that Emma takes advantage of this weakness and controls Harriet demonstrates one of Emma's major character flaws. As she continues to ignore Harriet's true position and prospects, she demonstrates her inappropriate view of Harriet. This is exemplified when Emma becomes "half ashamed of her friend for seeming so pleased and so doubtful" as to whether or not she should accept or reject Robert Martin's marriage proposal (40). Harriet's behavior suggests that she would behave in a way more fit for her position and with a realistic outlook on potential suitors had Emma not intervened. Harriet's tendency to accept Robert Martin highlights the flaws as Emma suggests her opinion, counseling "such expressions of gratitude and concern for the pain you are inflicting as propriety requires, will present themselves unbidden to *your* mind, I am persuaded. *You* need not be prompted to write with the appearance of sorrow for his disappointment" (41). In her emphasis on the pronoun Emma suggests that Harriet has come to the conclusion to reject the proposal on her own, while Emma is, in fact, demonstrating the ill-mannered manipulations that do not honor social structures and make her unfit to lead her community. The obviously unfavorable opinion pressures a weak Harriet into behaving the way that Emma would have her behave.

As she is acting as a counselor to Harriet, Emma shows that her selfish desires can blind her to almost anything and likewise demonstrates Mr. Knightley's place as Emma's guide away from ignorance. Knightley's position is firmly established as he works to be the proper counselor to the silly Emma, as Emma is attempting to be the proper counselor to the silly Harriet. Mr. Knightley will be integral for Emma's eventual growth just as Mr. Tilney acts as the important guiding force in Catherine Morland's journey. In both cases, the young women must grow to

first acknowledge their inadequacies before they are able to correctly heed the warnings set aside by their instructors, taking them through the process of limen and aggregation.

Throughout the entire attempted courtship Emma demonstrates her powers of manipulation as well as Harriet's ignorance, but she also highlights the evils of incomplete knowledge. Although Emma continues to convince herself of the propriety of the match between Harriet and Mr. Elton, she is not taking into account the real Harriet but rather modifying and perfecting her in ways that remove her from her original station and even physical beauty. Emma demonstrates her theoretical knowledge of what aspects make up the proper wife of a gentleman as she makes these manipulations. But as she ignores Harriet's true nature and position, we see that Emma's manipulations will be detrimental to society as a whole. They show that Emma still has a great deal of individual growth to experience before she can truly lead the society in the proper moral manner. Thus, she shows the power of the landed gentry, as we have acknowledged in Monaghan's theoretical framework, but also the potential for disaster when what is supposed to be the moral groundwork for society is altered to the whims of the individual. In the scene during which Emma chooses to paint Harriet, we see Mr. Elton falling for the manipulation but Mr. Knightley, once again acting as the voice of reason, criticizing Emma's adjustments and solidifying his role as Emma's balancing guide. Looking at the painting Mr. Knightley declares, "You have made her too tall, Emma," and while "Emma knew that she had, [she] would not own to it" (38). Yet Mr. Elton defends the painting, accounting for positioning and proportions to demonstrate the correct height and thus emphasizing that he has fully accepted Emma's manipulations. The scene demonstrates Emma's power in a less serious way but foreshadows the type of chaos Emma has the potential of instilling as she misuses her power, wielding it inappropriately.

Emma chooses to be oblivious of Mr. Elton's advances as she is attempting to win Mr. Elton's love for Harriet, thus demonstrating the impropriety of her attempts to manipulate the lives of others and the dangers for her community as she acts as a flawed leader. Even as Harriet is forming a deep sentimental attachment with Mr. Elton, he is misconstruing Emma's involvement and perceives the great gains he may make in a marriage with Emma. Thus, we are able to see Emma's first major failure in this scheme as a moment triggering one of Emma's smaller stages of reflection: "Not only had Emma become directly involved where she had intended to supervise; she had become involved not so much as a young woman desired for her own sake but rather as an article of commerce" (Duffy 47). When Mr. Elton proposes Emma is not only taken aback but also taught her first lesson about how the obsessive focus on her manipulations serves to blind her about the reality of the world. In the ill-fated carriage ride home during which "she found her subject cut up—her hand seized—her attention demanded, and Mr. Elton actually making violent love to her" (103), Emma is shocked and still attempts to revert the attention toward the relationship she wishes for Harriet. Mr. Elton cries out in frustration at Emma's fervent attempts to convince him that he truly means his offer for Miss Smith, denying any such attention toward the woman that would not act to serve him an important connection:

> "Miss Smith is a very good sort of girl; and I should be happy to see her respectably settled. I wish her extremely well: and, no doubt, there are men who might not object to—Every body has their level: but as for myself, I am not, I think, quite so much at a loss. I need not so totally despair of any equal alliance, as to be addressing myself to Miss Smith!" (105)

His vehement repetition of the social impropriety in the potential connection between himself and Harriet Smith emphasizes that the rest of her community understands what Emma has yet to acknowledge: that there is definite danger in manipulating the way the social structures operate. This proposal reminds Emma of the role of marriage in society but does very little to truly reshape her view of the world, and certainly does not stop her from continuing to manipulate Harriet's relationships. Although this proposal and the realization that comes along with it do temporarily chide Emma for her actions and challenge her viewpoint of the world, it is not a big enough experience from which Emma may learn. Thus, she remains ignorant and continues to act as a flawed leader, liminal as her position is not paralleled by a true growth in understanding. At this point, Emma is "too committed to her perverse approach to experience to acknowledge its limitations" and thus will continue on in the same way (Monaghan 128).

Since Emma has yet to truly understand the role of class-distinctions in her society she fails to fulfill her proper role, as is specifically demonstrated through her treatment of those inferior to herself. Again, Emma proves herself to be an unfit moral leader, when she refuses to acknowledge the amiable qualities and opportunities for growth in the presence of Jane Fairfax. When this young woman of Miss Bates' rambling praises arrives in Highbury Emma ironically rejects her almost immediately,[8] perhaps most specifically for the very reason that Jane Fairfax is the most moral member of their group and the one most suited as Emma's equal. Unlike Harriet, a woman that Emma has to mold into a proper friend, Susan Morgan emphasizes that Jane is "[t]he friend Emma should have chosen" as she is "the only character close to her in age,

[8] While the role of the comical minor characters such as Miss Bates as well as Mr. Woodhouse create an interesting and complicated representation of class and societal standards, my primary focus on the growth of Emma will not allow me to examine these characters fully. For more analysis of these characters several intriguing sources include John Wiltshire's "*Mansfield Park, Emma, Persuasion*" for its analysis on the role of these characters.

accomplishments, and consciousness—in many ways Emma's superior" (*Meantime* 34). Jane Fairfax is, in fact, the actual representation of the type of woman into which Emma is attempting to manipulate Harriet.

Besides already having the qualities that would make her a suitable societal leader, Jane Fairfax would challenge Emma to see the importance of class structures and decorum as compared to Harriet's blind submission. She forces an outside world and code of conduct upon Emma's small and controlled Highbury community. As Morgan points out, "Jane comes from the external world, the big world of real events, to the idyllic isolation of Highbury. Because she brings the disturbing facts of life into a hitherto tranquil realm easily governed by Emma's imagination, Jane is a threat to Emma, although not as the rival Emma envisions" (*Meantime* 31). Thus, because of Jane Fairfax's liminal and particularly vulnerable role she has a view upon the world from which, as Turner predicts, she can truly examine her society and learn (in fact she must do this before her aggregation). Jane Fairfax and her position in life would challenge Emma to behave more rationally but, as she is less willing to submit to Emma's manipulation, Emma disregards Jane. As she dismisses Jane Fairfax Emma also rejects an opportunity for her own moral growth. Initially Emma admires the newcomer as she would an equal, noting the "elegance, which, whether of person or of mind, she saw so little in Highbury" (131). Yet, despite all of her admirable qualities, Jane is unable to provide Emma with what she truly wants: more information about Mr. Frank Churchill. As Emma prods her for more information Jane responded with a level of decorum that refuses to reveal anything of interest and for that "Emma could not forgive her" (133). It is because Jane Fairfax does not accept Emma's base and ill-mannered whims that Emma does not like her.

*Intrigue with Frank Churchill*

After a long wait the mysterious Frank Churchill finally arrives in Highbury and Emma immediately takes a liking to him. Although Mr. Knightley, in his strict adherence to propriety and rationality, quickly sees the flaws in Frank, Emma is intrigued by this new addition to her community—one that might suit her own needs for another admirer. A relatively open flirtation between the two thus progresses. While Emma is exposing herself in a way unbecoming of a woman of her position she is also demonstrates her continued selfish behavior in her sustained interactions with Frank Churchill.[9] Even though this flirtation and openness between the two is quickly established, it is not long before Emma has dismissed Frank as a potential lover for herself and makes another attempt at finding Harriet a partner in Frank Churchill. Emma's frivolity continues but she is soon faced with a particularly difficult decision in the forthcoming party hosted by the Coles.

Emma's apparent rejection of the Coles' newly formed interactions with society suggests an ironic depiction of Emma's standards in comparison to her own hypocritical practices with Harriet. The Coles are able to afford new luxuries after a sudden gain in fortune. However, in Emma's opinion there seems to be a limit as to how much they can utilize this new money and situation as they attempt to establish themselves in a position in society alongside the other wealthy members without the substantial family background of the Westons, Knightleys or Woodhouses. Emma is critical of the Coles' attempts to remove themselves from their former

[9] Emma's foolish flirtation with Frank Churchill is highly reminiscent of Marianne Dashwood's unrestrained attentions toward John Willoughby. Emma, however, stands to lose less because her economic position does not expose her to nearly the same potential for loss as Marianne's flirtations. The parallel between the two Austen heroines, however, does suggest that Emma is an intriguing reworking of Marianne's attitude, although with a different social and financial situation, revealing the great advantages these positional bonuses provide for Emma.

position and enter a new place in society through utilizing the money that they worked hard to gain. So while she thinks that the Coles "were very good sort of people—friendly, liberal, and unpretending . . . they were of low origin, in trade, and only moderately genteel" (162). Emma disparages their attempts at entering the community of the Highbury elite because the Coles have not always held the company of the wealthiest families of highest importance. Emma's preoccupation with her position in the social structure reveals her restricted manipulations of class-structure when the Coles might presume to ask them to dinner:

> Nothing should tempt *her* to go, if they did; and she regretted that her father's known habits would be giving her refusal less meaning than she could wish. The Coles were very respectable in their way, but they ought to be taught that it was not for them to arrange the terms on which the superior families would visit them. This lesson, she very much feared, they would receive only from herself. (163)

Emma ironically wishes to teach the Coles about class structure and the propriety of maintaining their position in society but in so doing is not holding up her responsibility as a member of the true landed gentry. Emma is not demonstrating the true sense of morality that, according to Monaghan, is required of her as she rather rudely describes her desire to rebuke their invitation. This also highlights Emma's hypocrisy, as she does not see that she is attempting to lift Harriet above her station without even same means that the newly moneyed Coles possess. Thus, while she is claiming a deep desire to maintain the strict social order which she has been fondly enforcing, Emma is undercutting the social order herself in her desire to improve Harriet.

We see misjudgment in Emma's desire to be the moral grounding of the community, especially in relation to the Coles. While she does emphasize her desire to be recognized as a social leader, Emma is more concerned with maintaining her positioning as the social center of

Highbury rather than focusing on proper responsibilities to morality and decorum. We see the problem with Turner's simple phases in this situation as Emma acts as a leader and refuses to recognize that she is liminal, since she holds a position of power without the complete moral understanding to effectively lead her society. Turner's phases perpetuate society with the assumption that the community, and particularly its leaders, hold the important knowledge necessary to teach the neophytes what they need to know—exposing the basic building blocks of culture. However, as Emma is a leader yet lacks the knowledge necessary understand her responsibilities, her role as a neophyte is complicated; likewise, Monaghan's emphasis on the power and morality of the landed gentry is complicated in this liminal heroine. Before her aggregation Emma must still be held accountable and, in the interim, she acts with hypocritical standards and puts her entire community at risk.

In her desire to reject an invitation to the ball Emma is representing what Burke feared would be the negative role of the aristocracy to society—a self-interested perpetuation of their own standing.[10] Rather than guiding the society, she is acting to disassemble a system of growth and seeking only to promote her own desires. However, as every other member of society accepts the invitation Emma learns, while not enough to prompt another stage of reflection, a harsher realization about how others see her role—rather less central than she would have suspected. Emma refuses "to grant the Coles the respect due to them, and in fact Emma goes to their party only because she realises that it will provide her with opportunities to continue her interesting new relationship with Frank Churchill" (Monaghan 128). Ironically, she is seeking to do the same thing to Harriet that she despises the Coles for attempting. As she creates her segmented world Emma's own creations are treated as separated from the moral codes and

[10] For more on Burke's theories and his view of the gentry see Monaghan's Introduction.

operations of those outside her imagined world. Thus, the Coles are shunned while Harriet is encouraged to attempt to raise her own status because Emma has convinced herself of the character she has created for Harriet. As she accepts the invitation to the Coles', with some tolerance for her limited power as she does so, Emma must grow to face a world larger than the one she has created and imagined all her life.

This education continues at the Hartfield party when, again, Emma is unable to be the central fixture of the event. Now Mrs. Elton challenges her position and the historical role of the members of the landed gentry, emphasizing her importance in the party and attempting to push her newer values forward with her social prominence. Just before the dancing is to begin it "occurred to Mrs. Weston that Mrs. Elton must be asked to begin the ball; that she would expect it; which interfered with all their wishes of giving Emma that distinction" (255). Emma complies with the "sad truth [about the proper procedure] with fortitude" but comes to understand that she is not as central to the Highbury community as she had once believed (225). She also proves herself, in at least some aspects, worthy of her position as she upholds Highbury's standards against the challenges of Mrs. Elton. The rude and pushy newcomer upsets Emma's role but in her gentle acceptance of the displeasing realization Emma demonstrates her capacity to be gracious in defeat even as her goal in life has always been to be first—always the best. While Emma has not yet adjusted her behavior to act as an appropriate social leader she is beginning to find faults in her idealized picture of society and become humbled. Her journey progresses with several obstacles: first was the realization that Mr. Elton would not succumb to her manipulations and marry Harriet, then her partial loss of control as she is not given the opportunity to respond to the Coles as she would have liked, finally her disappointment as she cannot lead the dancing at Hartfield.

## *Love and realizations*

In the final stages of Emma's liminality before she completes her education, and thus her journey, her world is turned around and she must learn how to operate in society as it really is rather than how she wishes it to be. While Emma grows less certain about her position, Mr. Knightley, partly spurred on by Churchill's close contact and flirtations, "is shaken out of his usual complacency and participates fully" (Monaghan 122).[11] As her social world becomes more complicated, being unsettled by Frank Churchill and the new Mrs. Elton, Emma's reality is challenged. As Oberman explains, "[i]t is when she begins to recognize that she is not the center of consciousness for the Highbury universe, and that others' consciousnesses have valid claims on her own" that Emma can start to recognize the other characters' needs (12-13). Their next dance, the Crown ball, serves as a learning experience in which Emma is at least partially aware of the lack of her complete authority. As such, it is a great opportunity for growth as:

> this at last, then, is a Highbury social occasion that not only places a burden of responsibility on Emma, but also provides her with opportunities to engage in activities appropriate to her age and situation. As a result she discovers that proper behavior can satisfy her need for stimulation, and she begins to develop a more satisfactory relationship with her community. (Monaghan 133)[12]

[11] Monaghan acknowledges Mr. Knightley's role in Emma's aggregation, but I think it is important to recognize the characteristics that make him an optimal moral leader by the end of the novel, especially opposite Emma. I will explore this more in depth later.

[12] Emma's relationship is not just important to her own personal growth but is vital to the necessary social reform. I hope to expand upon Monaghan in his discussion of this growth to explain why it is ultimately Emma that is needed to act as a leader of society because of her disposition and liminal growth.

At the ball Emma starts to grow fonder and more appreciative of Mr. Knightley as he offers to dance with Harriet after she is snubbed and humiliated by the Eltons. Yet Emma still does not outwardly acknowledge his assistance or understanding as she waves off his suggestions of a close connection between Jane and Frank (a connection which Mr. Knightley has rightly perceived as we are to eventually find out that they are engaged).

While Emma does not always heed Mr. Knightley's advice or observations, her respect for him makes his true disappointment prompt serious consideration for Emma in her growth—making her lesson about Box Hill sink in all the more powerfully. In turn, this marks a true turning point in Emma's behavior. While at Box Hill, the flirtations between Frank Churchill and Emma finally go too far for both Jane Fairfax and Miss Bates. When Frank Churchill suggests a game Emma's teasing goes past the point of prudence, emphasizing a cruelty that underlines Emma's flippant perception of the old maid. As Miss Bates takes a jab at herself, categorizing all of her comments as dull, Emma takes this insult too far; egged on by the attentions and jokes of Frank Churchill "Emma could not resist," declaring "Ah! ma'am, but there may be a difficulty. Pardon me—but you will be limited as to number—only three at once" (291). When Mr. Knightley angrily approaches Emma about her misbehavior she does not at first believe that the old woman truly understood the joke, but with assurance Mr. Knightley finally shames Emma into realizing the faults with self-amusement at the expense of others. As he does this, Mr. Knightley enforces his role as her lifelong instructor, declaring that he "must once more speak to you as I have been used to: a privilege rather endured than allowed, perhaps, but I must still use it. I cannot see you acting wrong, without a remonstrance" (294). Emma's defenses do not subside the stream of disapproval as Mr. Knightley goes on to criticize, most specifically, the immorality that has been consistently undercutting her obligation to properly behave as a central

and privileged member of society. In explaining her appropriate role Knightley serves as a voice that will guide society back to propriety and teach Emma what she has yet to learn about the building blocks of society.[13] As the particular nature of the misbehavior is identified this acts as one of the most effective moments of Emma's education. Knightley teaches her the particular fault: "Were she your equal in situation—but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live to old age, must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion" (295). Thus, Emma must acknowledge the needs and rights of others rather than just her own whims as she holds her position of power. She must understand what she is supposed to be providing to her society and how to treat others as individuals with their own roles, rather than beings suited to fit her own sources of amusement.

Emma has finally started to understand her lesson that the responsibilities that accompany her position of authority are more than just to fulfill her own selfish amusement. Mr. Knightley's criticisms hit home and finally Emma is able to truly see her error and why it is unbecoming for a woman in her position. Feeling her responsibilities:

> She was vexed beyond what could have been expressed—almost beyond what she could conceal. Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life. She was most forcibly struck. The truth of his representation there was no denying. She felt it at her heart. How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates!—How could she have exposed herself to such ill opinion in any one she valued! (295-6).

[13] Mr. Knightley's character aligns most accurately with the role of Turner's instructor. He lacks the flaws that Henry Tilney presents in his role and understands the basic building blocks of culture most accurately of almost any character, especially any supporting character, in Austen's novels.

Just as other Austen heroines before her have learned from their mistakes, so too must Emma be forced into a realization. This confrontation, however, does not completely finalize her transitional journey, though it does prove an important step in her recognition of the responsibilities she should acknowledge to those in her community, particularly those of lower class status. However, Emma has not grown to understand the scope of her misbehavior in meddling with others for her own amusement. As she merely sees the pain she has caused to Miss Bates and feels the sting of Mr. Knightley's disappointment, Emma must continue to learn in order to complete her transition. Although she has experienced a key stage of reflection, Emma leaves their conversation concerned with how Mr. Knightley viewed her behavior and thus has not fully grasped how widespread this concern may become. This experience has altered her view but Emma needs to continue to apply her new knowledge to completely understand her society and how she can truly act as a proper moral guide. In order for Emma to grasp the extremity of this situation she will be forced to see not only the impacts of her meddling on those around her, but also how they threaten to destabilize her own position and desires.

Emma apologizes to Miss Bates but continues on in her new contemplations of her true role and is faced with more fallout at the group's outing to Donwell Abbey, Mr. Knightley's estate. Emma's illusions start to break as she begins to question the reality of her view of others, finally looking at their independent roles separate from her schemes. At the same time Donwell Abbey starts to take on a meaning of its own. As she examines the house and estate, she appreciates its size and style and eventually comes to the conclusion that "[i]t was just what it ought to be, and it looked what it was—and Emma felt an increasing respect for it, as the residence of a family of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding" (281). Incidentally, these realizations also come with Emma's subtle recognition of Mr. Knightley as

more than just as a friend and moral guide. John Wiltshire suggests in "*Mansfield Park, Emma, Persuasion*" that the actual realization comes in a very similar form as it does in *Pride and Prejudice* when Emma admires Mr. Knightley's estate: "an eloquent embodiment or vessel for that desire, which is thenceforth seen to be inseparable from the social institutions that may contain it" (75). I also think that the suggestion of a growing interest in Mr. Knightley may stem from the curiosity Emma feels at Harriet and Mr. Knightley's close confidence and Emma's consistent focus on her superiority. As she grows to understand her importance she is also introduced to her own vulnerability, and Emma begins to feel the threat of not getting exactly what she wants.

Emma's whole illusion quickly comes tumbling down as Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax reveal their relationship and she finds out about Harriet's feelings for Mr. Knightley. With this, Emma experiences jealousy as she realizes that she has loved Mr. Knightley all along and has only had the power to admit it to herself when it is possible that the chance of their union has been lost to her forever. As Harriet admits her affection for Mr. Knightley Emma

> sat silently meditating, in a fixed attitude, for a few minutes . . . sufficient for making her acquainted with her own heart. A mind like her's, once opening to suspicion, made rapid progress. She touched—she admitted—she acknowledged the whole truth . . . Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself! (320)

This realization comes to Emma as it has to so many Austen heroines before her. Just like Elizabeth, Marianne, Catherine, and Fanny, Emma's final realization comes at the rush of a moment and puts all of her previous actions in a perspective that forces her to face her own faults full-on.

As she discovers her feelings Emma "begins to see the danger of making people appear by art what they are not by nature" (Wiesenfarth 209) and faces the possibility of losing all that she finally realizes that she wants. As she comes into the full understanding of her own liminality and flaws:

> Her own conduct, as well as her own heart, was before her in the same few minutes. She saw it all with a clearness which had never blessed her before. How improperly had she been acting by Harriet! How inconsiderate, how indelicate, how irrational, how unfeeling had been her conduct! What blindness, what madness, had led her on! It struck her with dreadful force, and she was ready to give it every bad name in the world. (320-321)

Emma comes to understand that like her female counterparts she wishes to be married. While it is not for want of the same future financial security as it is for the Dashwood sisters, Emma understands her liminality between states of complete control as she needs to be with Mr. Knightley to become a full and worthy leader but cannot return to her previous ignorance. Emma realizes her love for Knightley and also grows to understand that Harriet is not worthy of Knightley. She also understands, however, that it is her own manipulations that have encouraged Harriet to strive for gentlemen like Knightley all along. In fact, she unknowingly encouraged Harriet's affections when she approved of her attempting to marry above her social class. Emma must face the harsh truth that while she dislikes the union because of her own desire to marry Mr. Knightley, this union is also dangerous to her community. In fact, she had a hand in manipulating what Monaghan describes as something that "will undercut the prestige and authority of one of Highbury's leading citizens and thus damage the community" (137). Thus, while Mr. Knightley acts as her guide all along, it is the realization that she may lose him forever to a manipulation of her own creating that she is able to learn her biggest lesson. Emma's growth

is demonstrated by her mature response to the news that Harriet has formed an attachment to Mr. Knightley and accepting that Mr. Knightley might feel the same way. In her new understanding of how harmful her meddling has been she must allow the match despite her own personal feelings.

Now that Mr. Knightley has a choice and Emma is powerless in a way that she has never been before, she is forced to experience the extent of her own flawed manipulations and recognize her incomplete power in ruling Highbury. Because she has yet to personally experience much of society's restrictions based on social or economic class Emma is particularly hurt by the potential for her love, Mr. Knightley, to love another in a game that she was attempting to control. For the first time in a courtship Emma cannot meddle in the relationship. While she realizes her fault in doing so before the lesson rings twice as true as the love she seeks to manipulate happens to be her own. Up until this point Emma had refused to acknowledge the importance of Mr. Knightley: "Emma had never known how much of her happiness depended on being *first* with Mr. Knightley, first in interest and affection.—Satisfied that it was so, and feeling it her due, she had enjoyed it without reflection; and only in the dread of being supplanted, found how inexpressibly important it had been" (326). In her stage of reflection she comes to learn about herself and experience personal growth while also instilling social reform. Emma needs adjust as her journey has exposed the importance of the basic building blocks of culture and prompted her to behave more appropriately as a societal leader. When Knightley reveals that his true affection lies with her, Emma is rewarded for her lessons and she can experience her aggregation. Emma can guide the Highbury community with moral and decorous leadership and enjoy her reintegration as she is now properly educated about her social position.

All that is left to stand in their way is for the other characters to follow suit into the reintegration to their proper positions. Their journeys are soon completed as well. As Robert Martin once again proposes to Harriet Smith—and this time without Emma's meddling she accepts—Harriet firmly fixes herself into a pleasant life suitable to her background. Each character is reintegrated into society as a member of the social class from which they originally belonged ultimately underscoring that the building blocks of culture enforce these social roles as important elements of the overall performance of society with every individual playing their part. Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill are finally able to be together without the disapproving eye of Frank's aunt,[14] Harriet Smith is finally married to a suitor that is appropriate for her, and Emma has learned her lesson with Mr. Knightley's assistance. Emma and Mr. Knightley overcome their last challenge (Mr. Woodhouse's continued reliance on Emma) as Mrs. Weston's poultry-house is robbed and Mr. Woodhouse agrees that Mr. Knightley would offer an important sense of protection.

The society is righted as Emma has been able to grow to be the type of leader that is required of her. By the end of the novel, Wiltshire suggests, "[w]hat Emma learns in this novel is not to think like Mr. Knightley, but that she has always, in fact, thought like him" (75). While the closeness of the two all along highlights that they will eventually be together, it does seem presumptuous to assume that, with such a sheltered life and silly whims, Emma is holding the same propriety as Knightley all along. Although the basic principles have been generally the same between the two Emma's foolish disagreements with Mr. Knightley throughout suggest

[14] As Joseph Wiesenfarth points out, these accomplishments, even for such a moral woman as Jane Fairfax, must come at some expense. Jane must admit the fault with her situation before she is capable of her just reward at the end. Wiesenfarth reminds us that "[b]oth Emma and Jane Fairfax achieve such true elegance after they repudiate their mistakes and misconduct—the one her judgment that Harriet is suitable to be a gentleman's wife, the other her toleration of a secret engagement that is not consonant with moral obligation" (210).

that she, in fact, does not entirely think with the same moral and educated guidance that Mr. Knightley demonstrates. Rather, I agree more closely with Wiesenforth's assessment of what Mr. Knightley does for Emma. Through his constant reminders and patience, "Mr. Knightley cures Emma's vanity, corrects her judgment, moves her to repentance, and frees her of the crippling notions that her good depends upon her independence as an unmarried aunt and upon her need independently to mother and her father" (Wiesenforth 216). This view suggests that Emma did have the underlying disposition to act as Mr. Knightley would have her behave all along, but also emphasizes that she needs to be reminded of her true place in society and what attitude that place entails.

## *Emma Woodhouse and George Knightley*

Emma's personal growth is a product of her experience with the transitional journey and both highlights her own flaws and prompts social reform that stabilizes the Highbury community. As she attempts to manipulate the basic building blocks of culture Emma travels further away from the growth that she needs to achieve during her time of liminality, and in turn threatens Highbury's stability. The barriers to entrance that Emma experiences, through her manipulation of Harriet's courtships and then her own trials, prove to be important indicators that Emma must learn more about her society before she can truly take on the position of a leader.

It is through the process of trial and error that Emma starts to learn of her restrictions and how these good values that she has demonstrated can work in relation to other people. Her manipulation of Harriet is ultimately her biggest exercise in demonstrating her own flaws but also the experience that truly shapes her growth. At the beginning, Emma enters into a friendship

with Harriet for the convenience of location and the ability to control and shape another relationship. She learns through the failed attempts at connecting Harriet with several potential suitors of her own true limitations. As Magee and in some ways Oberman describe, this manipulation can be viewed as Emma's attempt to manipulate her own authorial power in creating a courtship plot. Emma does not personally struggle with the boundaries of class divides but repeatedly sees that Harriet is not properly fit with the men Emma imagines her to be connected with. Her manipulations go too far and she realizes the truth of her selfish behavior as the Highbury community falls apart. Relationships that were once firmly established begin to disintegrate and Emma learns how her own manipulations can turn against her as she truly realizes her love for Mr. Knightley. Thus, Emma finally experiences the progress of the transitional phases as the situation for both her own personal happiness and Highbury becomes dire.

Emma's needs to experience her own transition to truly understand her community become evident as she begins to manipulate the basic building blocks of culture for Harriet. Without her transition Emma would continue to lead her community with impropriety, putting the whole social structure at risk. Yet, it is also her prominent social position that both necessitates and creates a danger in her time of transition. Austen's previous heroines experience their transition as outsiders and as such their challenges prompt personal growth and their will to perform social reform. When they fail or struggle in their transitions, the ramifications may have been urgent for their own wellbeing and the eventual propriety of their communities, but do not immediately impact their communities. However, as Emma holds a prominent role in Highbury her experience with transition and stages of reflection easily prompt social reform, but also risk the stability of her community. Additionally, it is because Emma resists the restrictions and

binding rules of liminality that her world descends into chaos. Her attempts to continue to manipulate the world around her force Emma to recognize her position and experience this new kind of liminality. She faces her most prominent challenge to actually see the faults in her ways and grow during the difficult time when Mr. Knightley may no longer be her match and Emma loses control. It is as if Mr. Knightley can no longer give her advice and right her faults (as he is the subject of her desires and the potential object lost) that Emma must learn for herself—causing the greatest change and reward. We thus see a complicated and more serious transitional journey in Emma's role as her society depends on her success but also feels her weaknesses. Thus, in her aggregation Emma grows to understand the necessity of and solidifies the proper basic building blocks of her community.

Both Emma and the position of the Highbury community complicate the whole plot of *Emma*. Emma is trying to grow in highly volatile surroundings in the middle of a society that is simultaneously resisting change, in Mr. Woodhouse especially, yet facing challenges to its structure, primarily through Frank Churchill. While she claims to reject or challenge the norms of her society by refusing marriage Emma eventually learns of her own vulnerability as love and marriage become the central focus of the novel. Thus, in order for Emma to achieve what she finds that she truly wants the most, she must fall. This suggests that too much power can be dangerous and, in fact, her attempts to manipulate others and overstep her means of power become the very way in which she is humbled into understanding. In order for Emma and Knightley to end up together they have to be forced into the risky liminal position—to expose themselves to the same sort of instability other Austen characters struggle with throughout entire novels. Yet, in order for the culminating aggregation to truly reflect proper societal growth it can only be these two characters that become the most prominent leaders. They represent the

different views of their world better than anybody else in their community. Mr. Knightley is able to maintain the integrity of the older order of the landed gentry yet with more flexibility than Mr. Woodhouse ever demonstrates, thus tying him to underlying principles of morality necessary to balance Emma's more liberal and new views on society. She, however, stands as a superior example of this liberal openness as compared to Frank Churchill and Mrs. Elton's newer positions in Highbury. Emma proves herself capable of maintaining more propriety and decorum than her counterparts and as such she is necessary for the overall success of the community. Together Knightley and Emma create a perfect balance that will allow the community to continue to grow and adapt with the change of time but maintain the prestige and moral grounding that provided them with this important role to begin with. By the end the social structure in place can stand to be perpetuated, thus allowing for the transitional journey to run as Turner anticipated it should. This suggests, once again, that the class-based system is reliant on the appropriate interactions between the gentry and other members of society. In order to fully function properly, therefore, it is the individuals and not the system that need to be checked. As Emma and Mr. Knightley come together at the end of the story the proper morality of the community and social system may, once again, function smoothly with respect for the past and openness toward the future.

## *PERSUASION*

*Persuasion*'s Anne Elliot is, like Emma, a member of the landed gentry, which gives her unique social power and moral obligations. Unlike Emma, however, Anne Elliot is an outsider in her community, and as such, she experiences her own situation in life and transitional journey entirely differently. Rather than being the focal point of her society, she is on the fringes,

underappreciated and ignored. It is easier to see how Anne Elliot might be experiencing liminality in a more traditional sense. As the least loved daughter Anne Elliot faces heavy criticism for her attempts to leave the world of the gentry and social elite, if even only for small outings. Anne, however, also consciously takes her own personal departure from the world of the gentry, such as when she meets with Mrs. Smith, and appreciates the qualities of the world outside the one her family inhabits. Because her choice is to engage more openly with society, Anne seeks to explore the world outside of the gentry and thus complicates the building blocks of culture by the end of the novel. With this deviation we can expect to see a new kind of liminality and transitional journey for Anne Elliot, as her disposition and weaker position within the gentry noticeably alters her journey. Her kindness toward others, especially those less fortunate, exemplifies her admirable qualities but also puts her in company with individuals that other members of the gentry frown upon. The connections with those less fortune ultimately serve a greater purpose for both Anne as well as the progress of her own journey, and thus the journey of society. Mrs. Smith,[15] for instance, serves as an example of how precarious even established positions can be. With the loss of her husband Mrs. Smith is exposed to massive debts and financial instability, while being simultaneously afflicted with a debilitating disease. As the rest of the Elliots frown upon Anne's low connections, Mrs. Smith's position is one that the Elliot family may face if they do not learn to be more careful. Yet, Mrs. Smith has more sense and reason than Sir Walter Elliot and Elizabeth Elliot put together and ultimately helps the family avoid a similar fate to the one that she has faced. Anne's transition is a journey of personal growth and a different kind of social reform, change that is complicated by Anne's liminal position and the extremity of her flawed society.

[15] Mrs. Smith interestingly shares a name with Harriet, a similarly socially weak character in *Emma*.

Anne is trying to fit in with a new type of society that does not operate under the same conditions and manners and this lies at the heart of Anne's displacement. Thus, Anne faces a challenge as she needs to find other ways to display her worthiness that don't have the same typical social form. In addition to being forced to deal with liminality, as Anne is rejected from her society despite her morality and adherence to the decorum that should be expected of the landed gentry, we see the flaws with her community—what Anne must seek to alter before aggregation. As she is underappreciated, even her acts of general sense and kindness do not spur any recognition from those around her and so she must face a more difficult journey of portraying her importance to her community. Therefore, Anne needs to learn how to operate under new conditions in her family world that is stagnant and the rest of the world that is ever progressing and changing. Her progress will be marked by several key moments that help her to exemplify her important morality and strength as a leader and several setbacks to her eventual aggregation. What is important to note, however, is how different societies respond to her attempts to prove her worth, as it will be an indicator of the overall social reform and concluding strength of the novel. The communities in *Persuasion* are of central importance and act as a great barrier to Anne's growth. When looking just at the growth of Anne Elliot *Persuasion* looks a lot like Austen's other novels, but her last novel takes a slightly different solution to social downfalls, suggesting that there is in fact an important necessity for both the liminal heroine and flawed society to be willing to experience a complementary growth. Anne must eventually make the decision about what community she will chose to complete her journey with, picking one that will allow her to stand as a moral leader as it demonstrate a capacity for moral growth. In a way *Persuasion*'s conclusion is different than may be anticipated but, I think, not as completely distinct from Austen's other novels as critics suggest. Rather than a complete departure from her

old world, Anne is able to manipulate her society so that by the end, although it is vastly different from the original social structure, Anne's society is not a complete rejection of what we see at the beginning, either.

## *A new complication*

*Persuasion* starts long after the time where most of Austen's other novels end, presenting an older heroine a significant amount of time after an initial rejected proposal without any relief for her liminal position. While it is not particularly out of the ordinary for Austen heroines to reject proposals, even from the men that they will eventually marry,[16] Anne's rejection does not meet the same satisfying end as many of Austen's other heroines. While others are presented with a second (or maybe even third) proposal that they can rightly accept shortly after their first rejection, Anne Elliot must wait for years before even seeing her hero again. She has refused her offer from Frederick Wentworth and is forced to live with the consequences, growing far older than any of Austen's other heroines were ever allowed to go unmarried.[17] For Susan Morgan, "[w]hatever twenty-seven may have meant in Austen's life, in her work it represents that time which both sentimentalists and realists see as too late for love" (*Meantime* 182). It is within this very action that Anne Elliot's predominant flaw is demonstrated—the ability to be persuaded by others out of what she might have believed. As such, her demeanor, and likewise her transitional

[16] Elizabeth Bennet, for example, rejects Mr. Collins and even Mr. Darcy's first proposal.

[17] Most remarkably Anne Elliot, although of a much higher social class, embodies the true fate of what would happen to a woman who rejects the proposal of a worthy suitor, like Harriet Smith's early rejection of Robert Martin. Although these characters are very different in their backgrounds, the fate of the unmarried woman continues to preoccupy this novel in an extended version of Harriet's shorter period of liminality.

journey, is vastly different from Emma Woodhouse's who presents bulletproof self-confidence but a flawed comprehension of her society. This flaw, although not new to Austen's literature, is highlighted in a unique way in *Persuasion* as Anne faces the burden of this error most directly for the longest period of time—longer than any other of Austen's heroines—as she is not immediately able to rectify her mistake. Anne must live with her decision for eight years, underappreciated and morally challenged.[18]

This in itself creates some unique challenges for Anne Elliot but also emphasizes a larger structural struggle; maybe partly because of her position as an old unmarried woman and partly because of her differing proprieties, Anne Elliot is a relative outsider in her community. So, while she is ushered into the landed gentry by birth and with a family name that will help her to maintain her place, those individuals with which she comes into most frequent contact, particularly her father and sister, leave her to her own devices—marking her as an outsider to the community to which she socially belongs. Like Fanny Price, Anne Elliot is one of the few people in her community that appropriately follows the moral codes and standards required of her to perpetuate a moral society. In some ways, therefore, Anne Elliot never fully experiences the stage of separation within her initial community because she, like Fanny Price, has never quite been a social insider. Thus, although clearly liminal and experiencing a prolonged position as an outsider, she begins her journey in a different way than Turner's traditional separation. Thus, her journey toward acceptance into the community comes as she must shape her surroundings and demonstrate to others not only why she is worthy, but also what must change in order to produce a better future for the society as a whole. Her eventual power must come when she adequately rectifies her original misguided rejection, and stands strong with her beliefs as she demonstrates

[18] Anne's acceptance of another's thoughts as more accurate than her own feelings aligns her heavily with Catherine Morland as well as Harriet Smith.

to Captain Wentworth that she has made this change. In this way, Austen marks Anne Elliot's transition in a way very different than those of her other heroines; she also concludes the narrative with a subtly different moral and tone than we have seen in any of her previous works.

While Austen's earlier fictions mark a growth in the landed gentry so that they can adequately fulfill the position of moral leaders, the social structure in *Persuasion* must be reworked in a way to exclude some of the most flawed members of the landed elite in a more complicated processing of social reform. While this response is more extreme than anything we see in Austen's previous works, it is necessary to respond in the most extreme manner to the likewise most extreme case of ill-fit moral leaders. However, while Anne cuts herself off from some of the most prominent members of her own social group, she is not completely upturning the system, but rather reorganizing the members of the landed gentry in a way that reflects the proper moral obligations of the gentry. I do not believe that it is a complete overhaul to the social structure as Monaghan suggests. Rather, the ending is an extreme product of social reform in bringing the most morally fit leaders into prominence. Anne thus takes a prominent role in her transitional journey at the stage of aggregation, as she may not complete her final phase of Turner's structure with the same society that has blocked her liminal growth all along.

The transitional journey must focus more broadly on the shift in some of the more salvageable components of Anne's society, as those worthy parts come to recognize her importance and in turn grow worthy of Anne Elliot. Her transition focuses on social reform rather than more specifically on Anne's own liminal experience and personal growth—thus emphasizing the necessary duality of the phases through and out of liminality. Just as the moral growth in the liminal experience reflects an understanding of social structures, it needs to be adequately mirrored by a moral growth in society. Monaghan suggests that the ultimate flaw in

the society of *Persuasion* is its attempts to prove an exception to the rule that "by the time the heroines achieve maturity and marry, not only have they proven themselves worthy of their society, but the society has proven itself worthy of them" (Monaghan 12). In other words Monaghan points to *Persuasion*'s departure from Austen's traditional formula. However, while we do not witness the entire society proving its worth, the small portion of Anne's community that does begin to recognize Anne's prominence and change to reflect her guidance, is importantly incorporated into the final community. As such, I do not entirely agree with Monaghan's interpretation of the ending of the book, and suggest that Austen does, in fact, continue to follow structures of liminality. Yet, some of Monaghan's conclusion that the novel does not fit this general structure of the traditional journey rings true as *Persuasion* treats the same issues of social structure and liminality differently. As such, in *Persuasion* Jane Austen suggests a new iteration of aggregation. The novel takes on a new perspective of the role of the landed gentry, demonstrating the flaws without completely abolishing them by the end of the novel, just as previous heroines have altered their societies.

The novel itself begins in a rather unique way as well, highlighting the flawed landed gentry in a way that will be further demonstrated later through a varied plot and conclusion. Rather than introducing Anne in the opening passage, we get a glimpse into her family and community and thus grow to understand Anne as distinct from much of her surroundings. She is first presented without much literary power or social prominence in comparison to those around her. From the beginning of Anne's characterization, especially in comparison to the way that Emma Woodhouse is represented at the beginning of her novel, Austen establishes a different tone in her last work. As such, it is important to note the contrast between Anne Elliot and Emma Woodhouse at the beginning of their respective novels. Whereas Emma is the center of life at

Highbury (or at least perceives herself to be at the beginning of her journey), Anne is in the shadows almost on the outside of her group. If compared with the morality of Austen's last two heroines, Anne and Emma's social positions further complicate the depiction of social importance and moral grounding—complicating whether or not being at the center of such a potentially superficial environment is actually desirable.

*Persuasion* begins by establishing the Elliot family history, a potential qualification to lead others, but almost immediately counters this social standing with the representation of the attitudes and superficiality of the family. With an emphasis on the importance of social standing and an ironic undercutting of this vanity as a source of the Elliot family's fall, the novel immediately highlights the flaws in their way of life. The very first character introduced in *Persuasion* is Sir Walter Elliot and we readily see the narrow attention and importance he gives to his own family heritage. In the only book he ever perused, the Baronetage, where "he could read his history with an interest which never failed," Sir Walter finds an appropriate response to any of his moods and continues to chronicle his family's importance "improv[ing] it by adding, for the information of himself, and his family" (9). He frequently turns to this book as a reminder of his importance, emphasizing his own focus on the past and family history as the crucial factors deciding the prominence of a man. And if it was not clear by this frequently riffled book and careful chronicling, as we learn of his history Austen bluntly describes that "[v]anity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character; vanity of person and of situation" (10). His title alone stands to distinguish him from other Austen characters and serves to be his downfall as his narrow emphasis on title prevents him from progressing his society in response to Anne's transitional journey. Thus, ironically, his own personal standing and perspectives have removed him from the potential of becoming a moral and fair leader—a role that the landed

gentry should not just strive for but truly embody. Sir Walter is first and foremost introduced as a bad leader demonstrating "very forcibly the decadent condition into which Jane Austen believes the gentry has sunk," as Monaghan describes, "Sir Walter is very concerned with externals such as manners, social positions, and personal appearance, but does not realise that they have value only as long as they reflect the moral concerns of the inner man" (146). Thus, like Emma Woodhouse, Sir Walter Elliot is an unfit leader, yet unlike the previous heroine, his lack of both charity and flexibility prevents his growth, ultimately dooming the fate of both his vanity and his power over the community.

While Sir Walter is the most prominently flawed figure and the one whose conceit leads other astray, most of the rest of the Elliot family does not prove to be great social leaders either, exposing their whole community to impropriety. Elizabeth Elliot is equally vain and foolish, and therefore, upon her father "her influence had always been great, and they had gone on together most happily" (11). Through her right as the eldest and a similar preoccupation with keeping up appearances and maintaining her high position in society, Elizabeth too has become a representation of the kind of flaws that such attention can breed. Thus, the hierarchy is established and Sir Walter's "two other children were of very inferior value" and while at least "Mary had acquired a little artificial importance, by becoming Mrs. Charles Musgrove," Anne did not hold any amount of importance to her father (*Persuasion* 11). In this hierarchy we see the central problem regarding the social structure at Kellynch Hall, as the Elliots devalue what should be most important to maintaining the morality of society. Yet, it is important that from the onset, rather than being a flaw in Anne that has forced her aside, it is a flaw with her father's disposition and values, suggesting a difference in their temperaments and rights to lead society. For, even the narration demonstrates her worth: "Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness

of character, which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nobody with either father or sister: her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way;—she was only Anne" (11). Anne thus represents the only potential for truly respectable moral guidance at the Hall but, due to her lack of importance within the family, often goes ignored or underappreciated. She is liminal in her role, without the power to perpetuate society as she would see fit. Although she "was a most dear and highly valued god-daughter favourite and friend" (11) to Lady Russell, the family's trusted advisor and best friend to Anne's deceased mother, Anne is also led astray by Lady Russell as she advises Anne of her distaste for Captain Wentworth's inferior social standing.[19] Ultimately, taking the advice of her friend leads Anne to reject the proposal of the young man for whom she had a fond affection, and leaves her stranded in the liminal state with very little importance in her own family and no new prospects of leaving her situation. Thus, Anne is, in many ways, set apart from her family intellectually.

When the family falls under hard financial times they are faced with a direct call for action—and although she should be the guide in such times, Anne's voice alone will not be enough to direct her family into a better, more economical position. This need for change in which Anne could hypothetically be of use to her family, as one of the only practical ones amongst the Elliots,[20] proves to be a challenge that may offer the potential for social growth for the other Elliots (and thus as their position dictates, their society). Yet, as we will see, it goes as an ineffective moment of learning or humbling as the Elliots continue to disregard Anne, and she must ultimately turn to a different part of her community because of her family's dismissal of

[19] Continuing in the parallels between Anne Elliot and Harriet Smith, this moment is highly reminiscent of Emma's manipulations to convince Harriet to reject Robert Martin.

[20] Because of her more realistic view of the world Anne should be trusted with finding a new situation and maintaining order, just as Marianne Dashwood was an important guide to her sister and mother during their time of displacement.

their necessary moral growth. This financial crisis complicates Anne's position, further destabilizing her place; Anne Elliot is joining her family in another aspect of liminality as they face financial hardship that threatens their position and forces them to make changes. The Elliots are experiencing the economic turmoil and an actual tangible departure from their land, making them unfit for their position as the landed gentry, but without the danger of facing the social or financial stresses that might threaten them with a role in the middle or working class. Sir Walter Elliot, however, is highly resistant to this alteration in lifestyle, voicing concerns about what relinquishing his estate and entering into the liminal position will do for his power.

Sir Walter has clung to his family name and status to the detriment of his family's financial situation. In his blind emphasis on name and title and with little attention paid to the responsibilities of the landed gentry, Sir Walter's close-minded views of his rights and perceived power prevents him from seeing that he is actually losing the means of maintaining his place in society. The anxiety over his potential loss of position is therefore clearly pronounced in Sir Walter's mind yet he ironically does not acknowledge his own role in the alteration of his family's position or how he has forced his daughter to live her life in a similar fashion for years. Sir Walter also does not recognize what he can do to regain prominence in society, focusing on the physical signs of wealth and power rather than the important moral component. Therefore, as he does not truly face the root cause of his instability, this experience will not push him toward a better understanding of the basic building blocks of culture as he is set in his vanity. As such, Anne will continue to struggle in this society that holds different standards and that, even in facing their crucial change, will not acknowledge a necessity to adjust. Although Sir Walter Elliot's vanity has lead to debt and the precarious situation in which his family is placed, he remains unconcerned with his spending and voices distaste toward alternatives to cut back on

money. His actions reiterate that vanity is his central focus and might serve as the impetus to his fall from power and status.

Sir Walter Elliot's continued selfish desires thus prevent Anne from altering her society, perpetuating her phase of liminality as Sir Walter continues to evade alteration, especially and ironically in respect to the rise in status of the middle class naval men, those officers that could (and eventually do) threaten his position. With continued negotiation, Sir Walter Elliot is finally persuaded to rent out Kellynch Hall and move his family to Bath temporarily, where it might be easier for the family to moderate their spending. However, even in this humbling experience Sir Walter exerts his discrimination to anyone lower than himself, underscoring his continued delusions of grandeur while simultaneously being forced into his own liminality. While this decision could (and as Turner explains, should) coincide with the ability for the characters to grow and change, it marks the first disappointment that Sir Walter will not be moved from his stubborn opinions about class structure or heed Anne's more even-handed opinion on the matter. This stringent refusal suggests that Sir Walter Elliot and his spoiled daughter are unworthy leaders of society as they refuse to face their time of liminality as a period of reflection upon society. They wish to maintain the social structure but without the means of being proper moral guides for society and refusing to listen to Anne as a potential instructor during their time of liminality. Thus, from the onset, the novel suggests that because of the flawed social leaders, Anne's journey and her aggregation must represent a new kind of liminality that addresses the issues of an intrinsically flawed community. The Elliots are soon advised of the potential for tenants of the state in the newly returned naval officers. However, Sir Walter's ill-favored stereotypes of naval men further underlies his inability to adapt or to see anything beyond his own importance and position.

Although focusing more on their new rise as ill-fit in the old social order, Sir Walter emphasizes that the naval men represent a new way of life; he finds in the navy the very things that he fears may challenge his position, but instead of responding rationally as a means of solidifying his own position, he seeks to discount their prominence through his old-order perspective, ignoring their importance. As such, Sir Walter is resistant to the idea of a navy man living as a tenant in his house. Anne's reasonable voice counters Sir Walter's marked disgust when she suggests that the navy "who have done so much for us, have at least an equal claim with any other set of men, for all the comforts and all the privileges which any home can give" (21). Still, Sir Walter persists that, although the "profession has its utility . . . [he] should be sorry to see any friend of mine belonging to it" (22), suggesting that Sir Walter's fixation on social standing is broadly applied to every situation. Sir Walter feels that any man of proper social standing and wealth need not take on any profession or provide a service to society as they, themselves, are already fixed. He goes on to describe the points of the navy that he finds most offensive:

> As being the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of… a man is in greater danger in the navy of being insulted by the rise of one whose father, his father might have disdained to speak to, and of becoming prematurely an object of disgust himself, than in any other line. (22)

Sir Walter underscores that he deems the development of their social position as particularly unfit, in so doing emphasizing his firm adherence to the fixed social hierarchy and structure that holds him in high honor and importance, while men who have put forth some sort of use for the good of the order may be treated as they ought based solely on their position at birth. His

obvious disdain for the professional class of men, as represented specifically in *Persuasion* by the navy men, simply underlines his inability to see the value in their position. This disposition ultimately strikes a contrast between his old world order and that involving those professional officers that operate with the proper decorum and grow to shape the world in a powerful and meaningful way. This inflexibility and discrimination against new money suggests the ill-informed and prejudicial nature of Sir Walter Elliot's view and the flaw that leads to his downfall.

The Crofts, the couple that comes forward as potential renters of the space, behave in a way opposite of what Sir Walter Elliot expects, and as such, suggest the potential for this new moneyed class to actually hold a position. Although Sir Walter does not see the propriety of this couple as a means of elevating the prominence of their social group, his contradictory opinions of them suggest that they hold the propriety of society more dearly than Sir Walter. The Crofts are a good looking and responsible couple with a desire to rent the space, and more importantly, the means to do so, underscoring the potential for their rising power in society. Sir Walter and Elizabeth are charmed by their unpredictably good manners, accepting the Crofts' desire to rent Kellynch Hall. Thus, a new couple enters the Elliot's social circle, physically there to fill the space that the Elliots formerly occupied, and likewise providing a potential alternative to the current social leaders. The contrast between the two families exemplifies the faults with the Elliots' disposition and further underscores their view of society. It emphasizes that they do not truly understanding the basic building blocks of culture, only seeking to understand the position that they have the privilege of occupying by title and land. It is still with a selfish kind of arrogance that these two Elliots accept the Crofts. His own vanity being mollified, Sir Walter begins to look at the Crofts as he would equals in social standing yet without recognizing that

this implies an alteration to his preconceived social structure. He suggests that an association with the Crofts may not be damaging his own image and vanity as he "without hesitation, declared the Admiral to be the best-looking sailor he had ever met with, and went so far as to say, that, if his own man might have had the arranging of his hair, he should not be ashamed of being seen with him any where" (31). Thus, for the Crofts Sir Walter has set aside his own standards, however, his doing so does not involve any sort of change toward his general attitude.

As her social world begins to alter, so too does Anne's position, presenting more possibilities for not only Anne's growth but also that of the community. However, at first Anne is too fixated on the change to truly realize the potential presented by this alteration. As she begins to contemplate Captain Wentworth, Anne moves to a central narrative focus of the novel for the first time, providing her with the agency as a character that is still withheld from her as a liminal member of the gentry. Therefore, from the reader's perspective Anne has become more understandable and we can begin to see her transition and stalled liminality. As the Crofts secure the estate, Anne's former love interest, Mrs. Croft's brother Captain Wentworth, once again enters into her life after a long hiatus. This new member sparks an acknowledgement of Anne's past wrongdoings—but she is able to reflect retrospectively, seeing her mistakes for what they are. Anne has grown to regret her decision and has matured to realize how she was led astray. She becomes the central focus of the narration for the first time as we learn of Anne's history, presenting her with narrative authority and standing while emphasizing her place as the rightful moral guide of society. Anne further exemplifies her worthiness by recognizing her own fault in the matter rather than blaming Lady Russell for her advice, and revealing her good intent all along, even in her initial rejection. Anne was convinced to give up her affections for Mr. Wentworth as "[s]he was persuaded to believe the engagement a wrong thing—indiscreet,

improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it" (28). Yet, rather than an act of self-vanity or caution, Anne "consulting his good, even more than her own . . . [felt the] belief of being prudent, and self-denying principally for *his* advantage" (28). Anne may have been convinced against her initial judgment but we see that the flaw in her view was in believing too heavily in the principles of social status and propriety based on the hierarchy, rather than taking into account the morality and worthiness of her potential lover. Her emphasis on what is right for Wentworth, though not particularly socially progressive, does indicate that even in her earlier years Anne's propensity for good outweighed even her own personal desires. Thus, Anne's growth since then must be in her acceptance of the need for an altered view of the social order, one which Anne ultimately chooses to believe in as she eventually accepts Captain Wentworth's second proposal at the end of the novel.

Anne shows her continued growth as she takes personal responsibility for her initial rejection, establishing that if she was at one point flawed she has learned from her mistakes and moved past them. In accepting the consequences graciously Anne demonstrates her underlying ability to accept alteration while maintaining her strong sense of morality and a desire to do what is good.[21] Likewise, it is up to Captain Wentworth to prove himself worthy of Anne and her society if they are to become involved again. Like Anne, Wentworth has changed since the time of his initial proposal, having soon after the rejection joined the navy, distinguished himself enough to earn advancement, and with bravery and cunning made a great fortune for himself. He is now, as it happens, economically a man that Anne's relatives would acknowledge as more closely worthy of Anne's hand. However, his ability to establish his wealth through service is

[21] This disposition will be crucial in her final decision. Her openness to change is partly what allows her to make her choice to leave some of her community behind while admitting new members into her society. It is, in fact, this openness that allows her to save her society and fix the problems with the flawed social leaders.

what Sir Walter detests in the rising middle class, but it does not ultimately deter Anne. His now vast fortune has accounted for that aspect of the original discontent, and although formally his rank has remained unchanged, he has proven himself at sea and gained respect from a new kind of working naval officers. Thus Austen establishes a succinct account of the alterations the characters have undergone as Captain Wentworth's reintroduction approaches. The adjustments are similar to what we see appearing at the end of the works just before the lovers become engaged in Austen's other novels. But as it comes near the beginning, we can see that these characters must face larger difficulties in their struggles against a restrictive society. The novel, it would therefore appear, is focused on Anne proving herself worthy of Captain Wentworth, Captain Wentworth proving that he is still worthy, and their attempts to prove the fortitude of the couple to the society in which they dwell.

Before she joins her father and sister in Bath, Anne visits her younger sister Mary at Uppercross for a short while. Mary continues to demonstrate the Elliot family's faults, yet in a different and more frivolous manner than those of Sir Walter and Elizabeth. The different nature of her faults presents itself as to suggest that some of the landed gentry, and thus society, may be salvageable. Mary's actions, particularly her desire for Anne to stay behind, depict another alternative to the morally grounded behavior that must be held by the landed gentry to avoid harming the community as a whole. Like Elizabeth and Sir Walter Elliot, Mary's status as a member of the landed gentry is marked by a negative representation as she appears to be solely concerned with her personal desires and not so with her children or the world around her. Mary seeks her own entertainment above all else, so much so that she sees her need for entertainment as a matter of health, heightening her solitude to ordeals beyond inconvenience as "to add to every other distress that of fancying herself neglected and ill-used" (35). Yet, while Mary may be

frivolous in her own selfish calls for entertainment, she does not embody a stagnant refusal for change as her father and sister do. Although the Musgroves may be flawed, they may also be taught to alter their behavior and outlook, suggesting hope for the landed gentry.

The Musgroves embody a less harmful frivolity as compared to the severe focus on social positioning and performance that occupies the minds of the rest of the Elliots. Thus the rigid structure of the Elliots does not impede the moral growth of the Musgroves. While Mary is silly and self-important, she is still pleasant to those around her and is content to befriend a larger range of individuals. Most importantly, Mary and her family are less focused on the same sort of outward displays of importance that characterize Elizabeth and Sir Walter Elliot. Thus, in the Musgroves Austen establishes a different kind of character for the landed gentry, although not yet necessarily worthy leaders. This distinction between members of the landed gentry is ultimately what allows Anne to salvage her society rather than completely reject it.[22] Yet, while the Musgroves represent a less harmful flawed disposition, Anne's journey is still made all the more difficult "[s]ince her new world lacks any subtle understand[ing] of the moral significance of the individual's polite performance, Anne must win the Musgroves's regard by actively demonstrating her usefulness and concern for others" (Monaghan 150). This proves to be the largest challenge that Anne must face in achieving social reform—the effort in convincing others of her own worth and their impropriety while they are already significantly disposed to operate under different guidance. Since the community does not seem ready to acknowledge her in conventional ways, Anne faces the added challenge of offering growth to what is already such a complicated social structure. The community that is positioned to guide society with decorum

[22] This is where my understanding differs from Monaghan's most extremely. Where I see the ability for social reform, Monaghan sees the rejection of a flawed social structure and a complete renovation of society in the end of *Persuasion.*

and morality, therefore, needs to be taught and discover this responsibility, themselves. Because they do not initially appreciate the necessity for a leader like Anne, her growth out of liminality is blocked and she must continue to exert herself until she can finally prove her worth. So, while Anne is positioned with particularly restrictive rules in her liminality, as Turner predicts she should be, these rules are flawed and produced within a corrupted society. She must, therefore, expose the proper building blocks of culture and reshape the gentry's misconceived interpretation of their role in order to complete her own transition.

## *Demonstrating worth*

In her new environment Anne must seek to find an appropriate role to be useful, at the very least, and to seek to promote positive change if she wishes to grow out of her position of liminality. As she enters into a new community Anne's move prompts another opportunity for her to restart her journey toward aggregation. She very specifically faces a physical separation from the society in which she has yet to make an impact, but this new community still represents part of the landed gentry, and as such she is given a new opportunity to effect change. While she experiences a new kind of liminality in this place, the opportunity to face a different community presents Anne with the chance that she needs to, yet again, work to fix her flawed society and promote the necessary social reform that will allow her to experience aggregation and end her extended period of liminality. It becomes the important task for Anne to find her new role in this place as she acknowledges "it to be very fitting, that every little social commonwealth should dictate its own matters of discourse; and [she] hoped, ere long, to become a not unworthy member of the [society that] she was now transplanted into" (39). Indeed, Anne must become more than just "not unworthy" in order to face her aggregation, but in her defeated attitude we

see that Anne's lack of confidence in her potential as a moral leader prevents her from outward expressions of her worth. Amongst the buzz around Captain Wentworth, the newcomer to the social group, Anne is left again on the uncomfortable fringes, particularly liminal given her past with Wentworth. As the date of their first encounter arrives, Anne is on her way to visit her former love interest when Mary's son Charles falls, injuring his collarbone. Although this means that she misses her opportunity to again become acquainted with Captain Wentworth, the accident also sparks the key moment of her social growth in which she is able to demonstrate her importance among her companions. Anne aids the young boy while she helps to calm his hysterical mother and the whole distressed household. She, thus, becomes the voice of reason in the chaotic incident, and serves a unique purpose that the Musgrove house has gone sorely without. This proves to be a particularly fruitful experience as "[t]he normal routine of Uppercross life in fact throws up so few opportunities for Anne to prove her worth that it requires a freakish accident in which young Charles breaks his collarbone before she can reveal anything like the full extent of her considerable powers" (Monaghan 151).[23] Therefore, she may take the first tentative steps to remove herself from her initial liminality, establishing a distinctive role in Uppercross and establishing a position of calming guidance, if not yet authority.

As it becomes most important that she demonstrates her significance, with Captain Wentworth's return, she begins to become truly appreciated when her clear head and sense are desired in a dire emergency—a feat that cannot be met by any other in her society. While this

[23] At this point, I still agree with Monaghan about the root cause for Anne's difficulty in changing her community. It is apparent that because her society is so different from what it should be (and as such does not value the traits that should promote Anne to leadership) only extreme moments may break with their complacency. I think that this further suggests that Anne must also experience personal growth in her self-confidence and ability to provide aid even when she is not called upon in a time of desperation.

should be enough to remove her from her liminality, it does not make a strong enough impact to truly change her position, which points to the struggles Anne faces in her society and the incredible amount of progress she must make to complete her journey. This first incident, unfortunately, does not demonstrate much more than her kindness and caregiving to the community at Uppercross as Charles stabilizes but still needs care and attention. Given her disposition, Anne volunteers to stay behind with the boy as the others go on for their visit the next day. However, this does not strongly assert her importance in this community as it is probably most importantly demonstrated by Captain Wentworth's attitude toward Anne. He reveals that he finds Anne "so altered he should not have known [her] again" (*Persuasion* 53). Thus, as the moment of potential tragedy dies away, Anne is once again pushed back into her liminal role and continues to be overlooked for her true merits. It therefore appears that the society is so flawed at this point that her community does not truly appreciate what Anne represents. As such, she needs to dictate her important and moral prominence to Captain Wentworth in order to make strides to remove herself from liminality. Wentworth's influence among the Musgroves and his likewise prominent morality, place him in an ideal position to make these assessments, and with his approval Anne will accomplish an important first step toward aggregation. This is a new obstacle for Anne, different from other Austen heroines who "may be humbled in their own or even their lovers' eyes," but as Valerie Shaw points out, "they never cease to be 'somebody' in their families and villages" (290). Thus, her trials further establishes *Persuasion*'s different plot structure and the new kind of liminality Anne faces, with more resistance from all sides than previous heroines. As she loses the favor of both her lover and her family, it is her love interest that promotes her altered status, rather than the other Elliots.

In fact, Captain Wentworth's prominence minimizes the status she has gained in helping young Charles, as he has not yet approved of his former lover. Having neither forgotten nor forgiven Anne for her cruel treatment eight years prior, Frederick Wentworth recalls how she "had used him ill; deserted and disappointed him; and worse, she had shewn a feebleness of character in doing so" (54). Thus, in his renewed quest for a wife, he finds interest in either of the Miss Musgroves having "a heart, in short, for any pleasing young woman who came in his way, excepting Anne Elliot" (54). Anne's position of importance is therefore short lived and she must, once again, seek to prove herself to be useful as her good deeds fade out of prominent view. Given the importance of Captain Wentworth's position as an eligible and relatively wealthy bachelor, his disregard for Anne leaves her further marginalized in the group.

Their continued interactions, although necessary as they occupy the same social circle, demonstrate how greatly Anne Elliot suffers from not agreeing to Captain Wentworth's proposal, and how little the Captain now thinks of the woman who once declined his offer, solidifying her liminal position. Because of her past Anne faces another obstruction on her liminal path, and must therefore prove her worth to Captain Wentworth or risk losing the ability to fix her flawed society. He is the crucial member now, the one that others rely upon for guidance and so, if Anne is ever to move out of her liminality, she must join him to right the faults of the community.[24] Wentworth's charming nature and kind spirit do not extent to include the women who scorned him. Anne must, therefore, endure another key test to truly prove herself to Wentworth, and with his acceptance to grow in prominence in the society at Uppercross. As they see more of each

[24] Just as Emma needed Mr. Knightley to balance her more liberal view with his conservative, Anne must seek out a connection with Captain Wentworth for his role in connecting the gentry with the future morality, to balance out her worth as a member of the existing landed gentry. Just as Monaghan did not delve as deep into the connection between the two leading characters in *Emma*, my emphasis on the role of Captain Wentworth for Anne and the future of society differentiates my work from Monaghan's.

other the tension between Captain Wentworth and Anne subsides as she demonstrates, through her caring nature for the injured young Charles, that she is indeed kind spirited, proving herself worthy of this important member's attention. After accidently stumbling upon Anne nursing the boy, the two former lovers are left alone for the first time in eight years. Surprised and unnerved, for Captain Wentworth this uncomfortable situation "deprived his manners of their usual composure" (67). Yet both Anne and Wentworth demonstrate their good social graces as they are able to make idle conversation before others join their midst. It is especially important that Wentworth finds Anne as she is acting as a nursemaid to the child, demonstrating her kindness and humility, both aspects that Wentworth may doubt that she possess given her earlier treatment of him. An additional, and very literal, weight is added to Anne's situation as Charles's two-year-old brother begins to entertain himself at Anne's expense. Since "his aunt would not let him teaze his sick brother, he began to fasten himself upon her, as she knelt, in such a way that, busy as she was about Charles, she could not shake him off" (68). Though she tries to persuade him down, her situation does not allow her to succeed and she must continue to suffer, as she has done for the last eight years, with little force to change the momentum of any situation in the society that refuses to acknowledge her importance or needs.

Captain Wentworth's role in relieving Anne of this burden physically demonstrates an important shift in their relationship; it also marks a shift in her treatment within the Uppercross society, indicating another positive change for Anne's position. The young Musgrove will not relinquish his hold for anything, yet suddenly Anne finds herself released from the young boy "though he had bent down her head so much, that his little sturdy hands were unfastened from around her neck, and he was resolutely borne away, before she knew that Captain Wentworth had done it" (68-69). Although he is the one that has the most to hold against Anne, Captain

Wentworth is the one to relieve her of the burden of the additional struggle. Thus, he acknowledges the challenges she already faces and seeks to alleviate her stress, serving to demonstrate his good character and his recognition of hers. If looked at metaphorically, Anne seeks a release from her guilt and disappointment for Captain Wentworth. As John Wiltshire points out, "the boy's unruly attachment to her is an incarnation of Wentworth's still childish rage against, and therefore conflicted involvement with, Anne. His release of the boy thus figures as an initial movement towards his own relinquishment of a disabling psychological attitude" (79). As Captain Wentworth removes the boy from Anne's shoulders he is releasing the weight of the additional burden of his anger and resentment toward their past and emphasizing the moral integrity of both himself and Anne—thus aligning the couple as equals once again heightening Anne's role in society, though still not romantically situating the two. So while Anne does not experience any change in her true liminality yet, as the society as a whole has not grown to accept her worth, Anne's humility and genuine nature prove to build her merit in Captain Wentworth's eyes. This shift makes her liminal position much more comfortable until she is able to assert her dominance at a second key moment of tragedy. After this, although Captain Wentworth does not show the same kind of interest and affection for Anne as he does to the Miss Musgroves, he acts with respect and kindness toward Anne, now obviously taking into account her needs within the group. So when out on a walk, after suspecting Anne to be tired, he arranges for the Crofts to drive her back in their carriage. Thus, while he does not foster the same kinds of feelings for Anne as he once did, his recognition of her importance and use amongst their society marks an important shift in Anne Elliot's position. For the first time her needs and desires are being accounted for rather than just having her skillful uses acknowledged, paving the way for her moral guidance to create a potential for change in the gentry.

This brings Anne's growth out of liminality to another key moment of her journey as her role in the group continues to grow more prominent. When she joins the party on a trip to Lyme, an outing that eventually demonstrates Anne's importance, her new position marks her progress toward aggregation and incorporation. Several smaller moments prove her worth before a second extreme circumstance solidifies her role as an important leader amongst the landed gentry. Anne, once again, proves herself to be a kind force within the group, taking it upon herself as the only one to strike up conversation with Captain Benwick, to whom the recent loss of his fiancée has spurred a deep depression. Anne's kind words and attention help him break out of his shell, an aspect that does not go unnoticed or unappreciated by the others. Thus, this new appreciation for Anne's role demonstrates the community's important acknowledgement of morality and kindness, incorporating these values into their outing. The trip also progresses Captain Wentworth's affection for Anne. Here, spurred on by an admiring stranger, for the first time Captain Wentworth turns to admire Anne as well.[25] Then, Anne is able to truly shine and demonstrate her worth when tragedy once again confronts the group. Anne faces her second emergency with the confidence and power to solidify her place in this small society. As Louisa insists on foolishly jumping down steps that they come across on a walk and falls, hitting her head and falling unconscious, Anne is once again the voice of reason to help calm the situation. As the party assumes the worst the sanity of the group begins to break down. Anne is forced to mediate the situation, catching the swooning Henrietta, seeing to it that Louisa receives the attention she immediately needs, and responding to Wentworth's desperate cries for help. By guiding the group through this crisis Anne continues to demonstrate her worth to the group, and particularly to Wentworth. Likewise, Captain Wentworth maintains a certain level of composure

[25] We later find out that the stranger is Mr. Elliot, Anne's cousin, heir to her father's estate, and future prospective love interest. He becomes the man to challenge Wentworth for Anne's hand.

in the ill-fated disaster, seeking to help to do something for Louisa rather than lamenting for himself as the others are doing. Ultimately, this scene aligns the two characters in both compassion and moral strength. The incident allows Anne to, once again in a time of disaster, serve as an instructor for society. This time she is in the most prominent position of control, demonstrating that she has overcome her position as an outsider.

Through her calm control of Louisa's situation Anne is able to prove her worth to the Uppercross society and is openly acknowledged as the important figure. Captain Wentworth even suggests that she should stay to nurse Louisa, there being "no one so proper, so capable as Anne!" (95). Thus, not only has Anne become a member of their group, but as Captain Wentworth demonstrates, an intrinsic and important member, trusted in the most chaotic and disastrous of situations to maintain a level head and to demonstrate her virtue. Although it is ultimately settled that another member should stay behind to nurse Louisa to health, Captain Wentworth's open acknowledgment of not only Anne's worth but also of her superiority suggests that he has once again grown to appreciate her as he did eight years earlier. Although Wentworth is still in many ways attached to Louisa by propriety, in his guilt he turns to Anne for support—opening to her in a way that exposes his vulnerability and demonstrates his need for a person like Anne in his life, and as such in the lives of his community. With her inclusion and important social growth in the Uppercross society, there is hope that at least part of this older class of landed gentry may be willing to prove themselves worthy of their position. As the society begins to recognize her importance as a morally sound leader, they too prove themselves capable of change, a necessary aspect of this transitional journey for Anne Elliot's full growth. Anne might accept aggregation if she were to continue on with this smaller community of the landed gentry. She has passed her phase of uncertainty and stepped forward to lead her

community. As such, she is primed for a position of social reform as the Musgroves and their Uppercross friends demonstrate that they are willing to commit to her leadership.

Yet, as she returns to her family in Bath we see the Elliots' obstinate refusal to recognize or value Anne as a moral leader; their inability to move away from their vanity-driven lives demonstrates that they ultimately lack the capacity to become the moral leaders that they are intended to be given their position at birth. Anne's decision to leave Uppercross and join Lady Russell highlights the differences between these two communities. Her conversation with Lady Russell emphasizes Anne's own growth since she took the recommendation of her advisor to reject Captain Wentworth's proposal eight years prior. Anne cannot give the same importance to the frivolous topics that Lady Russell wishes to discuss and realizes that there is something more important in the world as "[s]he was actually forced to exert herself, to meet Lady Russell with any thing like the appearance of equal solicitude on topics which had by nature the first claim on her" (101-102). She is still mentally fixated on the world she left behind, and even the thought of her sister and father's situation in Bath could be but secondary to the situation at Uppercross, where the import of Louisa's recovery and a sincere interest in morality rather than vanity dominates the topics of conversation.

Anne has realized her own importance as she gains power at Uppercross and has a difficult time relinquishing her newfound status as she joins her family in Bath, emphasizing the choice that will soon come before the liminal heroine. Anne has grown to attach herself to the society in which she has an important social role and that contains friends that would heed her advice. At Uppercross Anne plays an important role to bring a sense of order to the chaotic world, which is lost in her interactions with Lady Russell and her father and sister. However, as she is forced back into this community where she still holds a position of lesser consequence,

Anne must recognize her position in the world and contemplate what she is willing to leave for the betterment of her own life and her community. It disheartens Anne to have to retire to Bath to be with her father and Elizabeth who, though eager to show her all of the new furniture and their arrangement in Bath, demonstrate that their frivolity has not subsided to make way for logic and morality given the harsh realities of their new situation. While she finds "[a] degree of unexpected cordiality" from her family's unusually warm greetings (111), they still do not heed what she tells them and Anne finds it disheartening to see her family degraded without their full realization. She looks to this time in Bath "with a sinking heart, anticipating an imprisonment of many months" especially compared with the growth and freedom that she experienced at Uppercross (111). The stagnant nature at Bath as compared to the growth at Uppercross is demonstrated in her father and sister's continued fixation on appearance. Sir Walter critically disparages the plain-looking women of Bath and continues to seek his place at the upper-most levels of distinction. In a way, Anne has experienced another stage of separation that physically removes her from the progress that she has made. If she is to continue her growth and learn anything from her time at Uppercross she needs to focus on what is possible for her community, and start to critically view her own family. As such, she must continue to exercise the confidence that she gained at Uppercross if she has any hope of completing her aggregation in the even more restrictive Bath society. Anne needs to realize that it may be particular members that are hopeless, most prominently her immediate family, and not society as a whole.

## *Anne's challenge*

While Anne was away with the Musgroves and Captain Wentworth, Sir Walter Elliot and Elizabeth had the opportunity to reacquaint themselves with their cousin Mr. Elliot, who they

had disowned for his marriage to a wealthy woman below his social status; even in this liberal forgiveness they exemplify their flawed view of the world, adjusting their standards once again without realizing their altered opinions. This modified alteration suggests that, while they have the propensity to openness and change, just as Anne does, her family does not recognize what they are doing. As such, Sir Walter and Elizabeth do not make larger adjustments but rather exceptions to their otherwise flawed attitudes. Even though they make exceptions to their biased understanding, they do not consciously allow these moments of change to alter their opinion overall. Therefore, they favor their vanity in the old structure rather than morality, as they continue to strive for connections with the elite and continue to take no notice of their responsibilities to society. Their acquaintance with Mr. Elliot grows fonder, but as Anne arrives she suspects that his true motives in Bath are actually to court Elizabeth. While everyone else is charmed by his manners, Lady Russell included, Anne remains cautious of her cousin and the acquaintances of the highest level in Bath to whom he introduces the Elliots. Anne, with a sensible eye, views these distant relatives for their personalities and moral qualities rather than their social rank. While the others brag of their attachment, too blind to any inadequacies in character that these new attachments may demonstrate, Anne turns to other members of the community. Thus, with her return to Bath, Anne's world is once again filled with the overwhelming attention to class status and appearances. She is forced into the same position she was in at the start of the novel, where her opinions and worth do not receive the same recognition of merit as they did with the sometimes silly, though kindhearted, Musgroves. Mary's family was at least susceptible to the acceptance of common decency and moral order, if incapable of producing it themselves. Thus, through her time back with her immediate family, Anne must

ultimately understand the stagnant impropriety of her family and seek to change her position if she is to attempt to escape her perpetual liminality.

Anne begins to behave in her society at Bath with the confidence that she has attained from her prominence as a moral leader at Uppercross. As Anne visits an old school friend who has fallen on hard times, she asserts her call for morality rather than rank, even as her family continues to obstinately refuse to alter their selfish values. Anne's friend Mrs. Smith has fallen on hard times yet remains a cheerful and eager acquaintance—qualities which Anne values as holding more authority than status or wealth, and she agrees to maintain this newly rekindled friendship, visiting often. While Anne's kindness to her fallen friend represents the amiable qualities necessary for a member of the morally sound landed gentry, her family continues to demonstrate that their own slight fall from fortune has done nothing to quell their dissatisfaction with those in lesser positions. At her preference to visit Mrs. Smith over accepting the invitation from the wealthy Dalrymples, Sir Walter severely criticizes her acquaintance: "Upon my word, Miss Anne Elliot, you have the most extraordinary taste! Everything that revolts other people, low company, paltry rooms, foul air, disgusting associations are inviting to you" (127-8). He attempts to make her change her arrangement but, holding true to propriety and her compassion for Mrs. Smith despite her lack of fortune or title, Anne refuses to succumb to the same type of submission that characterizes her earlier interactions with her family. This self-confident insistence acts as Anne's first step in moving beyond a simple acknowledgment of the flaws in her family, to take an action against their impropriety.

News from Anne's world in Uppercross soon arrives, further underlying a distinction between the world of the landed gentry capable of growth, and the stagnant and flawed lives of the Elliots at Bath. The letter tells news of the forthcoming arrival of the Crofts in Bath as well as

the engagement of Louisa and Captain Benwick,[26] a match pleasing to Anne both because she wishes the happiness of her two friends but also because it leaves Captain Wentworth, once again, unattached; with the entrance of the Crofts and Captain Wentworth to Bath, Anne will be able to reestablish her important role, rather than simply being a shunned member of the Elliot family and society. When Captain Wentworth arrives in Bath, however, Anne is disappointed to find that her family and Lady Russell refuse to acknowledge him, favoring Mr. Elliot and demonstrating their continued preference for class standing over genuine character. Ultimately, this behavior forces Anne to once and for all make a decision about which world she wishes to join. Anne soon tires of Bath and begins looking forward almost exclusively to the next event at which she should see Captain Wentworth. In primarily valuing Captain Wentworth, Anne choses the society that demonstrates the capacity of social growth, but that does not have the same members as the one in which she was raised. Although she has chosen, Anne continues to face obstacles that prevent her from truly embracing the world of Uppercross, as she does not actively remove herself from the one at Bath. Even though her family acknowledges Wentworth at the next event, Anne is unable to sit next to him at the concert, and her time is instead occupied with Mr. Elliot. He praises her skills and character, ultimately hinting at a desire that they be married. So, even after she has emotionally made her decision about what society she wishes to join, Anne is unable to disconnect from the world her family prizes and remains trapped by their restraints. When Anne is finally able to talk with Captain Wentworth, he is obviously jealous of Mr. Elliot and only briefly engages with Anne. Thus, while Anne has made her choice, her

[26] Louisa's growth from folly to an attachment with Captain Benwick is markedly similar to Marianne Dashwood's overall journey, thus demonstrating Austen's preference for reincarnation of previous plot points.

evening demonstrates that she must take an active stance to completely reject one world in favor of the other or risk losing her ability to leave her family's flawed society.

The following day Anne visits Mrs. Smith who proves to be an important connection for Anne and the Elliot family, despite her lack of fortune and fallen status. Mrs. Smith quickly explains Mr. Elliot's true nature and the role he played in her downfall. She tells Anne of the man "without heart or conscience; a designing, wary, cold-blooded being, who thinks only of himself" and of his lack of feeling for those "whom he has been the chief cause of leading into ruin, [and how] he can neglect and desert without the smallest compunction" (160). Mrs. Smith warns Anne away from the man that has caused so many problems for herself, and whom she knows wants to marry for money and the freedom of fortune rather than love. Thus, Anne learns the truth about her manipulative cousin. Mrs. Smith's important advice warns her away from any potential connection with a man that would destroy her family's wealth and name. It is ironic, therefore, that the connection that the Elliots disregarded so thoroughly is, in fact, the one that would save them from making a horrible mistake. Without this advice, the Elliots may have been thrust into a situation that would lead to further shame and a departure from the world of which the Elliots so strongly fight to remain a part. Heeding Mrs. Smith's warning Anne no longer humors Mr. Elliot's advances, much to his frustration. When she pointedly suggests an evening away from Mr. Elliot, Captain Wentworth overhears and notes. Thus, Anne takes an active stance, choosing her preferred world and sealing her fate.

The next day, Anne is able to truly reassess her situation after her long period of liminality, and demonstrate her new ideals as Captain Wentworth, once again, proposes to her. As they are in a room full of people, Captain Wentworth chooses to reveal his second offer for her in a love letter; he claims that his true love for her has never failed, and now that he has

gotten past the original heartbreak he seeks her hand. Anne is shocked at his proposal, but readily accepts, confirming her choice in the Uppercross gentry's world, with its new members. Anne reflects upon her journey as she seals her aggregation.[27] After all of her suffering and liminality, Robert Hopkins notes that finally "*Persuasion* gives Anne Elliot a second chance at happiness with Wentworth after he overcomes his pride and diffidence to propose to her again at the end of the narrative" (144). This renewed proposal ignites a series of reflections that both justify and remove Anne's past decision from any criticism, while simultaneously acknowledging how different their lives may have been. Anne's contemplation points to a central function of the novel: "[g]iven the continuing problem of understanding character," Susan Morgan emphasizes that "the particular focus of *Persuasion* is on how the very process of understanding can itself shape character" (*Meantime* 167). Anne's final move, in making the decision for herself rather than letting others take control over her life, marks an important demonstration of the difference in her countenance between the two proposals. Anne can experience her aggregation with her own personal growth in self-confidence and is able to reenter her society alongside the man that will allow for complete social reform and a continuation of the moral ideals Anne has been trying to instill all along.

## *Anne's choice in an altered society*

In their final decision Anne ultimately ends the novel as it could have been finished eight years previously. Anne and Captain Wentworth have grown to better understand their own roles

[27] It is interesting to note the difference between Anne's contemplation here and the realizations of other heroines in Austen's previous works. In fact, rather than focusing on her own flaws, she comes to more clearly recognize Captain Wentworth's actions toward her—a marked difference that seems appropriate given the differing nature of Anne and her society's growth in this novel as compared to previous works.

and each other, but Anne has also grown to establish not just a new position for herself but, in a way, a new society. While Wentworth's second proposal is now backed by his social standing and wealth, Anne's return to her previous engagement suggests something about the society that she originally heeded. Rather than accepting the advances of Charles Musgrove or Mr. William Elliot, Anne chooses to continue to reject the offers of suitors that she finds represent the flaws in society as she sees it. By marrying Captain Wentworth, Anne is admitting a new member into the social circle—one who has the proper moral grounding to be a leader; as Captain Wentworth gained his social standing and wealth, he was not tempted by the vanity and pride that have so egregiously touched the other members of Anne Elliot's social circle. He is thus separate from the same flaws that remove them from propriety, and which has prevented them from justly exercising their power over society. So, as Magee describes, "Anne waits instead for the man who appreciates her worth and loves her as a person . . . For her the convention has led her away from tradition and into a new social milieu" (203), changing her world in the choice of Wentworth.[28] Wentworth is elevated to the station of the moral leader, alongside Anne Elliot and the Uppercross community. Likewise, while the Elliots are not rewarded in the end,[29] they are treated as such because they have also not demonstrating the same level of growth, rather maintaining a similar understanding and depiction of the world as when they first started along the journey. Thus, we see the consequences of refusing to acknowledge a necessary change as the Elliots refuse to alter their behavior and as such are, in many ways, removed from their role

[28] Magee agrees with Monaghan about what the ending of the novel suggests about Anne's actions. Although I believe that Anne does not instill a complete change, as Magee and Monaghan suggest, it still seems important to note that Anne's actions do, in fact, act as far more progressive than anything we see in Austen's previous novels.

[29] By the end of the novel Elizabeth is the only one who remains single, as she is unable to find anybody that is worthy enough by birth who will likewise accept her faults. As such, the very pride with which she has acted has prevented her from achieving her ultimate goal.

entirely. This highlights the important power of liminality in society as it not only teaches neophytes about the basic building blocks of culture, but also can become so powerful as to punish members that refuse to undergo their obligatory transition—rejecting those members that refuse to behave appropriately with the final aggregation of a worthy member.

Anne must turn away from the most unworthy parts of her society in her own transitional journey to establish a predominate position from which she can create a larger impact on society. Seeing the truly redeemable qualities in the navy men (the class at which Sir Walter Elliot scoffs), Anne turns to these men, and mostly Captain Wentworth, to complete her growth, ultimately rejecting her father and eldest sister. The major differences between *Persuasion* and Austen's earlier novels highlights the necessity for cohesive growth in the liminal experience. Not only must the liminal heroine complete her journey, but also so too must the society in which she is operating learn and grow with her—requiring a willingness to change that Sir Walter Elliot lacks. In her time with the Musgroves, Anne is able to almost complete her transitional journey because this society is able to reflect her own growth. This community presents itself as willing to accept the necessary social reform that would return the society to its full moral strength, the final step necessary to complete Anne's stage of liminality. Part of the adaptability of this community also entails including the best of middle-class naval men amongst the landed gentry, taking the best social and moral leaders rather than simply reflecting upon social status. It is important for the ultimate transition that the heroine and her society grow together, as they do so each gains what knowledge is necessary for their ultimate return to morality. However, in *Persuasion*, part of the society that inherits this position falls short. Sir Walter Elliot and Elizabeth Elliot are unwilling to parallel Anne's journey, and as such they are unfit, so Anne must seek a new community to fit her ultimate removal from limen back into a

prominent role. However, in her stay with the Musgroves Anne sees part of the gentry reflect this willingness to grow, and so Anne is able to maintain at least part of the social structure as she does include part of her old society. This underlines that it is not completely the system, but rather particular members of the old landed gentry and their reluctance to adjust, that is ultimately stalling Anne's transitional journey.

As different as this plot may seem to be at first glance, *Persuasion* rings true to Austen's representation of society all along. In *Sense and Sensibility* the Dashwoods face a similar conclusion in which the heroines and their respective heroes retreat from, rather than serve to correct, the flaws in their society. In a way Marianne and Elinor Dashwood, along with Colonel Brandon and Edward Ferrars, escape from their flawed society to create their own moral space in the imperfect world. In this context, therefore, *Persuasion* is only a variation on this rejection of the flawed old community, one which the Dashwoods in *Sense and Sensibility* do not have strength enough to correct. We have also seen the flawed antiheroes dismissed from the societies they try to manipulate in the Bertram sisters as well as the Crawfords of *Mansfield Park*, all of whom are rejected for their immorality by the end. This is also true in *Pride and Prejudice*'s Lady Catherine de Bourgh (markedly also a character with a title just like Sir Walter) who is set right by her nephew in the end and who no longer has the same sway as she once utilized. In *Persuasion* the subtle changes to the plot still align it to earlier works, as Anne responds with the greater good of society in mind, not with a complete rejection of any attention or affection for her family but an important distancing and recognition of their faults.

If, by the end of the novel, it appears that Anne is rejecting the social structure that Austen has created in her previous novels—as Monaghan suggests—it only does so to an extent. Anne Elliot does decide to leave her traditionally rooted family in favor of the newly rising class

of the naval elite, but in so doing she also carries with her part of her adaptable society and older traditions. This suggests that, although in the case of the Elliots the reworking of the social order to better the community may be impossible, it is not necessarily always so. Wentworth represents a newly rising elite, the only one of Austen's heroes that succeeds in climbing the social ladder to become more worthy of the position among the elites. His inclusion also, however, acts as the reintegration of an already worthy member. As his monetary gain and rise in naval status does not alter his manners, which have always been those of a gentlemen, Wentworth's rise suggests that his behavior represents that which should be expected of the landed gentry. So, as Solinger believes, "[i]f in the end *Persuasion* authorizes a new masculine ideal," and thus I argue an ideal in the traditional ruling class, "it does so not despite but because of that ideal's incorporation of traditional gentlemanly traits" (275). Captain Wentworth comes to replace Sir Walter Elliot, whose title and status as a powerful elite falls when Wentworth establish his place amongst the other members of the gentry in his marriage to Anne; but Wentworth does still stand to represent an older ideal of the masculine gentleman. Thus, *Persuasion* does not go so far as to suggest that any member of this newly rising middle class could take on the responsibilities of a moral community leader and upturn the historical power of the landed gentry. Rather, Wentworth and his friends the Crofts and Captain Benwick, establish their prominence through the moral superiority which is required of the landed gentry, as "Wentworth, moreover, is arguably the only man in the novel capable of fulfilling the obligations of service that had always defined the gentleman" (Solinger 283). It is also important to note that these newly made powerful men are not completely replacing the old social structure as Anne's sister Mary, and her in-laws the Musgroves have demonstrated their capacity for growth (and have likewise joined hands with Captain Benwick in the engagement between Louisa Musgrove and the Captain). Thus, while

Anne and the Musgroves are embracing these newcomers into their powerful roles as the landed gentry, responsible for the moral integrity of society, this alteration does not come with a complete departure from the past, but rather simply a rejection of the very flawed and worst of the vain gentry.

## *THE FINAL NARRATIVES*

*Emma* and *Persuasion* represent an unlikely continuation of Austen's earlier themes of liminality. These two novels take an unexpected twist on the classic plot with two heroines that we might presume to be fixed in their positions, and thus without the threat of impending liminality. What makes Emma and Anne interesting, then, is to find that they are, in several important ways, liminal. Although they are by birth members of the landed gentry (unlike Fanny Price), and do not face the same kind of struggle with the threat of the loss of their position (as is the case for Elizabeth Bennet and Marianne and Elinor Dashwood), both face a series of obstacles that create just as devastating states of liminality. Emma's upbringing perpetuates a childish ignorance and selfishness that ultimately serves to threaten her happiness when her meddling goes so far as to potentially take away the one thing she realizes she needs for happiness. Likewise, Anne allows her society to control her and take away her chance to marry Captain Wentworth, leaving her in the position of an unwanted social castoff.

What they experience, therefore, is a similar style of moral and social growth that is necessary for their release from liminality. This perspective of growth from the point of view of a direct insider adds an additional complication to Austen's previous representation of social standing. Both Emma and Anne, therefore, experience a new kind of transition, with interesting deviations and similarities to Turner's three phases of the journey. Also striking is that while

*Emma* suggests that such growth is possible and necessary for the continuation of the hierarchical system that works to protect and maintain the moral integrity and needs of the whole community, Anne Elliot's experience suggests that there may be an alternative for the communities that cannot grow in the same way. Monaghan thinks that this points to the idea that "[b]y the time she wrote *Persuasion*, Jane Austen seems to have lost faith in the gentry" (143), but I think that there are subtleties involved that suggest that, rather than a complete alteration in the system, *Persuasion* suggests new depictions and solutions but not a complete overhaul. The social positioning of the newly moneyed Captain Wentworth and Crofts does deviate from the normal narrative structure of Jane Austen's previous five novels. These characters are in many ways beings in limen themselves, of the moral and monetary positioning to act as proper leaders of society, but without the historical placement and leisurely acquisition of their money. These characters are not, at the same time, comparable to the other soldiers that we have seen in previous works, such as the scheming George Wickham. They set themselves apart as the acquisition of money, though integral in their ability to exercise more freedom and more power, has not changed their morality in the slightest. Thus, Captain Wentworth and the Crofts stand to represent, contrary to the philosophy of Edmund Burke, that it is possible for the middle class to attain money in order to elevate their position while still maintaining standards of right and wrong.

# THE POWER OF WRITING AND RITUAL

The conclusions of Austen's romantic plots all emphasize the eventual union between the heroine and her ideal hero. But the political structures within which the heroine must navigate, and as such the transitional journey of all of the heroines, are all distinct enough and they are the really fascinating part about Austen's novels. The Austen plot can be distinct and yet simple because it is the story of a ritualistic journey, one which humankind has always faced in communities large and small. As van Gennep and Turner's works emphasize, these important rituals help us negotiate our complicated societies. Austen's manipulation of these rituals and the heroine's transitional journey is therefore representative of the larger struggles with which mankind has been confronted. The need for a transitional journey highlights the complicated structure that derives from our necessity to classify and categorize our surroundings in order to understand the world.

Therefore, each new depiction of liminality represents the necessary and constant adjustment of the transitional journey, one that has become fully integrated into society but is always unique to each individual's experience. Austen's novels further highlight the importance of the role of the journey and individual in society, as the process is both created by and representative of the community in which the individual is living. Through the barriers to entrance we can see where the various societies may be focused and as such where the flaws in their structures may be. As an outsider, the heroine must learn about the society she is leaving and is placed in an important position from which she may be most critical of the group (as it is easier to criticize as an outsider looking in); she ultimately may seek to change the society as she

reenters it, bettering herself and ultimately the community. The progression of Austen's plots in her last novels intertwines these elements, suggesting that the growth of the heroine is ultimately a crucial means of growth for society as a whole. The heroines play an important role in their communities as their moral integrity is vital to the overall function of society, making the knowledge gained and actions taken during the liminal stage even more important. Ultimately, this helps to explain why it is not only true that social growth and individual growth seem to be related, but also true that they are integrally connected—without one the other cannot happen. Because the actions of the heroine are so closely tied to the overall propriety of her society, she cannot complete her transition unless her community has accepted her attempts to fix the flaws.

## *RETURNING TO TURNER AND MONAGHAN*

Throughout this piece I have attempted to show how all of Jane Austen's characters experience a transitional journey that aligns with Turner's three phases, including the stage of initial separation, the period of limen with its important stage of reflection, and culminating in aggregation. I have tracked the progression of this adjustment through the course of Austen's six novels, just as I have integrated Monaghan's understanding of the role of the landed gentry into these novels. Monaghan looks at the landed gentry as the members of society that should act as moral guides to the rest of their communities, which explains why Austen's characters are frequently found in this community at a highly influential time of their lives. Thus, in many ways Monaghan and Turner both look to social structures involved in the basic building blocks of culture with the landed gentry acting to influence the rest of society. When the plots differ from these theoretical frameworks, however, the interplay between liminality, the social obligation of

the heroine, and the role of the flawed society becomes far more complicated and diverges from the simple structures laid out for ideal societies.

As Austen progresses in her writing, she alters her depictions of how society functions. Her stories move away from simply reproducing Turner's three stages, complicating the process. This new structure involves not just individual personal growth but also social reform—an element that is not present in Turner's transitional journey. Both the roles of the ruling landed gentry and the three-phase journey are based on the assumption that the society merely needs to reproduce itself. However, the heroine must also seek social reform in order to be truly fit for the role she must fill once she is newly reinstated into a strong position in the landed gentry. These heroines must therefore act as agents of social change while facing a complicated existence as both restricted liminal neophytes and morally sound individuals prepared to instill social improvement.

While Monaghan engages with liminality in a way that highlights the social rituals in place to move the heroine along, he does not explain the reasons why departures from traditional formations of liminality are so important. This is partially to do with the fact that, while briefly mentioning van Gennep, Monaghan does not engage with Turner's theories of liminality. Building on Monaghan's insights, I have taken a closer look at Turner's views of liminality to advance my understanding of Austen's achievement. In the transitional journey described by Turner, the neophyte is taught by her society what she needs to learn before she is ready for aggregation. In Austen, however, it is the immorality of society that most frequently impedes our liminal heroine's growth. As an outsider, the heroine can see the faults with her society, yet she is also at greater risk of losing her position if she seeks to diverge from her society. However, she may not enter society until it has met her standards of morality. As she is more moral than her

surrounding community and sees how the building blocks of society are not being upheld, Austen's heroine must simultaneously hold the position of the neophyte and the instructor. In fact, she must guide society toward propriety before she can rejoin its ranks. Once the heroine ultimately convinces the society of its faults she may become a member, and often a leader, as the society has finally adapted and members begin to fill their intended social roles. Ultimately, the growth of both the heroine and society means that the heroine can finally experience aggregation as her journey not only exposes the basic building blocks of society, but also alters them to fit with expected social morality.

## *THE LIMINAL AUTHOR*

Jane Austen's own liminality helped her to understand the challenges and dangers that face her heroines. Her progression of separation, limen, and (to some extent) aggregation likewise mimics Turner's transitional phases with some noteworthy exceptions. At several times during her life Austen experienced a separation from her home community: as she went off to school twice, in her several moves later on in life, and most prominently in her mid-life move to Bath in 1801. During each of these times Austen entered a new social world, and as such, was not entirely an insider until she grew to learn about the society surrounding these new spaces. For her most traumatic instance of separation, from her childhood home to Bath in 1801, Austen was so unsettled that she was unable to write. Austen, therefore, faced the beginning of the transitional journey firsthand several times and fully understood how uncomfortable her liminal heroines would be. Although she was able to eventually experience some amount of aggregation, during these times Austen was never fully settled in her community, dying as a single woman who lived most of her life reliant upon others for monetary stability. Therefore, Austen was

socially liminal during much of her life. Her inability to experience aggregation, which Turner believes completes the transitional journey, highlights how unstable her life was given her deviation from the conventional roles expected of her.

Austen's career also forced her into a state of liminality. Austen experienced very little success as a writer until later in her life. More importantly, this position of female authorship was highly contested and Austen even reflects some of this societal attitude in her works. For example, *Northanger Abbey* is highly critical of Catherine's reliance on gothic fiction but also portrays female authorship in a negative light. Although Henry Tilney thinks that that "[t]he person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid" (77), he does not give much power to the female author. As he teases Catherine, Henry describes the general flaws with women's writing as developed from:

> "this delightful habit of journalizing which largely contributes to form the easy style of writing for which ladies are so generally celebrated. Every body allows that the talent of writing agreeable letters is peculiarly female . . . As far as I have had opportunity of judging, it appears to me that the usual style of letter-writing among women is faultless, except in three particulars . . . A general deficiency of subject, a total inattention to stops, and a very frequent ignorance of grammar." (16)

Although Mr. Tilney's lesson is to teach Catherine to move beyond this general style of writing and superficial reflections on her world, his criticism does reflect the perceptions of female writing and authorship both within the text and within Austen's real world. While being both aware of these restrictions and the limited capacity for social change through writing, Austen still managed to produce highly critical pieces that reflected human nature, the transitional period, and societal flaws as well. Yet her works balanced this societal criticism with a self-critical

account of how little literature alone can do to instill change. Austen heroines that rely solely on literary education do not succeed until they actively engage with their communities, highlighting the limitations of the novel. Thus, Austen worked to simultaneously critique her community and recognize her own restrictions as an author, balancing the theme of liminality with her own call for social change.

## *JANE AUSTEN'S STICKINESS*

Austen recognized that she could only do so much without the power to create the social change and adjust the world of which she writes so critically. She faced challenges as she made claims about social changes that needed to take place, but could not instill the same kind of social reform as her heroines. In her critical presentation of flawed uses of simple literary education, Austen exercised some power while experiencing different kinds of liminality her whole life. However, this does not mean that Austen can do nothing. Her novels repeatedly see the right leaders step into power, ultimately fixing their respective flawed worlds. Her own prominence and continued importance in the literary world suggests that although she may not have created change for her contemporary society, she did work toward a growth of knowledge and ultimately laid the groundwork for change, leading the way for the more apparently progressive works of those writing after her. Austen facilitates the future criticism of the literary canon's restriction of women, pointing openly in *Persuasion* to the historically disempowered role of women: "Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove any thing" (188). Thus, like Heilbrun after her, Austen's criticism not only marked the challenges for female authorship, but also worked to establish the importance that this struggle

must change. Her role in the history of women in literature as well as her compelling storytelling seem to be the prominent reasons that Austen's works have remained popular even today.

Ultimately, the reason that Austen's works have lasted is the same reason that she is obsessed with retelling the same rituals—why she devoted all of her novels to the reworking of the same plot. The time of transition is so compelling to her, and us, that she focused her entire adult literary career reworking similar plots. Yet she presents this complicated time in such a fascinating way that she is able to create a completely different work six times. Austen explores rituals that push the heroine out of her original liminal position back to her stable place in society, while simultaneously causing important social reform that will make her society worthy of her as she becomes worthy of it. The whole journey is about social reform and resurrection as much as personal discovery and this may be why people connect with the liminal plot so strongly. Although she did not have a large outpouring of support when she first published her novels and has faced countless critics since then, including and notably Mark Twain and Charlotte Brontë, Austen's fame has grown greatly since her death, hitting its stride after the publication of the first biography of her life by James Edward Austen-Leigh in 1870 and again after film adaptations of the novels began to surface in the 1990s (see Harman xx).

Through countless film adaptations and copy-cat fan fiction that take Austen's characters on past the end of their novels, Austen and her works have taken on a life of their own—probably one at which Austen herself would scoff. Yet these new works and films perpetuate Austen's popularity as they have their own critics and followers. Her important literary twists allow us to continue to explore liminality and explain why Austen continued to write about these rituals of discovery. It tells us not only about ourselves but also about the society around us. As Emily Auerbach says, "[p]ut together, the heroines, heroes, and key minor figures in Austen's

novels offer a penetrating study of human nature in any era as well as the particular political and social systems of Austen's day" (288). We learn about our social structures and our own place within them through discovering Austen's liminal heroines. The fulfillment of the transitional journey through to aggregation in each of the novels requires different accomplishments with the same ultimate goal in the eventual removal of both heroine and society from the position of liminality, serving as both a reward for the character in personal growth and as a means of social reform for the greater good of society. This message is perpetually intriguing as it is so complex that it can take on many forms, only some of which Austen explores, and yet so simple that every reader can understand it.

The stickiness of the novels, that aspect that will keep Austen around, is the story—the plot that highlights liminality. She discusses something that has remained relevant to almost every generation since Austen first gained mass popularity because these rituals have always been such a strong part of society and always will be. In her literary works Austen has come across a key element of any culture and society and as such connects with almost every reader. It is "Austen's fidelity to truth (not 'universally acknowledged' truisms but the reality before her) [that] makes her work perennial" (Auerbach 270). The period of limen and rituals that accompany it are simultaneously fascinating and complex while being so simple that every individual must experience some time of limen throughout their life (and given the role of the ritual will probably face liminality many times). It is so much so that the concept and rituals of liminality have been a study of human nature and not just a literary notion; first discussed by van Gennep and developed further since *The Rites of Passage*, liminality has always played an important role in society and, likely, always will as people will continue to face challenges as they move from one role in life to another. Austen's honest portrayal of the growth and ultimate

success of the worthy heroine is coupled with the social reform necessary to correct the flaws in societal morality. So while it may appear that Austen is discarding Turner's model of the transitional phases, in fact, Austen is refining it to fit with a more challenging reality—deepening our understanding of the human condition.

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# APPENDIX A: JANE AUSTEN TIMELINE

Some of the specific dates in Austen's life have been lost in time. Although she maintained correspondences throughout much of her life, Cassandra Austen destroyed many of the letters that that may have allowed us to more accurately date certain events. I have compiled this timeline in reference to what I have found, but it is impossible to know some of these dates with absolute certainty.

- **December 16, 1775:** Jane Austen was born at Steventon Rectory.
- **Spring-Autumn 1783:** The Austen sisters Jane and Cassandra attended boarding school with their cousin Jane Cooper in Oxford. Their schooling here ended abruptly as typhoid swept the city and all three girls became ill.
- **Spring 1785 - December 1786:** Cassandra and Jane attended Abbey House Boarding School but did not learn much and were eventually withdrawn.
- **December 1786:** When they returned home from boarding school, the household was visited by special guests Philadephia Hancock and 25 year-old Eliza de Feuillide.
- **1787- June 1793:** Jane Austen produced her first works that would be compiled into three volumes.
- **December 1791:** Jane's third eldest brother, Edward, married Elizabeth Bridges.
- **March 1792:** James, the oldest of Jane's brothers, married Anne Mathew.
- **June 1793:** Austen begins work on 'Elinor and Marianne' (*Sense and Sensibility*). She would not read it aloud to the family until 1795 and it would not be published for some years.

- **1795-1796:** Jane Austen had a prolonged flirtation with Tom Lefroy which ended as neither of the young people had the financial stability to marry.
- **1796:** *First Impressions* (the original title of *Pride and Prejudice*) was started either during a visit to brother Edward and Elizabeth (his wife) or immediately upon returning in October.
- **February 1797:** Cassandra's fiancé Tom Fowle died of yellow fever on a return journey from the West Indies. After this point neither of the Austen sisters would be seriously engaged with any other male suitor.
- **1797:** Austen completed *First Impressions* and her father offered it to publisher Thomas Cadell who would decline.
- **1797:** Long time friend Eliza de Feuillide married Henry Austen.
- **1798-9:** *Northanger Abbey* was originally written under the name *Susan*. This work would not be published until after Jane Austen's death.
- **1801:** George Austen, Jane's father, decided to move the family to Bath. They would arrive in May and this would start Jane Austen's decade-long hiatus from writing any substantial works. She found the atmosphere of Bath to not be conducive to her writing.
- **December 2, 1802:** Jane accepted a proposal of marriage from Harris Bigg-Wither, a close family friend, but thought over her decision that night and declined the offer the very next day.
- **1803:** Austen began writing *The Watsons*, a story of women that are denied inheritance after their father's death. Austen abandoned the story after the death of her own father.
- **January 1805:** George Austen died after a short illness, leaving Mrs. Austen, Jane, and Cassandra at the mercy of Jane's brothers.

- **July 1806:** The Austen women left Bath for good and spent the rest of the summer with relatives. Eventually Cassandra, Jane, and Mrs. Austen moved to Castle Square in February 1807 where they shared the space for two years with Frank, Mary, and their children.
- **April 1809:** Austen wrote to Benjamin Crosby & Son to complain of delay in publishing 'Catherine' (*Northanger Abbey*). The firm replied that they were not obligated to publish it but would sue Jane and the Austens if she were to attempt to publish it elsewhere. They offered to part with manuscript and copyright at the price they had paid (10 pounds) for it originally. As the Austens were unable to pay the 10 pounds, Benjamin Crosby & Son retained their ownership over the manuscript without publishing it.
- **July 1809:** The Austen sisters, their mother, and Martha Lloyd moved to Chawton.
- **1809:** *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* were being revised.
- **Winter 1810-11:** An agreement was reached with publishers that *Sense and Sensibility* would be published on commission. The novel went to the presses in January 1811.
- **1811:** Austen likely started work on *Mansfield Park*. While it could have been started some time before, scholars agree that by this time she was seriously working on the novel. Austen finished it by June 1813.
- **April 1813:** Eliza de Feuillide died.
- **1813:** *Pride and Prejudice* was published. Due to proper advertisement it received a warm reception.
- **January 1814- March 1815:** Jane Austen wrote *Emma* and offered it to John Murray for publishing in August or September of 1815.
- **August 1815 – July 1816:** Austen wrote the first draft of *Persuasion*.

- **November 1815:** Austen reached an agreement that the second editions of *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* would be published on standard commission.
- **December 1815:** *Emma* was advertised and published.
- **August 1816:** After completing *Persuasions,* Jane wrote the preface for *Northanger Abbey*.
- **January 1817:** Austen began *Sanditon*, setting it aside on March 18th when the illness that would eventually kill her became too much. What she had completed would be published posthumously in 1925 as *Fragments of a Novel by Jane Austen.*
- **July 18, 1817:** Jane Austen died after fighting with an illness. It has never been confirmed what killed her but it has been suspected that she died of Addison's disease, Hodgkin's lymphoma, or bovine tuberculosis.
- **December 1817:** Henry Austen wrote 'Biographical notice of the author' to be included in the publications of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion.*