Evelina, The Wanderer, and Gothic Spatiality: Frances Burney and a Problem of Imagined Community

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The first notes of Frances Burney's *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* are Gothic in nature: a disembodied voice resonates from the dark shores of France into a vessel of British passengers escaping "the dire reign of the terrific Robespierre" (11). The Wanderer first appears in the novel as an incomprehensible presence, an unseen figure projecting itself into the already distressed consciousness of the passengers, whose only answer is to seek "deeper concealment" (11). To them, Juliet is wholly unknowable and, thus, a vague but certain promise of threat, pursuit, and ruin. The intervening distance and darkness between the bodies in the vessel and the mysterious figure on the shore trigger conflicting pressures: on the one hand, the pressure to suppress any recognition of the Other, whose strangeness situates her, literally, within a foreign and hostile land from which they have already begun to escape; and, on the other hand, the pressure to exercise sympathy and compassion. Surprisingly, these pressures are resolved with a gesture that is explicitly nationalized. Juliet's persistence buys her a flustered exchange between her and the passengers and negotiation among the passengers themselves, and while the promise of money and appeals to conscience do not secure Juliet's asylum on the boat, the Admiral finally prevails with this argument: "A woman, a child, and a fallen enemy, are three persons that every true Briton should scorn to misuse" (12). The opening pages of *The Wanderer* dramatize a sort of Gothic contact between a small group of distressed passengers and two unseen figures: a supposedly foreign "wanderer" and a "true Briton." At these words, Harleigh descends the boat to "[give] his hand to the suppliant" (12), and both ghosts materialize.

Burney's prefatory claim that her novel will provide no "materials for political controversy; or fresh food for national animosity" (4) is regarded by critics more than somewhat askance. Leanne Maunu, for example, considers this claim a "falsification," acknowledging that Burney's "last novel, just like her first, is a political novel" (195), and Julia Epstein links Juliet's fraught class mobility and relative self-dependence to an acute political analysis of

"the lot of women in every class of life" (191). This conclusion suggests a critical focus loosely in accord with Maunu's claim that "gender identity plays a more important role" in *The Wanderer* than national identity (41) and helps to develop now-established arguments about Burney's political expression— in this and in her other writings—that trace, in Kristina Straub's words, "the emergent development of a woman's writerly self-consciousness" (182). These readings are essential to any accurate understanding of Burney's work and its context as they provide an important sense in which the long-perceived "apparently self-contradictory nature" (Straub 2) of her work can actually be regarded as a register of robust political agency, suggesting that her relationship to patriarchal political structures is never merely passive (a former and widely-believed position notoriously expressed by William Hazlitt).[1] By looking more closely at how Burney represents collective, political, and explicitly national identities under stress, we can further develop these findings, advancing and complicating our understanding of Burney's political agency and providing a more complete picture of Burney's "falsification."

Indeed, the first pages of *The Wanderer* ground the narrative in a set of anxieties that are deeply political, and explicitly national, in nature. True "Britishness," a quality that the passengers ostensibly share, finally compels them to allow the stranger on board, but her presence, as a foreigner, only solidifies their coherence as a body. The passengers on the vessel operate as a political community, one that functions as an "us" and organizes itself principally around its voluntary and dramatic separation from France as well as its need to comprehend—and inability to absorb—the foreign, originless body of Juliet. Mrs. Maple scolds Harleigh, for example, declaring, "I don't think that we are much indebted to you for bringing us such company as this into our boat" (20), emphasizing the first person plural—"we," "us," and "our"—and setting this form against the impersonal "this" to which she has reduced Juliet. And Elinor, already jealous, asks Harleigh, "I wonder what sort of dulcinea you have brought amongst us," adding a moment later that if Juliet "has one atom that is native in her" (12), then she "will . . . be choked by our foggy atmosphere" (18). The effect of the Wanderer's appearance on the boat approximates in miniature what Linda Colley has described as a process by which "Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other" (6), arguing that "Imagining the French" in particular "as their vile opposites . . . became a way for Britons . . . to contrive for themselves a converse and flattering

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identity" (368).

As with *Evelina*, *The Wanderer* attempts to realize, from the beginning, that which sustains a distinct sense of (national) community and character. At the same time, Burney's use of space at this moment puts an extraordinary amount of pressure on how that community sustains itself: it exists in a suspended state, already in the water, of borderlessness. The passengers are on neither French nor English territory. Initially, they are spatially separated from Juliet, and at sea, it is too dark to see her fully at once, too dark to know if they are pursued, too dark to know how far from France they have come, or how close to England they are. Burney constructs a sense of spatial disorientation and suspense through which tensions are produced and resolved, primarily, with reference to various forms of, and disruptions to, imagined community. This disorientation is often distinctly Gothic, echoing disturbances to spatial and temporal order found in the works of Ann Radcliffe, Sophia Lee, Matthew Lewis, and others. In the following paper, I argue that Frances Burney regularly utilizes conventions of Gothic spatiality in order to put pressure on the ways in which distinctions between French and British, crowd and party, and stranger and acquaintance are imagined, established, and sometimes withdrawn. In using Gothic conventions to disturb these constructs, Burney constructs a political reality that subordinates the stability of the content and legitimacy of national community and political collectivity (dramatized by recognition, self-identification, and consent, for example) to the forms of these collective identities, such as boundaries and customs.

Gothic Landscape and Spaces of Collectivity

Benedict Anderson's basic definition of the nation as "an imagined political community," one that is "both inherently limited and sovereign" (6), is well known. "The nation," he writes, "is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (7; original italics). Writing about the "modern nation" in particular, Anthony D. Smith writes that modernists view "the nation [as] a form of human community" characterized, in part, by "a well-defined territory, with a definite centre and clear and recognized borders" (95). The concept of limit, boundary, or territory plays several important roles in the development of nationalism, one of which is to sustain the Other while conditioning its status as Other,

in part, on its simply existing outside the known, limited national space. Members of these communities, of course, come to associate themselves with territory in direct ways: thus Juliet is twice called "outlandish" on the vessel (14), even though all the passengers at that point (including Juliet), share the same space, come from the same space, and move, together, toward England's shore. And so territory also conveys the possibility of mobility. As geographer Jean Gottmann puts it, "[t]he concept of territory expresses the recognition of the fact that a group of people is at home in and has safe control of only a fraction of the total area that may be generally open to the wanderings and enterprises of its members" (7). That is, members of a given imagined community may wander—and may encounter, in the spaces of their own communities, wanderers in turn, at least until that community exercises its sovereign right to exclude her.

While this helps to explain why allowing Juliet aboard the vessel works to draw the community together into, as the Admiral puts it, "a body" (14), it also helps to establish the vulnerability upon which so much of Juliet's character is founded: her presence in their space is subject to their judgment of what kind of a liability she may or may not be. In Harleigh's words, Juliet's is "the voice of a woman! Where can be the danger?" (11). And while she is eventually found to constitute no immediate, physical threat on the vessel, she will continue throughout the long novel to threaten the reputations of those who take her in, and she will be pressured, time and time again, from families' homes because of this.[2] "The concept" of territory, Gottmann writes, "connotes a certain reasonableness of human communities in their acceptance of geographical limitation for certain purposes, the foremost of which has been security" (7). It is, in this sense, a "certain reasonableness" that contains even the wanderers; or, to put this another way, the possibility of encountering wanderers in a given territory as well as an expectation of security that legitimizes that territory in spite of the wanderers are both sustained by appeal to a kind of reason. The nation thus conceived, Smith reminds us, is the product, "of a particular milieu: that of eighteenth-century Western Europe and North America and of its rationalist, Enlightenment culture" (95). In this sense, Burney may have a stake in the Gothic as a potential counter-narrative to the rational foundations and assumptions that ostensibly underlie the experience of imagined community.

Perhaps Burney's disclaimer about nationalism and politics makes more sense then if one considers that her interest in "political controversy" and "national animosity" is only (or mostly) derivative and that her primary

purpose in displaying Britishness and Francophobia is to interrogate the (Enlightenment) mechanisms by which community—and its effects—come to be imagined at all. In particular, I argue that Burney is interested in how notions of belonging and community in a general sense are established and sustained in the context of the kind of rational thought, empirical experience, and spatial partitioning that come to "belong" to nationalism. As Homi K. Bhabha puts it, writing about the nation's "spatial expression of a unitary people," "[t]he recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity emphasizes the quality of light, the question of social visibility, the power of the eye to naturalize the rhetoric of national affiliation and its forms of collective expression" (294–95). In disturbing the boundaries that tend to orient and cohere community, Burney threatens to disturb the empirical "reasonableness" that legitimizes claims of secure community and belonging. Certainty becomes subordinated to anxiety, uncertainty, and doubt. In doing so, it makes sense that she would turn to conventions that have come to be associated with Gothic literature.[3]

Gothic literature tends to fragment, upend, and distort reasonableness, boundaries, and security, undermining the territorial claims that legitimize political communities by putting pressure on coherent notions of spatiality in at least two distinct ways: first, by erasing any concept of recognized spatial limits or boundaries, using trap-doors, hidden passages, boundless landscapes, and supernatural scale to interject doubt into the characters' negotiations of otherwise secure, known, limited spaces; and, second, by interjecting disorientation and disequilibrium through labyrinthine woods and ruins, dizzying and excessive passions, or absolute darkness, erasing in all cases the points of reference through which recognized, limited space can function, or have any meaning, as such. In moments of terror and stress, characters of Gothic literature frequently find themselves outside the knowable limits of space, or they lose their place within space. These are the kinds of spaces that interrupt the rational, epistemological continuity of empirical experience—the kinds of spaces that produce the Other, and the monstrous—and it is against these spaces that imagining community comes under stress and begins to break down.

Writing about *The Castle of Otranto,* largely regarded as the genre's foundational work, E. J. Clery acknowledges that "[t]he supernatural . . . arrives to announce and correct a lapse in the rightful possession of property" (71). The supernatural serves to interfere with the regulation of recognized territory in the novel, and space becomes directly associated

with Gothic effect. It is, after all, a space that is limited that is the primary concern of the "ancient prophecy" at the · center of *The Castle of Otranto*: "*the castle and lordship of Otranto 'should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to innhabit it*" (17). While the usurper Manfred is the true villain of the novel, supoernatural terror emerges directly from transgression of the limits of the phyysical space of the castle. A giant helmet, a giant sword, and a giant foot sigrnal a presence that can no longer be contained by its proper, limited space. The castle is a space, moreover, that is manifestly knowable. In the preface t to the first edition Walpole states that "[t]he author seems frequently, withoout design, to describe particular parts [of the castle]. *The chamber*, says l he, *on the right hand; the door on the left hand; the distance from the chapel to (Conrad's apartment*" (8). Yet these particulars prove insufficient, and the limnits (the known walls, chambers, and corridors) suggested by this kind of particularity quickly dissolve as they become undermined by trap–doors, ssubterraneous passages, "intricate cloisters," and a vaguely-defined "lower poart of the castle," described as a "long labyrinth of darkness" (27). This kiind of space appears again when Theodore absconds to the caves in the forestt: "he roved insensibly to the caves which had formerly served as a retreat to › hermits, and were now reported round the country to be haunted by evil spiirits" (75). These reports suggest the kind of superstition that Enlightenmennt ideology has labored to correct. Labyrinthine caves and cloisters, dark hnidden passages, trap–doors, and thick confusing forests become hallmarks (of the Gothic landscape: the dark woods of Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieldland* and "Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist," the convoluted passages of the ssepulcher in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* and Sophia Lee's *The Recess*, a forerumnner to the Gothic that uses both disorienting forests and secret hidden cavves to challenge the certainty of historical truth. "A certain poised instabiliity is central to the establishment of the Gothic mood," writes Elizabeth R.. Napier in *The Failure of Gothic*, "to its fear and delight, to the 'pleasing ddread' that forms the paradox of the Gothic response" (48). Walpole has heelped to initiate what Napier calls "[t]he artful disequilibrium of the Gotkhic" (48), that writers like Ann Radcliffe will perfect.

Napier points to a scene in *The Myysteries of Udolpho*, for example, in which "the atmospheric success" derivves from the way "in which the boundaries between what is known and whaat is unknown gradually dissolve" (51) and to *The Romance of the Forest*, whcose "first scene . . . makes . . . use of light to disorient and distort" (49), aadding that "[t]his technique of

blurring and partially obscuring is central to Radcliffe's scenic effects" (51). Recall the scene in *The Romance of the Forest* in which the characters first enter the ruined abbey. The dark resists a full view, and as the family surveys the ruins with a feeble light, "the obscurity of the greater part of the pile heightened its sublimity, and led fancy on to scenes of horror" (18). The problem here is not one of insufficient limits, as in the Castle of Otranto, but of the unknowable limits of the building, facilitated by the poor lighting and compounded, later, by the discovery of obscured chambers, passages, and trap-doors. The dangers of this setting are two-fold: Adeline is afraid of "spirits," and La Motte fears that "this apparently forsaken edifice might be a place of refuge to banditti" (18), for "[h]ere was solitude to conceal them; and a wild and extensive forest to assist their schemes of rapine, and to perplex, with its labyrinths, those who might be bold enough to attempt pursuit" (21). The forest and the abbey seclude the travelers, isolate them from society, but also arouse terror by foreclosing the certain reasonableness that serves to contain wanderers—foreign, spiritual, criminal, or otherwise.

The Marquis's estate, likewise, constitutes a threat because it disorients, and while, initially, the chateau's frescoed walls, chambers, and grounds are described with relative specificity (like the Castle of Otranto), when Adeline attempts to escape, the estate dissolves, for her, into a condition of borderlessness: "[t]o her imagination the grounds were boundless; she had wandered from lawn to lawn, and from grove to grove, without perceiving any termination to the place" (166). Exasperated, horrified, Adeline "perceived a shadow move along at some distance . . . heard her name repeated . . . sunk away in a different direction: she paused to take breath; she looked around and no person appeared" (166). A figure, almost disembodied, almost certainly the Marquis, closes in on her, and Radcliffe builds suspense by keeping the figure's spatial position unknowably vague ("at some distance," "different direction," "looked around") until, of course, "she found herself in the arms of a stranger" (167). Like Burney's passengers in a borderless state of escape, Adeline's anxiety is the product of a very real threat but which, as consequence of her inability to locate herself or her pursuer in space, expresses itself as a dread of the unknown and unknowable.

"Outlandish" Juliet, Stranger Evelina

Perhaps the most memorable Gothic moment of *The Wanderer* comes halfway through the narrative as Juliet is about to perform a public concert,

to her own despair, when she encounters a "strange figure, with something foreign in his appearance" (356). We are told that this figure has "a menacing air"—whatever it is about this air that is "menacing" is never fully developed, but Burney is sure to stress that the figure is foreign. In the space of a few paragraphs we see "something foreign," in him, "the foreign clothing, and the foreign servant, of the man," of whom "[t]he whole of his habiliment seemed of foreign manufacture" (357). Juliet perceives him to be, not only "menacing" (356), but an "intruder" and "her tormentor" (358), whose presence arouses in Juliet "a thousand vague fears and conjectures" (357). There is, moreover, an emphasis on the figure's position in space. It, first, "twice crossed before the chariot . . . as if purposing to impede her passage" before retreating "into the surrounding crowd of spectators" (356), suggesting at once the mobility of a wanderer who not only can traverse the borders of the social body but also has the power to insert itself between Juliet and the public. This spatial eclipsing becomes a crucial part of the figure's malicious air in this scene: once inside, he "had planted himself exactly opposite to the place, which, by the disposition of the harp, was evidently prepared for her reception" (357), occupying the very border, in the front row, which partitions ("impedes") Juliet from the assembly. The concert reproduces the structure of production and consumption that sections society off into recognizably distinct classes, and as Juliet takes the stage we are reminded of Giles Arbe's candid appraisal of class and luxury.[4] The "lookers on" become a public by sharing distinct "tastes and fancies" as well as the means to enjoy them, and the public here acts as a body: "[t]he assembly appeared with one opinion to admire her, and with one wish to give her encouragement" (358); it speaks in one "public voice" (360) that orders and normalizes its various members. Juliet, on stage, is not only visibly separated from this public but also so distracted by the embodiment of foreignness which constitutes its border that, studying her music, "she could not read a note" (357).

The figure, of course, is Elinor in disguise, purposing to make a public spectacle of her suicide. Comparing this scene to the novel's opening pages, we see that Juliet has been profoundly disturbed by a woman in distress, disguised as a foreigner, attended by a foreign friend, and stricken by a kind of aphasia (the foreigner's attendant assures the door-keeper that the tormenter is "deaf and dumb" [356]), who seeks to integrate itself into the assembly. We are meant to remember, of course, the book's opening, when Juliet herself is a woman in distress, disguised as a foreigner, attended by a foreign friend, and stricken by a kind of aphasia (unable to say her name or

her circumstances), seeking admittance onto the vessel. In a paradigmatically Gothic passage, Juliet is allowed to experience firsthand the distress and confusion of the early passengers when they first encounter her; she is forced to confront the uncanny dread of her own foreignness.

In the foregoing scene, Juliet's initial outlandishness is dramatized and projected out onto the "wild, and uncouth" figure of Elinor (358), whose continued transgression of social boundaries and moral hierarchies—described by Julia Epstein in similarly spatial terms as a "radical assault on the barricades of gender" (186)—repeatedly expresses itself in her radical politics. While Juliet, at her moral best, is sensitive to the confines and boundaries of propriety and dependence and always faithful to the prescribed limits of honor and delicacy, Elinor is defiant, audacious, and openly political. Despite almost endless setbacks, Juliet endures the female difficulties according to which, for a woman, "conduct is criticised, not scrutinized; her character is censured, not examined; her labours are unhonoured, and her qualifications are but lures to ill will!" (275), while Elinor, on the contrary, advises that Juliet "forget that you are a dawdling woman" and "remember that you are an active human being, and your FEMALE DIFFICULTIES will vanish into the vapour of which they are formed" (397). She owns that she is "ready to defy the world" (397) and rejects woman's dependence "upon the arbitrary customs of man" (399). Her politics constitute a transgression of limits, to be certain (collapsing strictly defined codes of behavior to "vapor" and "arbitrary"), founded on (from the perspective of the novel's moral center) a lapse of reasonableness, as Harleigh—the book's most direct and consistent mouthpiece of Burkean conservatism—makes clear. Harleigh criticizes Elinor's penchant for "Unbridled liberty" (18) and later calls her philosophy "a terrible perversion . . . of intellect," exclaiming "what a confusion of ideas! what an inextricable chaos of false principles, exaggerated feelings, and imaginary advancement in new doctrines of life," confiding to Juliet that "What [Elinor's] present plan may be . . . is by no means clear; but so *boundless* is the licence which the followers of the new systems allow themselves that nothing is too dreadful to be apprehended" (190–91, emphasis added). The monstrous in the case of Elinor evokes a kind of borderlessness attended by unreason, and it poses considerable disruption throughout the novel to societal bonds—not the least of which is any possibility of Juliet's union with Harleigh ever being realized.

In *Evelina,* Burney already shows a concern for spatiality, rationalism, and community. Her preface establishes her readers' expectations with a

gesture towards territory and rational empiricism. The novel, she insists, will disappoint readers inclined towards "the fantastic *regions* of Romance . . . where Reason is an *outcast*," and its hero, she writes, modifying Sheffield, "is No faultless Monster that the world ne'er saw" (7, emphasis added). She is no monster indeed, but she is outlandish, nevertheless, and her status as such—"a nameless nobody," in the words of Susan S. Greenfield (40), reveals how similar Evelina and Juliet actually are—provides the novel's central conflict: a narrative, after all, of a *Young Lady's Entrance into the World.* She is hopelessly rustic, and her country upbringing seems constantly legible to those already "in the world," and like a tourist fumbling self-aware through solecisms, she willingly owns her own outlandishness: "I think there ought to be a book," she writes to Mr. Villars, "of the laws and customs à-la-mode, presented to all young people upon their first introduction into public company" (70). And, just as Elinor had rudely suggested that English air might be a liability to Juliet's health, Lovel "very conceitedly" hopes that "[t]he air we breathe here . . . though foreign to that [Evelina has] been accustomed to, has not . . . been at variance with [her] health" (66). Yet her status is not as stable as these lines suggest. Her grandmother, after all, is a victim of her own unrelenting foreignness,[5] and the Branghtons, her distant relations, appear just as much so, acknowledging at one point that Evelina "should not be so proud with [her] own relations, and that they had at least as good a right to [her] company as strangers" (71). Evelina accompanies the Branghtons and Madame Duval to the opera, complaining, however, of their inappropriate dress and writing to Villars that she was "extremely diverted at their ignorance of whatever belongs to an opera" (74). Evelina speaks in the registers of two different communities at different points in the novel: she is foreign to the "laws and customs" of London society, of dubious birth with ostensibly French ties, yet she is the English foil against which her own family's foreign foibles and faux pas stand out in mortifying relief.

Her inability to sustain legitimate membership in either of these communities—London society, to which she is foreign, and her family, which is foreign to her—makes her especially vulnerable to committing, or being perceived to commit, "outlandish" social transgressions. Two episodes in the novel illustrate how limited the claims to imagined community can be, especially in spaces I associate with Gothic literature: her adventure in the dark walks of Vauxhall and her excursion to see the fireworks. In the first of these, Evelina follows the Miss Branghtons into the dark walks against her inclinations, transgressing the boundaries of space appropriated for proper

and secure social engagement. The claustrophobia of this space parallels the unbounded sexual license facilitated by the darkness and seclusion of the walks, and both of these effects are dramatized by a "very riotous" crowd of men who "formed a kind of circle, which first stopped our proceeding" (163), reminding readers, perhaps, that "in 1763 . . . the walks were actually cordoned off, but . . . the following year a riot of fifty young men tore down the railings so that the dark walks could reopen" (King 80), thereby linking mobbish, "riotous" sexual behavior with the history of the walks and the borders that contain them. One border is exchanged for another, and borders come to represent less the fixed limits of social engagement than the arbitrary and erratic whims of "riotous" sexual appetite and consumption. On being seized by one of the men Evelina, "almost distracted with terror" (163), only escapes deeper into the walks to be seized again. She has lost her party, she has lost her identity (she is believed to be a prostitute and an actress) and forced, reluctantly, into the protection of the rakish Willoughby, to whose recognition (which, however, she deeply regrets) she owes her safety.[6] All of this is attended by spatial disorientation akin to that in *The Romance of the Forest*: "I saw, what the perturbation of my mind had prevented my sooner noticing, that he had led me, though I know not how, into another of the dark alleys, instead of the place whither I meant to go" (164). She has left the space that contains proper social and sexual contact and, disoriented by the space of the dark walks and Willoughby's casuistry, finds herself severed from any meaningful claims to community, which Willoughby recognizes and exploits: "why, tell me,—why do I see you here?—Is this a place for Miss Anville?—these dark walks!—*no party —no companion!*—by all that's good, I can scarce believe my senses!" (164, emphasis mine). This space of "perturbation of . . . mind" and dubious senses has created a dangerous vulnerability, revealing a menace that, if not strictly Gothic in nature, derives from a representation of spatiality that is paradigmatic of Gothic encounters.

   The disequilibrium of the dark walks and its effect on imagined community are more pronounced in the episode in which she attends the fireworks display in Marylebone Gardens. Her party, initially, exists in a limited space: "we were . . . encircled . . . by the crowd" (194), distinguishing her own small community from the crowd that surrounds it. The fireworks tell the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, and at the moment of mythical separation, Evelina and her party become actually separated. Disorientation and terror succeed: "For a moment or two, I neither knew nor considered whither I had run; but my recollection was soon awakened by a stranger

addressing me . . ." (194). The stress of this spatial disturbance is enhanced by the contact it puts her into with strangers. "In vain," she writes, "from side to side, I looked for some face I knew; I found myself in the midst of a crowd, yet without party, friend, or acquaintance" (194). Evelina has exchanged the limited space of "party," which contains "friends" and "acquaintance," with the confused space of the "crowd," which contains strangers, the Other, and threat. The strangers of the crowd are hostile, "bold," "unfeeling," "free," fierce, and violent. She seeks the protection of two prostitutes whom she initially mistakes for "ladies" (194), and significantly, in their company, becomes a stranger herself. In the context of "such companions," she perceives Lord Orville, but he does not recognize her. He "passed us without distinguishing me," she writes, "though I saw that, in a careless manner, his eyes surveyed the party" (195). With "such companions," Evelina herself becomes the Other, strange and unrecognizable, punctuated by one of the prostitute's observation that Evelina has "a monstrous good stare, for a little country Miss" (195).

Orville will not recognize Evelina until her place in the "crowd" is once again exchanged for her "party," when the prostitutes "very cavalierly declared, that they intended joining our party!" (196). This time, when Orville passes, "not again did he pass quietly by us,—unhappily I caught his eye," and "with what expressive eyes did he regard me!" (196). The party, thus corrupted by the addition of two wanderers, opens Evelina up to renewed scrutiny and unbearable criticism.

There are a number of mechanisms by which Gothic literature represents the threat of the Other, many of which involve disturbing the limits of space, or the characters' sense of orientation in space. These spatial disturbances offer a set of counter-narratives to the Enlightenment rationalism of limited spaces without which distinctions between nation and nation, party and crowd, or acquaintance and stranger become confused. Critical narratives of nationalism often suggest that the naturalization of these categories— and imagined community more generally—tends to follow, rather than to produce or legitimize, the spatial limits that distinguish them. Burney, as we have seen, appears to anticipate this formulization, and the image of Orville carelessly passing by the stranger Evelina seems to confirm that, for Burney, if there is any essential content to acquaintance or community, it requires the form of acquaintance or community as well. For Burney, boundless and confused space—the Gothic form of the stranger and the crowd—is not sufficient to sustain the kinds of regard and respect that emerge from, and

belong to, imagined community.

NOTES

[1]   See Chapter 7, "'A very woman' and Her Readers," in Epstein, especially pages 210–13.

[2]   This sentiment is expressed early on by Mrs. Maple: "If I don't get rid of this wretch, she will bring me into universal disgrace! she shall not stay another day in my house" (106); and by Mrs. Howel: "people who enter houses by names not their own, and who have no ostensible means of existence, will be considered only as swindlers; and as swindlers be disposed of as they deserve" (133). Anger toward Juliet is always attended by relentless anxiety about the presumably precarious but essential stability of houses, rooms, and borders.

[3]   Andrew Teverson sees Bhabha's use of liminality in the modern nation as explicitly Gothic, writing that "[t]he Gothic, because it originates as a literary discourse that challenges Enlightenment ideals of the 'beautiful' and the 'unitary' . . . is already poised to threaten the 'unitary' vision of nationhood which Bhabha associates with Enlightenment thinking," describing the "idealized vision of the nation" as "a rationally ordered whole" (211).

[4]   "All the ease, and all the luxury are yours . . . ladies all, that are the lookers on! for [the musician or dancer] does not pipe or skip at his own hours, but at yours; he does not adorn himself for his own warmth, or convenience, but to please your tastes and fancies. . . . And all this, to gain himself a hard and fatiguing maintenance, in amusing your dainty idleness, and insufficiency to yourselves" (325).

[5]   Madame Duval is not French by birth, but worse, by inclination. She is brought to France in shame by her first husband and marries a Frenchman for her second, adopting French habits, tastes, and customs as her own. Thus, for most of the novel's characters and "contemporary readers," writes Leanne Maunu, "Madame Duval represents France and its people . . . strik[ing] a chord with . . . more nationalistic and anti-French readers" (59).

⁶   We see a counterpart to this scene in *The Wanderer* when Juliet, who believes that "honour" demands that she "quit the house . . . in which she was liable to keep alive any intercourse with Harleigh" (195), is also cornered against her will but in this case in a room by Harleigh shortly before her concert: "She started,—but it was not with terrour; she came forward,—but it was not to escape!" (335). She politely (though desperately) urges to be allowed to "quit the room" (335), and he politely (though desperately) urges that she stay, performing a scene in which reason and sexual virtue are not upset by Gothic disorientation but stabilized and legitimized by constantly invoking the spatial and social boundaries that Juliet and custom have established, ultimately only deepening their mutual concern and affections. Indeed, Harleigh bases part of his appeal (that she put her reputation before her material needs by not performing, further reinforcing the boundaries of decorum) on imagined community, begging that she consider "ties formed by . . . fellow-feeling; which bind us to our family, which unite us with our friends" (339), implicating her actions in the stability of his family and connections.

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