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Frances Burney's Queer Gothic: *The Wanderer* as Critique of Reproductive Futurity

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Abstract: Drawing on George Haggerty's *Queer Gothic*, Lee Edelman's *No Future*, and Jose Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia*, this paper positions *The Wanderer* as both a female gothic and a queer gothic text through its representations of sapphism and its critique of the marriage narrative and reproductive futurity. In *The Wanderer*, Burney locates Juliet's (who also goes by the Incognita, L.S. and Ellis) source of gothic horror in the marriage plot and the obligation of women to embrace reproductive futurity. However, Juliet's escape from her coerced marriage represents only a part of the novel's larger refusal of linear life paths and sexual developmental narratives. For both Mr. Ireton and Sir Jaspar Harrington, reproductive futurity unravels itself. It generates the gothic specter of male disempowerment—figured equally through marriage and its avoidance—that prevents both men from achieving it, and this resistance to reproductive futurity compounds the novel's queer gothic narrative bent. The article ends by tracing Elinor's trajectory from Wollstonecraftian radical to someone obsessed with gender normativity and marriage. When marriage becomes foreclosed, Elinor becomes a wanderer who enacts her own unique, queer path.

In the introduction to Frances Burney's 1814 novel *The Wanderer*, Margaret Doody notes the extent to which the gothic animates Burney's work, citing *Cecilia* (1782) as her most gothic and *Camilla* (1796) as her least gothic novel. Written in the 1770s and 1780s, Burney's early novels influenced gothic authors such as Ann Radcliffe and William Godwin, and Burney's last two novels were in turn influenced by those novelists. Despite discussing the gothic in Burney's more frequently studied novels (*Evelina*, *Cecilia*, and *Camilla*), Doody offers little commentary on *The Wanderer* as a gothic text. Laure Blanchemain's more recent essay attempts to identify gothic aspects of *The Wanderer*, but her insistence on what Eugenia DeLamotte has called "the shopping-list approach" to gothic (5)—where a text must include a long list of gothic elements to be considered a gothic text—leads Blanchemain to focus on the sublime and assert that the novel's lack of "foreign places and medieval settings" means that *The Wanderer* "cannot be described as a gothic novel" (163). Tyler Tichelaar reads *The Wanderer* as a gothic rewriting of *Evelina* and argues for Juliet as a gothic wanderer (102-04). This essay offers a fuller reading of *The Wanderer* as a female gothic novel, but argues that it is also a queer gothic novel through its depiction of same-sex desire and its insistent critique of what Lee Edelman has termed reproductive futurity, a system that "remains, at its core, conservative insofar as it works to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* social order, which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of its inner Child" (2-3). In *The Wanderer*, Burney locates Juliet's (who also goes by the Incognita, L.S. and Ellis) source of gothic terror in the marriage plot and the obligation of women to

embrace reproductive futurity. However, Juliet's flight from forced marriage and patriarchal power represents only a part of the novel's larger refusal of linear life paths and sexual developmental narratives.

In *Art of Darkness*, Anne Williams argues that female gothic features a heroine fleeing oppression, "generates suspense through the limitations imposed by the chosen point of view" (102)," uses terror (or the explained supernatural), and often features a happy ending, usually coinciding with marriage.[1] Upon first encountering the Incognita while crossing the English Channel, Elinor tells Albert Harleigh, "She's a nun, then, depend upon it. Make her tell us the history of her convent" (13). In this scene, Elinor condenses two stock gothic characters into the Incognita: the nun and the gothic heroine fleeing patriarchal power. Although not revealed until much later in the novel, the Incognita is fleeing the commissary, who has forced her into an illegitimate marriage to gain access to her inheritance. Elinor continues to position the Incognita as a gothic heroine when she jokingly accuses Harleigh of wanting "to have all the stories of those monks and abbesses to yourself!" (13). Elinor's assumptions about the Incognita are eventually revealed to be true when, later in the novel, Juliet is revealed to have been raised in a convent and to have fled a series of oppressive men, including the commissary, Lord Denmeath, Mr. Ireton (who repeatedly traps her), and libertine suitors like Sir Lyell Sycamore who doubles as a gothic villain attempting to abduct her (457-58). Likewise, the novel is set twenty years before its publication, "during the dire reign of the terrific Robespierre," and the plot revolves around family secrets, an element that Robert Miles has suggested is key to the gothic (46-50).

Julia Epstein has noted the gothic resonances of Elinor's suicide scenes (188), which set a gothic tone using the explained supernatural. Having summoned Harleigh and Juliet to the churchyard under false pretenses, Elinor appears to Juliet:

> Startled, she looked more earnestly, and then clearly perceived, though half hidden behind a monument, a form in white; whose dress appeared to be made in the shape, and of the materials, used for our last mortal covering, a shroud. A veil of the same stuff fell over the face of the figure, of which the hands hung down strait at each lank side.
>
> Struck with awe and consternation, Juliet involuntarily ceased her struggles for freedom; and Harleigh, who saw her strangely moved, pursuing the direction of her eyes, discerned the object by which they had been caught; who now, slowly raising her right hand, waved to them to follow; while, with her left, she pointed to the church, and, uttering a wild shriek, flitted out of sight. (579)

This scene initially feels like something taken from a novel by Ann Radcliffe or Regina Maria Roche, and just like those female gothic novels, the terror of this gothic moment evaporates when the specter is revealed as yet another of Elinor's

dramatic performances.

Since the 2006 publication of George Haggerty's *Queer Gothic*, gothic scholarship has undergone a general shift from discussions of female and male gothic to queer and, most recently, transgothic, which we can see as we move from Burney's gothic depictions of Elinor to those of Ellis.[2] Key to such interpretations is Haggerty's idea that a "wide range of writers, dispersed historically and culturally, use 'gothic' to evoke a queer worldview that attempts to transgress the binaries of sexual decorum" (2). *The Wanderer* evokes a queer worldview through Ellis's relationships with two women: Lady Aurora Granville and Gabriella. While still known as Ellis, Juliet is coerced into performing the role of Lady Townly in Elinor's private production of *The Provoked Husband* and meets Lady Aurora Granville after the performance. Lady Aurora almost immediately forms a connection with Ellis: "so warm an interest was kindled in the generous bosom of Lady Aurora, that the desire to serve and give comfort to her new favourite, became, in a short time, indispensable to her own peace" (118). Given Ellis's unknown past, this connection quickly becomes suspect, and after her lack of identity is revealed, the women are ordered to cease communicating. Yet the manner of this revelation suggests that this prohibited connection is about more than class mixing. In the scene at Mrs. Howel's house, "No one spoke; no one seemed to know how to begin a general or common conversation; no one could find a word to say" (126). This rhetoric of the unspeakable has a long history in sexuality studies as code for same-sex desire,[3] and many scenes involving Ellis and Lady Aurora incorporate this double meaning of class and sexual scandal. For example, upon hearing carriages arrive to take Lady Aurora away,

> Is she so nearly gone? Ellis cried; Ah! when may I see her again?—To the hall, to wait in the hall, she longed to go herself, to catch a last view, and to snatch, if possible, a kind parting word; but the tremendous Mrs. Howel!—she shrunk from the idea of ever seeing her again.
>
> Soon afterwards, she heard the carriages drive up to the house. She now went to the window, to behold, at least, the loved form of Lady Aurora as she mounted the chaise. Perhaps, too, she might turn around, and look up. Fixt here, she was inattentive to the opening of her own room-door, concluding that the house-maid came to arrange her fire, till a soft voice gently articulated: "Miss Ellis!" She hastily looked round: it was Lady Aurora; who had entered, who had shut herself in; and who, while one hand covered her eyes, held out the other, in an attitude of the most inviting affection.
>
> Ellis flew to seize it, with joy inexpressible, indescribable, and would have pressed it to her lips, but Lady Aurora flinging both arms round the neck of her new friend, fell

upon her bosom, and wept. (134)

These women have known each other for only a short time, yet the scene suggests two lovers parting. This is reflected in Burney's description of their "inexpressible, indescribable" joy at having one last embrace, Ellis's desire to kiss Aurora's hand, and their mutual confession of love as they part: "You can still, then, love me, my Miss Ellis?" Aurora asks, to which Ellis replies, "Ah! Lady Aurora! if I dared say how much!" (135). These confessions are followed by a discussion of living together: "Do not talk thus, my dear, dear Miss Ellis! Oh! if I were my own mistress—with what delight I should supplicate you to live with me entirely! to let us share between us all that we possess; to read together, study our musick together, and never, never to part!" (136).

A sapphic relationship is further suggested by their secret correspondence (144) and Mrs. Howel's repeated attempts to permanently separate them. She first enjoins Ellis "to hold no species of intercourse with Lady Aurora Granville, or with Lord Melbury, either by speech, or writing, or message" (132). Claudia Johnson briefly notes that "[i]t is impossible to read these, or any descriptions of Lady Aurora's and Ellis/Juliet's relationship without confronting the ecstatically homoerotic space opened out by warps in sentimental ideology" (178) but writes only that "Burney heterosexualizes it first by deflecting it onto Lady Aurora's brother, Lord Melbury, who shares his sister's ardor, and whose erotic excitement is more articulable, though less delicate" (179). Later, after confronting Juliet at Arundel Castle, Mrs. Howel locks her in a room and refuses to free her until she agrees not to see Lady Aurora, a demand that, very tellingly, Mrs. Howel does not make regarding Lord Melbury. Like the apparently sapphic relationship between Olivia and Elena that Ann Radcliffe presents and then defuses in *The Italian*, Burney offers a sapphic relationship only to unravel it by revealing Juliet and Aurora as long-lost half-sisters.

If Johnson mentions the homoerotics between Juliet and Lady Aurora only in passing, Burney's major critics completely overlook her relationship with Gabriella, who first appears in Brighthelmstone as a poor émigré of unknown background (e.g., as Juliet's double). Before long, the two women meet, recognize each other as childhood friends, and are reunited. In French, Juliet addresses Gabriella as "my friend! my much beloved friend!" and "Locked in each other's arms, pressed to each other's bosoms, they now remained many minutes in speechless agony of emotion, from nearly overpowering surprise, from gusts of ungovernable, irrepressible sorrow, and heart-piercing recollections; though blended with the tenderest sympathy of joy" (387). Burney's emphasis on the unspeakable emotion in this exchange resonates as a code for same-sex desire to those who understand the history of sexuality. Such passages appear throughout Juliet's interactions with Gabriella. For example, after learning of Gabriella's failed marriage and the death of her child, Juliet "could bear, she cried, all but this; all but beholding the friend of her heart, the daughter of her benefactress, torn from

the heights of happiness and splendour" (389). Likewise, when Harleigh asks Juliet why she appeared in the churchyard, she describes Gabriella as "a friend, a beloved friend!" (593). Later, when Gabriella tells Sir Jaspar Harrington what she knows of Juliet's history, she says, "We were brought up together!—in the same convent, the same governess, the same instructors, were common to both till my marriage. And now, again,—as before that period,—I have not the most distant idea of any possible happiness, that is not annexed to her presence" (640). While in the convent, "more united by the same sentiments than by the same studies, Gabriella had formed with her the tender, confiding, and unalterable friendship, that had bound them to each other with an even sisterly love" (644).

These two female relationships prefigure the long-standing debate in lesbian studies over what Lillian Faderman terms lesbian sensibility (207-10)[4] and what Terry Castle calls the apparitional lesbian. Rather than argue for one or the other of these supposed opposites, we might consider these relationships in terms of both/and: women who are *both* friends *and* experience something beyond friendship along the lines that Eve Sedgwick proposes: "an intelligible continuum of aims, emotions, and valuations" that link "lesbianism with the other forms of women's attention to women" (2). Indeed, Susan Lanser has argued that, after 1600, "intimacies between women became entangled with contests about authority and liberty, power and difference, desire and duty, mobility and change, order and governance. In short, the sapphic served the social imaginary as one way to confront challenges to the predictable workings of the universe" (2). By presenting readers with this sapphic relationship—a relationship that can be read as sexual but also as something that extends into other areas of the female affective spectrum, Burney blends women's concerns about many of the issues that Lanser notes above with apprehensions about female sexuality.

Moving beyond this sapphic gothic reading of the novel, the novel reads as queer gothic in the larger sense that Edelman offers. For Edelman, queerness has value precisely because it challenges the "viability of the social while insisting on the inextricability of such resistance from every social structure" (3). Thus, queerness represents not only differences in gender or sexual desire, but also a social orientation that resists a politics centered on reproduction and the figure of the child that "remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmic beneficiary of every political intervention" (Edelman 3). Insofar as Juliet refuses all forms of identity throughout most of the novel, she embodies Edelman's idea of queerness: a refusal of "every substantiation of identity, which is always oppositionally defined, and by extension, of history as a linear narrative (the poor man's teleology) in which meaning succeeds in revealing itself—*as itself*—through time" (4). Juliet's place as nameless, liminal, wandering subject stems from her flight from the commissary, and the discarding of her wedding ring and her pursuit by emasculated male suitors (Harleigh and Sir Jaspar) further the novel's overall theme of detachment from normative gender and reproductive social structures.[5]

As the Incognita, Juliet enters the novel as sexually suspect because of her flight from France unescorted, her assumed nationality and religion, and her apparent race. When the Incognita boards the ship for England, the other passengers hear her "imploring, in the French language," for "pity and admission" (11) and assume that she is French. Although she dispels the idea, stating, "I am no foreigner,—I am English!" (26), that initial assumption has planted seeds of doubt in the minds of the other passengers. Mrs. Maple accuses her of being a thief and a French spy (25), and the Admiral assumes she is a fallen woman (37). These suspicions are exacerbated by English prejudices against the French: Having grown up in France, she is probably Catholic, and, as Haggerty has shown, during the 1790s, the English viewed Catholic countries as queer spaces: "attitudes about sexuality" were "shaped by attitudes toward Catholics and Catholic countries. Throughout the eighteenth century, it was a commonplace that sodomy was imported from Italy and France, if not from more exotic locales, and often monasteries and convents were seen as locales where same-sex desire could flourish" (*Queer Gothic* 66). This association of same-sex desire with France and Catholic spaces like convents adds another layer of sapphic meaning to Elinor's earlier speculation that the Incognita is a nun on the run.

Likewise, the ambiguity of the Incognita's race and ethnicity fuels such speculations. Although later revealed as part of her disguise, the Incognita first appears as a woman with "hands and arms of so dark a colour, that they might rather be styled black than brown" (19). Riley immediately questions her race, ethnicity, and nationality by inquiring, "what part of the world might you come from? The settlements in the West Indies? or somewhere off the coast of Africa?" (19). These comments indicate more than Riley's desire to denigrate the racial other; they also suggest sexual stigmas associated with racial, ethnic, and national identity. In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock notes that "By the nineteenth century, popular lore had firmly established Africa as the quintessential zone of sexual aberration and anomaly—'the very picture,' as W.D. Jordan put it, 'of perverse negation'" (428). Likewise, as Felicity Nussbaum discusses in *Torrid Zones*, since the mid-eighteenth century, Europeans have debated the effects of climate on sexuality and generally attributed sexual excess to people from warmer climates (8-10). Thus, early in the novel, the Incognita's seeming Catholicism and ethnically ambiguous blackness work in tandem with British assumptions about geography, nation, religion, race, and colonialism to construct the Incognita as a queer subject of color. Even as these religious and racial associations fall away, the Incognita's refusal of identity (the Incognita, L.S., and Ellis are all identities thrust upon her by others), her lack of domestic and class fixity, and her refusal of marriage persist.

Where *The Wanderer* diverges from a queer gothic reading, then, is in its restoration of the Incognita's identity as Lady Juliet Granville and the traditional gothic restoration of the social order through marriage. This inability of the narrative to maintain its queer trajectory should not be surprising given "the long-stand-

ing critical consensus that even as gothic texts make possible a range of transgressive forms of gender and sexuality," they too often exclude "the very transgressions that they catalogue" (Marshall, "Beyond Queer Gothic" 41). It is tempting to read Juliet's restoration of identity and her marriage to Harleigh as reward, and yet, for the queer reader, these undercut her queerness, partially foreclosing the larger social resistance she has embodied.

If, near the novel's end, Juliet refers to her coerced marriage to the commissary in negative terms such as "shackles" (862) and "slavery" (863), she also expresses revulsion at the idea of marriage—even to Harleigh—when she learns of the commissary's execution in France:

> What a change! her feet tottered; she sustained her shaking frame against the Admiral; she believed herself in some new existence! yet it was not unmixed joy that she experienced; there was something in the nature of her deliverance repulsive to joy; and the perturbed and tumultuous sensations which rushed into her breast, seemed overpowering her strength, and almost shattering even her comprehension… (856)

Juliet feels the elation of being freed from her tyrannical faux-marriage, but at this point, she also worries about the Bishop's safety and realizes that her relationship with Gabriella might be precluded by Gabriella's return to France and Juliet's expected marriage to Harleigh. Burney attempts to mitigate Juliet's fear of separation from Gabriella when, after marrying Harleigh, Juliet returns to France to visit the Marchioness and while there, "not vainly, she strove to console her beloved Gabriella" (871). This suggests that Juliet and Gabriella may continue their relationship after Juliet's marriage, albeit sporadically, because they live in different countries. By leaving their future meetings off the page, Burney allows for such a possibility.

Juliet's equivocation about marriage also reflects her unease with how Harleigh expresses his idea of love: "Loveliest Miss Ellis! most beloved Miss Granville! My own,—at length! at length! my own sweet Juliet! that, and that only can be to my taste which has brought me to the bliss of this moment!" (862). Through his emphasis on ownership, Harleigh repeatedly defines love as possession.[6] What is more, marrying Juliet seems to matter to him only when it augments his taste and his bliss, not hers. For her part, Juliet recounts to Aurora "the various events, the unceasing obligations, which had formed and fixed her attachment" to Harleigh, again suggesting that, for Juliet, marriage—whether to the commissary or to Harleigh—is something women do out of obligation, not desire or love (864).

If Juliet is reluctantly reclaimed through the heteronormative marriage plot, Mr. Ireton and Sir Jaspar resist reproductive futurity more directly. Late in the novel, shortly after learning of Juliet's family background, Sir Jaspar confesses his history:

> it pleased my wise progenitors to entail my estate upon my next of kin, in case I should have no lineal heir. Brought up with

> the knowledge of this restriction to the fantasies of my future will, I conceived an early suspicion that my younger brother built sundry vain-glorious castles upon my celibacy; and I determined not to reach my twentieth year before I put an end to his presumption. The first idea, therefore, that fastened upon my mind was that of marriage. (631)

As Sir Jaspar notes, the pressures of reproductive futurity simultaneously split the family and catalyze his pursuit of a mate. Sir Jaspar's fear of futurity—a future where his "celibacy," that is, his lack of reproductivity, causes his younger brother to inherit his estate—becomes the catalyst for his pursuit of reproductive futurity. He seeks potential mates only to find that his fear of ruining his own future by marrying badly prevents him from marrying at all:

> But as I entertained a general belief, that I should every where be accepted from mercenary motives, I viewed all females with the scrutiny of a bargain-maker. Thankless for any mark of partiality, difficult even to absurdity, I sought new faces with restless impatience; modestly persuaded that I ought to find a companion without a blot! yet, whatever was my success, regularly making off from every fair charmer, after the second interview, through the fear of being taken in. (631)

For Sir Jaspar, the fear of competing negative futures—one where he does not marry and his brother usurps his estate and another where he marries the wrong woman and procreates the wrong kind of future—prevents him from achieving the reproductive futurity that society demands. In this sense, compulsory heterosexuality and reproductive futurity entail their own demise. Sir Jaspar tries to marry to fulfill his social obligations as the oldest son, but his fear of being swindled by a female adventurer prevents his fulfillment of that obligation. This, in turn, spurs him to warn his heir, Mr. Ireton, and the very act of warning Mr. Ireton causes him to repeat Sir Jaspar's pattern.

In the scene where Mr. Ireton traps Juliet in Mrs. Ireton's Temple of the Sun, Mr. Ireton confesses his fear of marrying Selina: "What do you think it is, then, that brings me hither?" he asks Juliet,

> Hay?—Why it is to arrange something, somehow or other, for getting myself from under this terrible yoke, that seems upon the point of enslaving me. My neck feels galled by it already! I have naturally no taste for matrimony. And now the business seems to be drawing to a point, and I am called upon to name my lawyer, and cavilled with to declare, to the uttermost sixpence, what I will do, and what I will give, to make my wife merry and comfortable upon my going out of the world,—I protest I shudder with horrour! (531)

As with Sir Jaspar, marriage forces Mr. Ireton to consider his death, the future

upon which the succession of society depends, and this fills him with a horror of marriage in general: "A man must needs take care of his house, and his table, and all that: but the horridest thing I know, is the condition tied to a man's obtaining the hand of a young woman; he can never solicit it, but by giving her a prospect of his death-bed! And she never consents to live with him, till she knows what she may gain by his dying!" (531). Mr. Ireton then explains that he has only pursued Selina in an effort to keep Sir Jaspar at bay: "Sir Jaspar's estate, in case he should have no children, is entailed upon me; and, in case I should have none neither, is entailed upon a cousin … I know he, and all his family, will wish me at the devil myself, if I marry; and if I have children, will wish them and my wife there" (531-32). In this scene, Mr. Ireton recognizes the system of reproductive futurity at work, how counterproductive it is to his life, and how it ultimately prevents him from participating in the same system. For both Mr. Ireton and Sir Jaspar, reproductive futurity unravels itself. It generates the gothic specter of male disempowerment—figured equally through marriage and its avoidance—that prevents both men from achieving it, and this resistance to reproductive futurity compounds the novel's queer gothic narrative bent.

At first glance, Elinor Joddrel seems to be the opposite of Juliet. When she is first introduced, she is engaged to Harleigh's brother, Dennis, comes from a respectable family, and wants for nothing. As most of Burney's major critics note,[7] early in the novel, Elinor embraces Wollstonecraftian politics, a stance that terrifies Juliet when they initially meet. Elinor says, "I detest all aristocracy: I care for nothing upon earth but nature; and I hold no one thing in the world worth living for but liberty! and liberty, you know, has but two occupations,—plucking up and pulling down" (110). Here, Elinor seems to be Juliet's foil, but this quickly changes once she meets Harleigh, falls in love with him, and breaks off her engagement to his brother. Julia Epstein calls Elinor "Juliet's mirror image and alter-ego" (186), and this becomes increasingly apparent as Elinor falls in love with and ultimately idolizes Harleigh. Epstein reads Elinor as "a female slave to passion whose very enslavement turns her into an agent for the novel's radical assault on the barricades of gender" (186). For Epstein, Elinor's assertiveness indicates her defiance of "all rules of genteel conduct when she proposes to Harleigh, writes him letters, and wields a dagger" (187). However, Elinor's "defiance of normative behavior" and her theatricality make her "dismissible as the novel's intellectual force" (188). As insightful as Epstein's reading of the novel is, she overlooks the degree to which Elinor clings to gender norms that dictate that women should marry.

Elinor's obsession with gender norms takes center stage when she learns through Juliet that Harleigh has rejected her (166). What began as a crush on her fiancé's brother, quickly escalates to a violent attachment: "O Harleigh! why have I seen you wiser and better than all your race; sounder in your judgment, more elegant in your manners, more spirited in your conduct;—lively though benevolent,—gentle, though brilliant" (176). As this passage shows, even after Harleigh has

rejected her for being "prone to devote herself to whatever is new, wild, or uncommon" (165), Elinor continues to idealize him. She subsequently threatens to stab herself, then interrupts Juliet's musical performance and does stab herself before staging the gothic performance in the graveyard cited above (182, 359). In this last scene, Harleigh prevents Elinor from shooting herself in the head (580). Through all these scenes—and despite Harleigh's continual rejections—Elinor holds on to the cultural ideal of heteronormative marriage that society values, perceives that ideal as foreclosed by Harleigh's refusals, and, unwilling to marry anyone else, exhibits performative melancholia (a condition where normative gender is experienced as loss) and becomes violently masochistic.[8] As such, Burney uses Elinor's experience to show the dangers of overinvestment in gender normativity—here, through a violent, enduring attachment to the idea of marriage and the privilege that it confers that ultimately leads to Elinor's multiple suicide attempts.

On the novel's last page, Elinor receives a letter from Harleigh recounting his marriage to Juliet, and Elinor is devastated:

> She received it with a consternation that cruelly opened her eyes to the false hopes which, however disclaimed and disowned, had still duped her wishes, and played upon her fancy, with visions that had brought Harleigh, ultimately, to her feet. Despair, with its grimmest horrour, grasped her heart at this self-detection; but pride supported her spirit; and Time, the healer of woe, though the destroyer of life, moderated her passions, in annihilating her expectations; and, when her better qualities found opportunity for exertion, her excentricities, though always what were most conspicuous in her character, ceased to absorb her whole being. (872-73)

Burney leaves Elinor alone, punished on the one hand for her obsession with "whatever is new, wild, or uncommon" (165), e.g., her revolutionary politics, and on the other, for not knowing when to let go of Harleigh and the prestige that marrying him represents.

Yet, viewed from a different perspective, Elinor ends the novel on a happy—that is to say, queer—note: She says, "must even Elinor!—like the element to which, with the common herd, she owes, chiefly, her support, find,—with that herd!—her own level?—find that she has strayed from the beaten road, only to discover that all others are pathless?" (873). In these final lines, Elinor recognizes that she has strayed from the beaten road, the patriarchal, heteronormative road that everyone else takes. At the same time, she emphasizes that all remaining roads "are pathless." For Elinor, life is not a teleology, a trip down the well-beaten road from infancy to adulthood, marriage, and reproduction. Her future is pathless; she is destined to stray and wander, to veer and digress. Having pursued marriage to dangerous and near-deadly lengths, she has come to understand what Edelman critiques about reproductive futurity. For Elinor, the future is out there, waiting on

one of those pathless roads—it is the queer future that is "always in the horizon" as José Muñoz has argued (11). For Muñoz, hope is "a backward glance that enacts a future vision" (4). As she moves forward into her own queer future, Elinor glances backward at her futile obsession with heteronormative expectations and enacts a future vision of herself meandering down any one of those other pathless roads. In this way, Burney ends the novel with another wanderer, a different kind of wanderer than the one who began the novel. If Juliet and Elinor have alternated as doubles and foils throughout the narrative, the novel's conclusion shows them each pursuing different forms of queer futurity: Juliet marries Harleigh but has the potential to continue seeing Gabriella, and Elinor begins her journey toward the queer horizon, one that is simultaneously terrifying and freeing, as many queer gothic trajectories are.

NOTES

[1]See also, Williams 101-04.

[2]In addition to Haggerty, see Fincher. For a discussion of the relationship between the gothic and queer theory in general, see Hughes and Smith. See also, Brabon and Genz. For trans representation in the gothic, see Zigarovich.

[3]In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault argues that "Calling sex by its name" after the seventeenth century "became more difficult and more costly …Without even having to pronounce the word, modern prudishness was able to ensure that one did not speak of sex, merely through the interplay of prohibitions that referred back to one another: instances of muteness which, by dint of saying nothing, imposed silence. Censorship" (17).

[4]For Faderman, texts with a lesbian sensibility critique heterosexual institutions, focus on women apart from their erotic connections with men, present romantic friendships between women (which exclude sexuality), evince a fascination with androgyny, and/or draw attention to female protest.

[5]Doody, Epstein, Straub, and Johnson have commented on the powerlessness of men in the novel. George Haggerty notes that despite their masculine failings, several men in *The Wanderer* still manage to assert male privilege.

[6]Friedrich Nietzsche would famously critique love along these exact lines in his 1882 *The Gay Science*.

[7]Like Epstein, Doody and Straub identify progressive elements in Burney's characterization of Elinor. Doody calls Burney's characterization of Elinor as "a female revolutionist" both "convincing and appealing" (338). Likewise, Straub argues that Burney uses Elinor "to make what is perhaps her most powerful statement of women's disempowered position in performing the customary gestures of romantic love that lead, in theory at least, to the institutionalized protection of women in marriage" (187). For Straub, "Elinor is caught in a no-win situation in that neither breaking nor playing within the rules seems to change

the essential nature of the game in which male power and female powerlessness are acknowledged in every move" (188). For an opposing view that borders on an academic beatdown, see Johnson, who critiques almost everything that Elinor does or says.

[8]For an in-depth theorization of performative melancholia and a reading of it in Burney's *Camilla*, see Marshall.

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