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THE BURNEY JOURNAL

Wanderer's End: Understanding Burney's Approach to Endings

EMILY C. FRIEDMAN

Burney's final novel, *The Wanderer*, comes at the end of a novel-writing life marked by expanding focus wherein Burney consistently aspired to masterful unity but fought against the structures that were commonly used to define wholeness and completion. In the volume endings of *The Wanderer*, Burney explodes nearly every signifier of closure she used in her preceding novels. Once she reaches the ultimate end, Burney is left with the difficult task of crafting a satisfying close from these same elements. Burney's confrontations with the common signifiers of closure mirror a larger literary reality that is more complex than has been previously understood.

The choice of the word "approach" in my title is deliberately multivalent. Burney's approach (i.e., her way of handling the problem of ending) is tied to her method of approaching (that is, drawing nearer to) the conclusion of each piece. Thus, when considering the effectiveness (and in some ways, the strangeness) of Burney's endings, it is not only final chapters or closing scenes that need to be considered but also the build-up (or lack thereof) to those endings.

Definitions: New Senses of Ending

For some time following her death, the trajectory of Frances Burney's career as a published writer was typically considered with the following arc: young Burney, under the cover of anonymity, publishes *Evelina* in 1778. Upon the discovery of her authorship of the wildly popular novel, Burney is catapulted to celebrity. She writes three more novels across the span of more than thirty years, but none live up to the promise of her first novel, and the last two are comparative failures. Her final novel, *The*

Wanderer, is viciously panned. After her death, it is her status as a prolific journal writer and correspondent that seals her fame.

This story, however, has been retold: in the light of the biographical and editorial work of Doody, Sabor, Epstein, and others, Burney has emerged as a careful, powerful writer, whose satire makes her as much the heir of Smollett as of Richardson. More than the foremother to the likes of Jane Austen, Burney is a powerful intellect in her own right. Key in this retelling is a rehabilitation of Burney's later novels and unpublished plays, which have received increased attention.

Similarly, the story of ending and closure requires retelling.[1] When talking about ending, one is required to deal with the specter of Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*. Between 2000 and 2006, fifty-two articles, dissertations, and books were produced featuring "closure" in a way that indicates its use as a literary construct.[2] Sixty-four such pieces were written about "ending," of which ten make reference to *The Sense of an Ending* within the title. Despite its having been published forty years ago, *The Sense of an Ending* remains a significant text and a shared touchstone for nearly all those who study ending and closure. Indeed, in his recent collection of essays on "narrative dynamics" (of which closure is one), Brian Richardson calls Kermode's work the starting point of contemporary closure theory, summing up the Kermodean project as "a study of the ubiquity of closure in all cultural productions" (252).

When one is trying to understand endings as a historical construct, however, Kermode's understanding of endings proves far too general. His story of the evolution of the novel is unmoored from actual texts, with Fielding placed at once "at the very beginning of the serious novel" (serious novel never satisfyingly defined) and as an "anti-novelist" alongside Jane Austen and with Samuel Richardson employed as a signpost of modernity (51, 129).

Moreover, Kermode and his followers emphasize a method of reading that places primacy on the initial reading of a "story." Such a focus is necessarily plot-driven—finding out what happens next, all the way to "the end." Readers are likened to madmen (specifically schizophrenics), children (sometimes autistic or otherwise "abnormal" children), and the elderly, who along with readers share an insatiable "hunger for ends and for crises" and are unable to delay gratification (55). To satisfy these desires,

"the novel has to modify the paradigms—organize extensive middles in concordance with remote origins and predictable ends—in such a way as to preserve its difference from dreaming or other fantasy gratifications" (56). In the Kermodean construction of the history of the novel (and all other imaginative texts, for that matter), the eighteenth-century novel stands at the beginning of a trend towards organization and realism. The succeeding closure critics, inasmuch as they touched eighteenth-century texts, did very little to change the perception of the period.

However, it is dangerous to assume that eighteenth-century ends are "predictable" from what comes before. Indeed, many eighteenth-century texts are marked by resistance to closure, which is manifested in a variety of ways, some of which are external: sequels, adaptations, publication in parts. Other manifestations of closure-resistance are within the work: digressive material (*Tristram Shandy*), false or multiple endings (*The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*), and what Hunter calls an "unseemly haste" to wrap up the events of a novel (*Tom Jones*). Hunter points to the convention of character-centric "histories" which makes the "relative unit of shape" a character's life rather than an overarching plot (283). Thus, there is a sense that ending is an arbitrary choice on the part of an author as opposed to a predetermined, necessary Kermodean denouement.

As the terms "ending" and "closure" are often used interchangeably, or with no clear distinction drawn, it is necessary to distinguish these terms as they are used here. For the purposes of this essay, "ending" is used in a very literal sense. All printed texts come to at least one end: that of the end of the book. As Burney's novels are complete works, the simplest definition is also the most useful. Because Burney's novels were published in multivolume editions, we can speak of multiple "endings" of an individual novel: in this case, five physical endings to *The Wanderer*, one at the end of each volume. Of course, we must remember this nomenclature is by definition artificial—these subsidiary endings were never intended to function as actual endings. At the same time, these volume endings do not function as cliff-hangers: instead of teasing the reader with what remains unrevealed, the volume endings are used by Burney not only to delay gratification but also to question the senses of gratification that we expect from "marriage-plot" and "family romance" modes of ending. Burney's volume endings are not merely cliff-hangers but also reflect Burney's shifting engagement with

potential forms of ending. Seen in this light, Burney's final ending, Juliet's lament on the fate of Elinor Joddrel, serves to highlight the challenges not only of deviating from appropriate early-nineteenth-century gender roles but also of critiquing the shape of novel expectations of the same period.

In contrast to this literal definition of the term "ending," I choose the term "closure" to designate those more numinous moments that give the impression of a "wrapping up" of plot threads. Unlike endings, which are built into the very nature of the bound, printed codex, closure need not occur. In Gestalt psychology, "closure" is a process, a way of creating a satisfying whole out of incomplete forms and/or situations (*OED*).[3] In this understanding of closure, the process is inherently subjective though one can discuss specific elements that lead to a feeling of closure within a text. While we can label "the end" and apparatuses of "the end" such as climaxes, denouements, and the like, whether or not a work has come to a satisfying closure is often a point of contention. This is extremely true of Burney's later novels though it is by no means limited to Burney's work.

It is worthwhile to mention that the concept of closure in the eighteenth century did not often—if ever—go by that name. "Closure" more often indicated a physical shutting-up (often of eyes) in the work of the period. The second, corrected edition of Johnson's *Dictionary* defines closure in four ways, three of which are related to the physical shutting-up of an object or space: the act itself, the means by which something is closed, and the physical boundaries that enclose.

The fourth is less tied to space: simply, "Conclusion; end." The definition is illustrated by a quotation from William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*: "We'll hand in hand all headlong cast us down, /And make a mutual closure of our house."[4] This is also the use of "closure" in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, where the pompous Mr. Collins warns Elizabeth Bennet "of what evils you may incur, by a precipitate closure with this gentleman's proposals" (402). In both uses, "closure" indicates the conclusion of some larger construction. In the Shakespeare passage, it is the end of a family line as Marcus Andronicus suggests a future where the Andronici clan is disintegrated by mass death. In Austen's novel, it is the ratification of a marriage that is invoked when Collins writes to dissuade Elizabeth from concluding a marriage treaty with Darcy.

The process of signalling closure, particularly as it is related to unity,

is in flux even in the preceding centuries. In *Essay of Dramatick Poesie*, John Dryden cites "the Ancients" in his discussion of dramatic unity but consciously expands the narrow strictures of the one-day, one-action definition of unity. Dryden's "unity" consists of multiple sub-plots working to achieve a single goal:

> If by these Rules (to omit many other drawn from the Precepts and Practice of the Ancients) we should judge our modern Playes; 'tis probable, that few of them would endure the tryal: that which should be the business of a day, takes up in some of them an age; instead of one action they are the *Epitomes of a mans life*; and for one spot of ground (which the Stage should represent) we are sometimes in more Countries then the Map can show us. (13, emphasis added)

Dryden here shifts the focus from "one day" and "one action" to "a mans life," paving the way for eighteenth-century texts, particularly the novel form, that center around character rather than plot. With "a mans" (or woman's) life at its center, texts no longer end with a sunset but must find a new way to resolve satisfyingly.

Life-Size Ends

Character is central in all of Burney's novels: each novel bears the identity (if not name) of its heroine. However, each heroine's relationship to the whole of her novel is quite different as is borne out in the novels' subtitles, which become progressively more and more universalizing, particularly in the final three novels. Thus, we move from "The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World" to the equally particular "Memoirs of an Heiress," then to a more general "A Picture of Youth," and, finally, to *The Wanderer*'s promise to narrate a broad spectrum of "Female Difficulties."[5]

Burney clearly sensed this widening perspective in her own work. In the opening of *Camilla* she describes the work of the "historian of human life" as an attempt to make sense of "that amazing assemblage of all possible contrarieties, in which one thing alone is steady—the perverseness of spirit

which grafts desire on what is denied" (7) This move to universalism is also seen in the particular foci of each novel. Cecilia Beverley, like Evelina, is the focus of her novel—we are invested in the fate of no other character quite as we are with her. If a novel is measured in human lives, Cecilia's is the only measuring stick. However, Mortimer Delvile and his mother are compelling secondary figures for a significant amount of the novel, and we are invested in their ends as well.

In *Camilla*, Burney expands her focus further. Like Cecilia, Camilla, on the road to adulthood, shares the spotlight with her suitor although Edgar Mandlebert's quest for complementary maturity is more fully realized than Mortimer's struggles. Moreover, the couple is joined by other characters whose roles cannot be neatly labelled as mere foils to the starring lovers. Indiana and Eugenia—particularly Eugenia—take up more of the reader's interest than the typical foil character.

The obvious effect on the potential for closure is that reaching a satisfactory conclusion becomes progressively more of a challenge as Burney's outlook becomes wider. While concluding in *Evelina* required merely the end of the correspondence, the later novels require more work to reach conclusion. The switch to third-person narration and the investment in increasingly large casts of characters at once open up many possibilities and create new challenges.

Burney's first three novels can be described in terms of characters who "grow up"—a process with a relatively stable end point. While it is obvious to note that the terminus of each novel is at least one marriage, it is limiting to concentrate on marriage as anything more than a sign of an ending already achieved, rather than a necessary component of closure. Contrary to the traditional marriage-plot understanding of the novel, marriage is not the culmination of any of these novels—or at least, marriage is not a clear demarcation of the ending. Cecilia's marriage resolves nothing—in fact, it opens up a whole new group of worries for the heroine. *Camilla*'s excruciating courtship plot is punctuated by smaller courtships, and the first marriage of Camilla's cousin comes at the center of the novel. The Wanderer/Ellis/Juliet is, as it turns out, married (however invalidly) before the beginning of the novel, and that marriage is revealed long before the end, further complicating the Byzantine trap Juliet is caught in.

In some sense, the goals of each novel are encoded in their subtitles:

once Evelina is no longer a "young lady" and has made her "entrance," her story has reached a satisfying end. Cecilia Beverley must navigate the challenges of being an "heiress" as embodied by her three guardians, and once she has successfully (or unsuccessfully) navigated the obstacles they represent and, indeed, divested herself of her heiress designation, her story also ends. This process of easily marked end points begins to break down with *Camilla*. A picture of youth spread out across a family requires more events—more deaths, more marriages, etc.—to contribute to a sense of completion, and it is less clear what marks the close of the novel. And a novel with the ambitious project of showing us Female Difficulties, as we shall see, requires even more work to close satisfyingly. There is more to closure than simply following the directive suggested by the subtitle of each novel. In the case of *The Wanderer*, it is absolutely crucial to note another aspect of Burneyan closure, that of recognition.

Recognition and the End

The importance of recognition, of course, is by no means an innovation on Burney's part. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle notes that *anagnorisis*—translated either as "recognition" or "discovery"—is a key element in "complex" plot though he does not identify this as a signal of closure (8ff).[6] In Burney's fictions, however, the critical indices of closure center upon recognition. Her heroines learn about the world in which they live and grow accordingly throughout each novel, but growth and maturity are insufficient to provide closure. In order for each novel to conclude satisfyingly, recognition must occur. This occurs in a variety of ways in Burney's novels but is always centered on the heroine's identity and value. The reading audience is already aware of who the heroine "really is"—but for closure to occur, the characters within the novel must also recognize these truths. In *Evelina* this recognition is straightforward. Her father must acknowledge what the readers already know from the opening of the novel: her true name and parentage. In *Cecilia*, our hero and heroine must acknowledge what is truly important, and in so doing, Cecilia will give up both name and fortune. In *Camilla*, Edgar must recognize the true value of Camilla's heart and mind (among other recognitions) again, which we already know from the earliest moments of her novel.

In *The Wanderer*, Burney deviates from her prior pattern of allowing

readers foreknowledge of the heroine's "true identity" although recognition remains the key element to indicating closure. Unlike Burney's other heroines, we do not know our heroine as she truly is from the outset of the novel. Throughout the novel, she goes by different names, occupies different roles, and takes on different work to hide who she really is. This also allows Burney to widen her scope, using a single heroine to explore a multiplicity of scenes, locations, and situations. Moreover, like the characters who come into contact with the Wanderer, readers are forced to make judgments without key data, leading to unsatisfying pseudo-conclusions about her identity.

The unrecognizability of the titular heroine is, indeed, the only characteristic we are given at the opening of the novel. She is only a voice, then a figure in darkness. The notion of falseness is immediately tied to her as she is referred to several times as a "dulcinea." She refuses to answer any questions about her nationality, birth, or even name—not even in the negative. It is, instead, Elinor Joddrel who is the first woman named—Harleigh addresses her by name precisely at the moment at which Elinor announces that the Incognita is likely unfit for the role of heroine:

> "You must resign your demoiselle, as Mr. Riley calls her, for a heroine;" whispered the young lady to Mr. Harleigh. "Her dress is not merely shabby; 'tis vulgar. I have lost all hope of a pretty nun. She can be nothing above a house-maid."
>
> "She is interesting by her solitary situation," he answered, "be she what she may by her rank: and her voice, I think, is singularly pleasing."
>
> "Oh, you must fall in love with her, I suppose, as a thing of course. If, however, she has one atom that is native in her, how will she be choaked by our foggy atmosphere!"
>
> "And has our atmosphere, Elinor, no purifying particles, that, in defiance of its occasional mists, render it salubrious?"
>
> "Oh, I don't mean alone the foggy air that she must inhale; but the foggy souls whom she must see and hear." (17-18)

Here, both Harleigh and Elinor are distracted from the identity of the mysterious stranger and absorbed in a discussion of revolution and liberty, paving the way for our understanding of Elinor's motivations throughout the novel. In the early moments of the novel, Elinor has at

least the virtue of being legible and knowable while the Incognita does not.

But, of course, Elinor is unstable in other ways, ways which make her an unsuitable heroine—qualities also marked during this debate with Harleigh. Elinor sees education as a reversal, a revolution—Harleigh as a laying of foundations from which one rises. Her wit, her rallying, her headstrong nature, put her in the tradition of outspoken foil characters like Anna Howe and Charlotte Grandison. She demands our attention, but she lacks sympathetic appeal.

Thus, we must return to the woman whose identity is unstable for our heroine. This instability of identity means closure cannot occur until she is wholly known. Suspending Ellis's full revelation is key to Burney's ability to reject many other avenues for ultimate closure. If we consider the literal endings of the five volumes of *The Wanderer*, we can note how each volume ends with a formula that, in any other novel, might easily resolve the conflicts as we know them at that point. However, all is not revealed, and new revelations—though woven into the plot from the very beginning—continually kick open almost-shut doors.

We can see this most clearly through a consideration of each volume's physical ending. Volume One ends with what might be called a cliff-hanger: Ellis rushes out to some undefined other space. However, right before Ellis flees, the scene is set up to look like a classic romance ending, the hero dropping to his knees, ready, willing, and able to take the mysterious Wanderer away from all this mess:

> Harleigh was instantly at her feet; grieved at her distress, yet charmed with a thousand nameless, but potent sensations, that whispered to every pulse of his frame, that a sensibility so powerful could spring only from too sudden a concussion of pleasure with surprise. (192)

This is Evelina's ending, nearly:

> "My Lord," cried I, endeavouring to disengage my hand, "pray let me go!"
>
> "I will," cried he, to my inexpressible confusion, dropping

on one knee, "if you wish to leave me!"

. . . . . .

For a few minutes, we neither of us spoke; and then, seeing me recover, Lord Orville, though in terms hardly articulate, entreated my pardon for his abruptness. The moment my strength returned, I attempted to rise, but he would not permit me. (290)

For Ellis, it is also a thwarted closure—Harleigh wishes to end all suspense here, all but proposing to Ellis. But Ellis has the force of will to stop him before he can do anything more than throw himself at her feet, and unlike Orville, Harleigh is too "confounded" to press his suit.

As if to underscore the striking difference between Harleigh's ill-timed but not wholly inappropriate suit and Elinor's reckless pursuit of Harleigh, Volume Two ends like the curtain of a melodrama, closing on the potential death-scene of Elinor Joddrel. As she has earlier staged her attempted suicide, at the end of the volume Elinor's mind continues to plot out the grand finale, an uncommon, superhuman death scene:

> The storm, now, again kindled in her disordered mind: "How!" she cried, "have I done all this—dared, risked, braved all things human,—and not human—to die, at last, a common death?—to expire, in a fruitless journey, an unacknowledged, and unoffered sacrifice?—or to lie down tamely in my bed, till I am extinct by ordinary dissolution?—"
>
> Wringing then her hands, with mingled anguish and resentment, "Mr. Naird," she cried, "if you have the smallest real skill; the most trivial knowledge or experience in your profession; bind up my wound so as to give me strength to speed to him! and then, though the lamp of life should be instantly extinguished; though the same moment that bless annihilate me, I shall be content—O more than content! I shall expire with transport!" (380)

But Elinor is unable to enact her imagined finale. It, too, is a thwarted sort of ending—Elinor will not die of her wounds, nor will she even be allowed to move. Even her potentially stirring speeches are undercut by

a switch to third-person narration at the end of the volume when Elinor, "tamed by feeling her dependance upon medical skill" (381), obediently submits to the care of a physician.

As earlier volumes reject marriage and melodrama, so Volume Three rejects the family romance. Here, Ellis is reunited with Lord Melbury and Lady Aurora Granville (who she will later tell us are her half-siblings). Though we know nothing of the relationship, Ellis (now known by her true name, Juliet) is no innocent ingénue ignorant of her own story—she knows what no one else present (including the first-time reader) does, that she has a place within the happy scene:

> An idea that teemed with joy and happiness rose high in the breast of Juliet, as she looked from Lord Melbury to Lady Barbara. Ah! there, indeed, she thought, felicity might find a residence! there, in the rare union of equal worth, equal attractions, sympathising feelings, and similar condition!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The heart of Juliet panted to give utterance to the warm acknowledgments with which it was fondly beating; but mingled fear and discretion forced her to silence. (560)

Nonetheless, she chooses to leave the gallery to perform a menial task—fetching clogs—for Mrs. Ireton and refuses all assistance in that errand.

In this volume we also see the first of the major revelations of the book: the Christian name of The Wanderer/"Ellis": Juliet. With the introduction of her friend Gabrielle, some of the mysteries of the plot—the source of the letters for "L.S." at Brighthelmstone, for example—are revealed, even as their conversation hints at deeper questions: the identity of Gabriella's uncle and the reason why Juliet must remain unnamed still. Even as Burney gives us key pieces of information, they fail to provide closure; they only whet our appetite for more.

Volume Four includes many revelations about Juliet's past. Gabriella provides testimony as to Juliet's legitimate "though secret" birth as the daughter of Lord Granville (shades of *Evelina* again). Readers also learn the history of Juliet's birth, her education, and her legal status as it was specified in Lord Granville's will. Information about the will opens the way

to reveal the continuing battle to assert Juliet's rights on English soil—proceedings complicated by the start of the French Revolution. While this moment might have been a complete recognition scene, her key ally the Bishop is nowhere to be found, and, thus, what ought to signal closure is thwarted by the absence of the final actor necessary. Moreover, the volume contains the potential for yet another sort of ending. Lost, frightened, and alone, Juliet finds herself lingering in the home of a countrywoman and her children:

> Far was she from desirous to quit it. With repose so much required, she here found comfort, peace, and affection,—three principal ingredients in the composition of happiness! which her mind, in her uncertainty of the fate awaiting her, was delighted to seize, and eager to requite. (709-10)

However, Juliet must wander away from this idyllic place as well—it is not her sphere, though it is a safe place for a while. It seems that "comfort, peace, and affection" are insufficient in and of themselves to allow Ellis rest.

Volume Five, then, contains the "Finis"—the Wanderer's end and resting place where she regains her true name and place. Only then can she freely choose to quit both and take up a new, fixed identity. However, the final volume is a bumpy ride, indeed; the reader who expects a graceful arc towards conclusion will be quite surprised. Revelations continue to crowd, some unexpected even at this late date. Juliet, it seems, is married—or so a mysterious Frenchman claims (727). Juliet reveals the truth of this claim shortly thereafter in a narrative that includes the story of how she came by the appearance she had at the beginning of the novel (747).

In fewer than a hundred pages, Juliet reveals her love for Harleigh and is reunited with more family members, among them the Admiral, who immediately reveals he has a copy of the codicil to Lord Granville's will legitimating Juliet. Juliet hears Harleigh's proposal from her brother, who is prepared to pay off Juliet's "husband," who conveniently dies four pages later. The bishop finally appears at the end of the penultimate chapter, opening a floodgate of events—as if enough has not already occurred.

The final chapter crams in enough incident to put the rest of the book to shame. Now that the recognition has been accomplished and

the supporting cast is complete, the novel rushes towards its conclusion wherein our heroine marries, the fates of her friends are outlined, and those who have tormented Juliet are given "positive exile." These developments are all in line with the expectations of most novels: "the good end happily and the bad unhappily," to quote Oscar Wilde's Miss Prism (318). But the concatenation of family romance, recognition, and marriage-ending is conspicuous given Burney's repeated deft avoidance of these very elements as indices of closure within the prior volumes. Even though such "tying up" of plot threads is to be expected, Burney's compression of these final incidents is striking.

The idea of creating a pleasing whole—something akin to the gestalt understanding of closure mentioned before—was certainly in Burney's mind when she defended the novel as genre in the Letter to Dr. Burney preceding *The Wanderer*:

> 'Tis the grandeur, yet singleness of the plan; the never broken, yet never obvious adherence to its execution; the delineation and support of character; the invention of incident; the contrast of situation; the grace of diction, and the beauty of imagery; joined to a judicious choice of combinations, and a living interest in every partial detail, that give to that sovereign species of the works of fiction, its glorious pre-eminence. (7)

And yet, that singleness is broken at the very moment of ending—Elinor's fate is not merely recorded but overshadows the neatness of what has preceded it:

> "Alas! alas!" she cried, "must Elinor too,—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)

Unlike the fate of other foil characters (such as Sir Clement flouncing off at the end of *Evelina*), Elinor's fate is bemoaned by the successful heroine and not merely for Elinor's folly. Instead, Juliet emphatically repeats her question of "must Elinor." Juliet's language ("common herd," "beaten

road") suggests that Elinor ought to be a special case, separate from "that herd."

Moreover, it is tempting to hear in Juliet's cry about deviations from the beaten path echoes of the young Frances Burney of 1778, who wrote in her Preface to *Evelina*,

> . . . however I may feel myself enlightened by the knowledge of Johnson, charmed with the eloquence of Rousseau, softened by the pathetic powers of Richardson, and exhilarated by the wit of Fielding, and humour of Smollet; I yet presume not to attempt pursuing the same ground which they have tracked; whence, *though they may have cleared the weeds, they have also culled the flowers, and though they have rendered the path plain, they have left it barren.* (6; emphasis added)

Young Burney found ease but not beauty in the clear path, and the tone of Juliet's lament suggests at least a residual ambivalence remained in the older Burney.

The younger Burney's words seem all the more appropriate to a discussion of *The Wanderer*, which displays a similar tension between the comfort of the "beaten path" of the early-nineteenth century novel form and the excitement and danger of deviations in subject matter and technique. To achieve satisfying closure, Burney must return to the paths she has attempted to reject throughout *The Wanderer*. But in the final moments of the novel, Burney chooses to remind her readers of what is left unresolved. By returning to Elinor, Burney deviates from the plain road she has been paving towards a vibrant, but clearly dangerous road. Indeed, it is a road marked "do not enter," and we are left contemplating its horizon, on the precipice but proceeding no further.

It is too easy to close with a suggestion that in *The Wanderer* Burney strikes forward into new, uncharted territory. Systemic understanding of endings in this period is already impaired by ill-fitting generalizations, and I wish my reading of Burney's work to be a step towards re-evaluating those assumptions. We need only be reminded of *Rasselas*'s "conclusion in which nothing is concluded" to recall that thwarted closure is nothing new (149). What Burney's endings of *The Wanderer* illustrate is the struggle within fiction to bring works to a satisfying close, a problem

that is always with us, but a problem that eighteenth-century novelists were addressing in a range of sophisticated ways.

NOTES

[1] The most recent example of this shift to reconsider closure is Robert J. Griffin, "The Text in Motion: Eighteenth-Century Roxanas." Unpublished dissertation work on closure in the eighteenth-century includes David Barry Kaufmann's "Answers from the Whirlwind: Chaos, Closure, and the Ends of Narrative"; Rebecca Ellen Martin's "The Spectacle of Suffering: Repetition and Closure in the Eighteenth-Century Gothic Novel"; Rachel Elizabeth Bennett's "The secret horrour of the last: Readers, authors, and the production of ends in the long eighteenth century"; and John C. Traver's "The Sense of Amending: Closure, Justice, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel."

[2] This data and that which follows in this paragraph is gathered from a search of the MLA International Bibliography and the MHRA's *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature* (ABELL).

[3] "Closure, n. 10." *OED Online.* Oxford UP. Web. 20 Sept. 2010.

[4] Johnson is quoting from 5.3.133-34. See the entry for "closure" in Johnson's *Dictionary.*

[5] With the exception of Burney's first, three-volume novel, this expansion in scope is not reflected in a change in size. All three of the later novels have a similar structure and mass: five volumes, with two books per volume, for a total of ten books.

[6] See also Cave, *Recognitions.*

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