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Mentorship and Female Subject Formation in Burney's *Cecilia* and *The Wanderer*

MARGARET KATHRYN SLOAN

Since its publication in 1814, Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* has received mixed critical reviews. Two aspects of the novel in particular have frustrated readers: Burney's unwillingness (or inability) to offer us access to her protagonist's interiority and her heroine's exhaustive (and exhausting) reiteration of her refusal to narrate her story to others. Generally, critical responses to these frustrations have either termed *The Wanderer* a literary failure or focused upon the novel as indicating Burney's radical movement from the eighteenth century into Romanticism. This paper proposes an alternate way to understand the narrative refusals of *The Wanderer* by situating it within a broader discussion of Burney's notions of female mentorship. Reading *The Wanderer* as an extension of discussions initiated in *Cecilia* (1782), we gain a fuller picture of the ways that Burney's novels critique conventional models of female mentorship and how this critique shapes Burney's depiction of female subject formation.

By female mentorship, I am referring to a pedagogical relationship between an older and a younger woman that is at once intellectual and affective. The term overlaps with other categories, including tutorage, a model usually based around the formal instruction of a male tutor, and patronage, a model usually based on an economic relationship. But, perhaps because English women were excluded from formal public education until the passage of the Education Act of 1870, mentor relations between women that exist apart from institutional or economic models pervade eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature. Hester Chapone's best-selling tract, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, published and reprinted fifty-seven times between 1773 and 1851,[1] reflects the contemporary notion that young females need mentoring and that mentorship is a beneficial and even

necessary part of women's emotional, social, and intellectual development:

> if you are fortunate enough to meet with a young woman eight or ten years older than yourself, of good sense and good principles, to whom you can make yourself agreeable, it may be one of the happiest circumstances of your life. She will be able to advise and to improve you—and, your desire of this assistance will recommend you to her taste, as much as her superior abilities will recommend her to you. . . . Whenever you find yourself in real want of advice, or seek the relief of unburdening your heart, such a friend will be able to judge of the feelings you describe, or of the circumstances you are in—perhaps from her own experience—or at least, from the knowledge she will have gained of human nature; she will be able to point out your dangers, and to guide you into the right path.[2]

This passage identifies several key features of female mentorship: that, owing to the denial of formal schooling to girls, the relationship is both necessary and desirable; that age is the distinguishing feature between parties; that greater experience establishes the mentor's credentials; and that confession by the mentee is an essential component of the relationship. Implicit in Chapone's model are the assumptions that the mentor's own experience and knowledge entitle her to judge the feelings and mind of her young friend and that this process of confession is one from which we can learn: "be very careful how you enter into confidences with girls of your own age. Rather choose some person of riper years and judgment, whose good-nature and worthy principles may assure you of her readiness to do you service, and of her candour and condescension towards you" (Chapone 293). Although this paradigm assumes an inherent imbalance of power, Chapone's imagining of this relationship elides the possibility of any abuse of that power and even considers such an imbalance potentially beneficial. Mentorship, Chapone asserts, is a positive

experience: engaging in this ideal mentor relation may be "one of the happiest circumstances" in a young woman's life.

The highly successful sales of *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* suggest that such a view of female mentorship was well known, and presumably accepted, by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers. Samuel Richardson's Pamela considers Mrs. Jervis a counselor and a confidante; Arabella in Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote* finds (and loses) a powerful female mentor in the figure of the Countess; Jane Austen's Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* depends, perhaps too much, upon Lady Russell for emotional support and guidance. Because the female mentor relationship was such a common trope, one might expect to encounter such a representation of mentorship in the novels of Frances Burney, the most eminent British novelist writing at the close of the eighteenth century. Indeed, Burney does focus significant attention upon female mentor relationships, as both *The Wanderer* and *Cecilia* narrate stories of young women as they move from the relative security of their childhood homes into the public world and, ultimately, married life. As critics have widely noted, each novel has as its emotional focus its heroine's relationships with other women. But Burney engages with this model of female mentorship in order to challenge the assumptions that underlie Chapone's endorsement of mentorship as an ideal for female education, showing that relatively independent, confident women can be schooled into submission through intense mentoring. When we look at the pervasive pattern of negative models of mentorship in Burney's fiction, two elements emerge: the centrality of confession to the development of both the mentor relationship and the mentee and the eruption of aggression and violence within the mentor relationship.[3] Burney's depiction of mentorship shows how the act of "unburdening one's heart," the confession so central to the Chaponean paradigm, renders one's identity vulnerable to the mentor's acts of oppression.

While *Cecilia* explores these dynamics through the central relationship of Mrs. Delvile and Cecilia, Burney's final novel depicts a virtual panoply of figures who nominally identify themselves as patronesses, protectors, or mentors, but who make their offers of emotional, social, and even economic support contingent upon the

heroine's confessional narration.[4] (While patronage usually is an economic relationship in which the patron helps to advance or protect an individual, a mentor relationship is pedagogical, accompanied by affective ties in which the mentor offers advice or guidance. These relationships, however, can overlap: mentorship can exist under the auspices of patronage, if one's mentor has money or social influence, just as patrons can offer economic support but cast their role in the affective mode of mentorship.) Female mentorship, a mode of education intended to promote the formation of rational female subjects, becomes in Burney's novels a process that transforms relatively independent, self-reliant heroines into the submissive, obedient models of patriarchal decorum that we witness in the final pages of her novels. Formulations of female mentorship like Hester Chapone's naturalize the oppressive forces of mentorship as part of a teleological model of growth. By exposing the destructive potential of this relationship, Burney offers a critique of the potential for subject development and of possibilities open to women.

"It were tyranny, not friendship": Mrs. Delvile and *Cecilia*

In *Cecilia*, Burney explores in-depth the aggression and the vulnerability that often accompany the act of confession, even when that confession is framed within Chapone's ostensibly beneficent paradigm of female mentorship. Unlike Chapone's ideal, however, in which "unburdening one's heart" to the mentor allows the mentor an opportunity to judge rationally and to direct prudently her young friend, Burney's model acknowledges the dynamism of this relationship—mentors have hearts and feelings as complicated, or more so, as those of their students. Her formulation thus demonstrates the impossibility of rational judgment and the dangers of imagining confession as simply an objective, analytical process of subject formation. As Cecilia's relationship with her mentor deepens, Mrs. Delvile begins to insist upon the confidence between her and Cecilia; she asks, in her capacity as Cecilia's mentor, for Cecilia to confide personal knowledge. These confessional conversations are part of what makes Cecilia, in Claudia Johnson's words, "a casualty of

a patriarchal system which continues to be honored despite its decay" (Johnson 142). That they take place at the depressing, isolated Delvile Castle, which represents the ancient and dying Delvile line, further underscores the extent to which Mrs. Delvile's mentorship of Cecilia is a controlling, subduing force. Mrs. Delvile frames her questioning of Cecilia about suitors and marriage plans as part of her responsibilities to Cecilia as her mentor:

> "I have forborn all questions upon this subject, lest you should find any reluctance in answering them; but I am now too deeply interested in your welfare to be contented in total ignorance of your designs: will you, then, suffer me to make a few enquiries?"
>
> Cecilia gave a ready, but blushing assent.[5]

It is her concern for Cecilia, Mrs. Delvile insists, that motivates her questioning. Elegant language and "blushing assent," however, cannot efface the elements of coercion latent in her request: Mrs. Delvile's forbearance was not because she thought it would be inappropriate to ask, but rather because Cecilia would feel obligated to answer and those answers would be given *reluctantly,* against her will. Here the contemporary definition of "reluctance"—"the act of struggling *against* something; resistance, opposition"—conveys even more forcefully than today's use of the word the active, even violent nature of her resistance.[6]

That Cecilia blushes her assent underscores the confessional nature of this interrogation and the way that her sensibility endorses and even encourages her confessions.[7] It also indicates both a slight embarrassment and a kind of pleasure in the questioning, for she is in part pleased or flattered by Mrs. Delvile's attention to her love life. Cecilia assumes that this kind of personal questioning reflects an intimacy between them that brings mutual pleasure and that is a mark of their mutual attachment. What is so insidious about Mrs. Delvile's mentoring of Cecilia is that the pleasure Cecilia takes in their intimacy makes her careless of her own privacy. In understanding how Mrs. Delvile's mentoring of Cecilia allows her access to Cecilia's private

thoughts, and how that access leads to violence, it is helpful to consider the nature of privacy as distinguished from secrecy. Sisela Bok writes:

> Having defined secrecy as intentional concealment, I obviously cannot take it as identical with privacy. I shall define privacy as the condition of being protected from unwanted access by others—either physical access, personal information, or attention. Claims to privacy are claims to control access to what one takes—however grandiosely—to be one's personal domain. . . . To have no capacity for secrecy is to be out of control over how others see one; it leaves one open to coercion. (10-11, 19)

Cecilia's blushing is a kind of involuntary confession that removes her capacity for privacy and secrecy: the blush marks her loss of control over her "personal domain" and exposes it to Mrs. Delvile's view.[8] But in this moment Cecilia does not feel her loss of control because she sees Mrs. Delvile as her mentor, and within the paradigm for female mentorship based upon confession, there is no "unwanted access" and, therefore, no need for privacy. Having secrets is part of having a self. Cecilia attempts to preserve her sense of self as an individual guided by but separate from Mrs. Delvile by establishing the boundary between not telling all and deception (a boundary that will become increasingly important in *The Wanderer).* Her love for Delvile exists outside of her relationship with Mrs. Delvile, and that love threatens Mrs. Delvile not only because she disapproves of it, but also because that love marks that part of Cecilia's self that exists beyond Mrs. Delvile's control. Despite Cecilia's willingness to answer Mrs. Delvile's interrogation, she does not disclose fully her emotions and is forthright in her declaration of her reserve: "I pretend not, I own, to open my whole heart to you; . . . but though there are some things I venture not to mention, there is nothing, believe me, in which I will deceive you" (470). That boundary, however, is conditional upon Mrs. Delvile's recognizing it: were Mrs. Delvile to ask her to reveal her deepest secrets, Cecilia would. Her mentor relation with

Mrs. Delvile has removed Cecilia's access to either secrecy or privacy, and by ceding her right to secrets—acknowledging that she would open her heart to Mrs. Delvile were it required—Cecilia cedes control over her own identity.

A mentor relationship based on the Chaponean model effaces the boundary between the self and other. The polite language of Mrs. Delvile's questioning of Cecilia about her love life, for example, cannot hide the threat that lies behind the mentor's claim of the right to know:

> "To shew you . . . that I will deserve your confidence in future, I will refrain from distressing you by any further questions at present: you will not, I think, act materially without consulting me, and for your thoughts—it were tyranny, not friendship, to investigate them more narrowly." (470)

On the surface, Mrs. Delvile appears respectful of Cecilia's privacy. But by referring to her questioning with the words "distressing" and "tyranny," she demonstrates her awareness of her power as one self-identified as Cecilia's mentor. Continued questioning can only be "tyranny" if Cecilia feels compelled to answer, even if it causes her pain. What masquerades as a gesture of trust thus becomes a performative statement of Mrs. Delvile's authority over Cecilia; there is *now* no need to ask because in the *future* Cecilia must tell. The future tense that defines the parameters of their continuing relationship—"I will deserve your confidence in future," "you will not act"—not only commands Cecilia's obedience to her mentor, but also reflects the certainty that Cecilia will obey.[9] As the syntax of Mrs. Delvile's sentence moves from actions to "thoughts," what is implied is her power to know and to control Cecilia's thoughts. And this confidence in her power is affirmed by Cecilia's response:

> Cecilia's gratitude for this delicacy, would instantly have induced her to tell every secret of her soul, had she not apprehended such a confession would have seemed

> soliciting her interest and assistance, in the only affair in which she would have disdained even to receive them. (470)

Mrs. Delvile's language, which dictates how Cecilia will act and think even as it presents Mrs. Delvile as respectful of Cecilia's privacy, coerces Cecilia as effectively as does her later apoplexy. Cecilia's immediate emotional reaction is to tell "every secret of her soul." This moment shows that affection—the "gratitude" that Cecilia feels—itself becomes a coercive agent that works actively to remove this sense of privacy from Cecilia. That gratitude is a natural result of the bonds that arise between confessant and confessor. Peter Brooks, in his work on confession, demonstrates how confession operates within a power hierarchy: "It is an affective bond. . . . It contains, and activates, elements of dependency, subjugation, fear, the desire for propitiation, the wish to appease and to please. It leads to the articulation of secrets, perhaps to the creation of hitherto unrealized truth—or perhaps the simulacrum of truth" (35). The bond that develops between Cecilia and Mrs. Delvile, based on this confessant-confessor relationship, fosters in Cecilia the desire to please Mrs. Delvile and the desire to articulate her own secrets. Confession shapes Cecilia into a submissive, subjugated subject desperate to please and appease Mrs. Delvile.

Asserting the right to know the other can become a means of control, as Peter Brooks's analysis of the dynamics of the process of confession, especially coerced confession, demonstrates:

> Above all, the good interrogator maintains control of the storytelling, so that the suspect is put in a position of denying or affirming—often, affirming through denials that lead to entrapment—the unfolding narrative that, one notes, is largely of the interrogator's own making, his 'monologue.' (40)

Brooks highlights the power that can come from narrative control. One's "unfolding narrative," one's "unburdening of one's heart" is a statement of identity. Burney's mentors assume interrogation to be a natural part of their mentorship, and the insidious control this position

gives them over their protégés' narrative allows them, in turn, control over their protégés' identities. Statements of knowledge can become psychological weapons capable of almost physical force. After her engagement, Cecilia imagines an angry Mrs. Delvile as a satire-spitting, wrath-darting snake—"The terror of the first interview never ceased to be present to her; she shrunk even in imagination from her wrath-darting eye, she felt stung by pointed satire, and subdued by cold contempt" (577)—but the reality of her attack is far worse. Mrs. Delvile's declaration of her knowledge of Cecilia's romantic life, "I come not to make enquiries . . . I *know* what has passed, I *know* that my son loves you" (original italics; 635)—which is knowledge that she earlier refrained from forcibly acquiring—here becomes a weapon marshaled against Cecilia that renders her nearly senseless: "she could not speak, she could not look at Mrs. Delvile; she arose, and walked to the window, without knowing what she was doing" (635). "I *know*" is a blow that uncovers Cecilia's every secret and leaves her vulnerable to losing all sense of agency.

Mrs. Delvile berates and coerces her protégée until Cecilia, attempting to defend herself, implies her willingness to break her engagement to Delvile. Again, Mrs. Delvile uses the language of knowledge as a means of control over her protégée: "now again do I know Miss Beverley! now again see the refined, the excellent young woman, whose virtues taught me to expect the renunciation even of her own happiness, when found to be incompatible with her duty!" (640). This "duty" is not Cecilia's understanding of her own obligations, but rather Mrs. Delvile's idea of the patriarchal values that she has decided Cecilia too must embrace. Mrs. Delvile redefines Cecilia's identity as submissive, even self-abnegating. Of course, her performative speech act—her announcement that Cecilia is again the obedient protégée she has always believed her to be—is only successful because Cecilia consents to it. Burney shows the force of mentor relations over the development of the subject: her characters are powerless to resist the declarations of knowledge imposed upon them by people in positions of authority; their assertion of knowing the other becomes a way of subduing the other.[10] She thus reveals female mentorship, a relationship based upon confessions of feeling

and judgments of that feeling, as a pedagogical mode with the potential to work by conquest and submission, not by gentle instruction. Cecilia loses even the power of resistance; unable to reject the meaning her mentor has attached to her words, Cecilia accepts that "her fate was finally determined, and its determination was not more unhappy than humiliating" (643).[11]

The Difficulty of *The Wanderer*

Unlike Cecilia, Juliet Granville of *The Wanderer* resists succumbing to madness and her own unhappy and humiliating fate; she asserts her subjectivity by maintaining control of her story. *The Wanderer* literalizes the threat that proclaiming knowledge of the other carries in Burney's other novels: Juliet's life (and that of the Bishop) depends upon her ability to preserve the secret of her history. (We hear echoes of *Cecilia* when Lord Denmeath's declaration to Juliet of "I know you!" carries the force of a blow, leaving her "utterly overcome" and "motionless").[12] The question of knowing the other is one that pervades *The Wanderer*, and characters and critics alike complain about the difficulty of knowing Juliet. Susie Park, in her discussion of the novel's representation of psychological depth, argues that *The Wanderer* offers "a way to think about where and why the freedom to tell one's story seamlessly becomes the obligation to tell one's story" (308). Building on this assertion, I wish to focus on the novel's engagement with confession as a mode of social interaction, particularly within the mentorship framework. Situating *The Wanderer's* aggressive mentors and their demands for knowledge within the broader context of Burney's depiction of female mentorship allows for a reading of *The Wanderer* as a limit-case that challenges a model of subject development based upon confession.[13]

As Juliet attempts to survive unnoticed in England until acknowledged by her family and informed of the Bishop's safety, she finds herself forced into economic and social dependency in a series of relationships with women: as an interesting foreigner offered social protection by Elinor and Selina Joddrel; as the houseguest of Mrs. Maple; as a genteel artiste offering music lessons to young ladies of

fashion; as a musician under the patronage and protection of Miss Arbe; as an apprentice to Miss Matson and then to Mrs. Hart; as a female companion to and dependent of Mrs. Ireton; and even as a kind of governess and social worker to a smuggler's family in the New Forest. Despite the diversity of these relationships, we can read them all as permutations of mentorship because each of these relationships is *ostensibly* a beneficent one that calls for trust and affection and through which a woman could receive protection, guidance, and even knowledge.[14] That Juliet is in some way economically dependent or indebted to each of these women further underscores the complexity of the dynamics of power that exist in any mentor relation.[15] Certainly, many of these relations have an economic component and thus can be considered in terms of patronage or of class relations, but each of these relationships has also (at least nominally) an affective or consiliary component. That Juliet's economic compensation is contingent upon her confessional narration highlights the overlap of patronage and the Chaponean model of female mentorship: "Mrs. Ireton, therefore, resolved to allow no recompense for [Juliet's] attendance, but in consideration of what she would communicate of her history" (47). Juliet's role in Mrs. Ireton's household as her "humble companion," while it can be considered under the economic model of patronage or master/servant relations, transcends a purely economic model. Her relationship with Mrs. Ireton affords Juliet not only material compensation but also social protection, and like many master/servant relationships, is also framed within affective and familial terms (however hypocritical the use of those terms might be).

All of these relationships become, to varying degrees, hostile. More than any other Burney novel, *The Wanderer* renders explicit the aggressive potential of mentor relations: Juliet must obey Miss Arbe "or turn a professed protectress into a dangerous and resentful enemy" (284). At Juliet's concert rehearsal, "solicitation" is "turned . . . into persecution" until "the poor, unconsidered, unaided *protégée*, dejectedly left the house, at the same moment that it was quitted triumphantly, by her vain, superficial, unprotecting patroness" (318-19). Similarly, Juliet asks Mrs. Hart for her counsel, only to discover that "to ask advice, without a pre-determination to follow it, is to call for censure,

and to risk resentment" (456). The word "protégée" appears more than ten times in the novel, and it is almost always accompanied by descriptors like "helpless," "poor," "unaided," and almost always refers ironically to Juliet's neglect or abuse at the hands of her supposed sponsors.[16] Even the circularity of the novel, the wandering "web of difficulties"[17] criticized by readers since Hazlitt, serves to underscore the persistent violence of these mentor relations: Juliet returns as Mrs. Ireton's paid companion to the same house where she suffered Mrs. Howel's attacks, and as Sir Jaspar notes of Juliet's odyssey, "To pass from Maple to Ireton, was to fall from Scylla to Charybdis" (543).

Moreover, Burney links the aggression of these women directly to their insistence upon their right to "know" who Juliet is. That the power of these women is predicated upon their ability to control and undermine the agency of Juliet suggests, in David Marshall's words, "the dangers of demanding proofs of the interior of the other."[18] Furthermore, the novel suggests that resisting those demands can be a means of preserving the integrity of one's identity. Scholars of Burney widely read the descent of Cecilia and Camilla into madness as manifestations of the psychological violence and trauma of female experience. Becoming alienated from their sense of self, and from their home and their family, they literally lose themselves in lunacy. In many ways, Juliet's lot is as difficult as Cecilia's: Juliet, like Cecilia, loses her home, her money, her parental figures, and her lover. But Juliet marks a step forward from Cecilia in that Juliet does not go mad. *The Wanderer*, as widely noted, presents a realistic picture of the social and economic difficulties confronting women—problems with no easy solution. In *The Wanderer*, Burney begins to gesture towards a reformed model for female mentorship and subject development, one that shares similarities with Wollstonecraft's and Hays's more radical formulations. As in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* and Mary Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice*, two earlier novels concerned with social realism, *The Wanderer* marks reform and progress in two ways: first, in making visible to readers harsh social, cultural, and economic realities; and, second, by showing how to effect individual change and achieve internal strength. What protects Juliet from descending into insanity is her ability to preserve her sense of

herself as an integral being. She finds that security by withstanding the constant pressure to reveal her story publicly.

Juliet protects her agency by refusing to articulate it: "A fixed silence still resisted all attack" (45). If knowledge of the other is a means of control, then denying others the right to know one's self becomes a strategy of resistance. Juliet opposes Mrs. Ireton's attempts to subjugate her by publicly insisting upon herself as a subject and, moreover, as a subject that cannot be known to Mrs. Ireton or to anyone else. When Mrs. Ireton, in an attempt to evoke a public acknowledgment of her control over her paid companion, asks Juliet sarcastically, "permit me to enquire who told you to go?," Juliet responds: "A person, Madam, who has not the honour to be known to you,—myself!" (526). Juliet's insistence that she cannot be "known" leaves the room speechless, but it places readers in an ambiguous position: we, unlike Mrs. Ireton, sympathize with our heroine, but, nevertheless, we cannot identify with her because we, like Mrs. Ireton, do not know who she is.[19] By aligning readerly desire to hear Juliet's confession of her past with Mrs. Ireton's tyrannical demands for that story, Burney reveals the force latent even in the gentlest requests to "unburden your heart."

Elinor literalizes the dangers of "unburdening the heart" in her repeated declarations of unrequited love accompanied by her unsuccessful attempts to stab herself in the heart; in Elinor's case, as Park writes, "self-expression amounts to literal self-negation" (313). While many critics have discussed Elinor's Jacobin views or considered her as an opposing model of female sensibility,[20] here I wish to point out how Elinor's violent acts of confession implicate Juliet. Elinor makes Juliet an instrument of her self-expression: not only does she force Juliet to tell Harleigh that Elinor loves him, but during her suicide attempts she publicly accuses Juliet of usurping her position in Harleigh's heart, forcing Juliet to affirm or deny the charge. Through Elinor's relationship with Juliet, Burney questions how effectively silence resists the dangers of telling. Juliet's silence cannot guarantee her autonomy, but her silence does allow her to protect her identity.

The Wanderer presents us with a subject who preserves her subjectivity by refusing to articulate it. In direct opposition to the Chaponean model of subject formation based upon "unburdening the heart," Juliet's "benefactress" writes to her from France to offer a model of self-sufficiency:

> "In your present lonely, unprotected, unexampled situation, many and severe may be your trials; let not any of them shake your constancy, nor break your silence: while all is secret, all may be safe; by a single surmise, all may be lost. But chiefly bear in mind, what has been the principle of your education, and what I wish to be that of your conduct and character through life: That where occasion calls for female exertion, mental strength must combat bodily weakness; and intellectual vigour must supply the inherent deficiencies of personal courage; and that those, only, are fitted for the vicissitudes of human fortune, who, whether female or male, learn to suffice to themselves. Be this the motto of your story." (220)

Here a mentor figure offers Juliet valuable advice that is not predicated upon confession: only by denying others the right to know her can Juliet "suffice to herself." But such a model, while to a certain extent offering a successful form of resistance, leaves Juliet without further guidance. In keeping with her own advice, Juliet's benefactress leaves Juliet to suffice to herself, and no more instructions arrive from France. We learn later, however, that it is her concern for the family estate, not her faith in Juliet's self-sufficiency, which prevents her from joining Juliet in England. The words of the letter become a static model of self-reliance that Juliet must use to defend herself from attack, but this model does not provide Juliet with a way to assert her agency to any productive measure.

The Wanderer's narrative shows that female mentorship links the act of confession to the process of identity formation and that the act of "unburdening one's heart" can render one's identity susceptible to a mentor's acts of aggression. Juliet's refusal to tell can thus be read as

a protest against a confession-based model of identity formation; instead, she chooses to protect her individuality. Burney famously ends Juliet's story with an allusion to one of the most popular novels of resourceful individualism of the eighteenth century:

> Here, and thus felicitously, ended, with the acknowledgement of her name, and her family, the DIFFICULTIES of the WANDERER;—a being who had been cast upon herself; a female Robinson Crusoe, as unaided and unprotected, though in the midst of the world, as that imaginary hero in his uninhabited island; and reduced either to sink, through inanition, to nonentity, or to be rescued from famine and death by such resources as she could find, independently, in herself. (873)

Burney places the wanderer not only into the tradition of the adventure story, but also into that of autobiography.[21] But identifying her as a female Robinson Crusoe is ironic, for Juliet never tells her story, and what is *Robinson Crusoe* if not one of the most famous examples of the tradition of secular confession? Burney's allusion suggests that a female Crusoe must suffice unto herself without the consolation of telling her story and, moreover, that unlike Crusoe, whose difficulties end but whose adventures continue, a female Crusoe's story can only end happily in marriage. Many readers have expressed disappointment at the novel's conventional conclusion, in which Juliet's story is revealed and she exchanges her struggle for independence for life at Harleigh Hall.[22] Although Juliet desires both to make those revelations and to marry, those actions come at the cost of her control over her identity. This cost is made most apparent in one of Harleigh's many pleas for information: "If I solicit to hear your name—it is but with the hope . . . that you will suffer me to change it!" (593). By naming herself, Harleigh imagines, Juliet will be able to lose her self—in the legal sense quite literally—in marriage.[23]

Looking at depictions of female mentorship in Burney's novels offers an explanation for their unexplained explosions of violence. It offers a way to think about the pressure to tell, to confess, and to

share, and how this pressure can work as an eroding force on the development of the female subject. That the process of mentoring is so consistently negative and violent in all of Burney's novels, that these mentor relations are central to her work, and that she openly critiques the process whereby women are silenced and brought into patriarchal resolution, suggests that despite the acknowledged conservatism of her novels' endings, Burney sees the formation of the self as a progress that is violent and not very progressive at all. *The Wanderer* presents a truly different model of agency, one that instructs women to "suffice unto themselves," but such a strategy leaves them only in a position of struggling for survival, waiting upon that desert island until someone comes to rescue them, or at least to give them a name.

NOTES

[1] These statistics come from the introductory note to Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* in *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785*, ed. Rhoda Zuk, vol. 3 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999) 257. The brief publishing history of the *Letters* in William St. Clair's authoritative study, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), indicates the enormous popularity of this text: more than 30,000 copies were printed between 1773 and 1830. St. Clair demonstrates the cultural power of this book: "Chapone's book was frequently praised, reprinted, anthologized, quoted from, and copied by others. Surviving copies show that the books were frequently given as gifts to young women by parents, godparents, friends, and by schools as prizes" (592).

[2] Chapone, "On the Regulation of the Heart and Affections," *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* 293.

[3] Many critics have focused on the darker moments in Burney's fiction in their discussions about the question of female experience. See Kristina Straub, *Divided Fictions: Fanny Burney and Feminine Strategy* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1987; Julia Epstein, *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women's Writing* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P,

1989); and Katharine M. Rogers, *Frances Burney: The World of 'Female Difficulties'* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990). Kristina Straub reads Burney as social observer, arguing that the apparent contradictions in Burney's fiction between her social critique and her conventional impulses are not an aesthetic flaw but rather that "these ideological gaps and contradictions in her texts seem the result of simple honesty about her cultural circumstances as woman and writer rather than a deliberate attempt to subvert" (Straub 3). Julia Epstein argues for Burney as social critic in her feminist reading of moments of violence and aggression in Burney's journals and fiction (3-12); Katharine Rogers, more moderately, discusses the darker moments in Burney's fiction to argue that Burney's critiques of social convention are ultimately overwhelmed by her desire to conform (1-24). But in their debates over Burney's rebelliousness or conformity, critics have not focused on the pervasive pattern of mentorship as it exists in Burney's fiction. Looking at mentor relations as depicted in Burney's novels offers a new approach to the same questions raised in previous scholarship and suggests a new way to consider the question of subject formation, especially female subject formation, in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

[4] Robert Mack, among others, notes the series of dependent relationships evident in *The Wanderer*. See Robert L. Mack, "The Novelist and the Critics: Frances Burney's Manuscript Corrections and Additions to *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties*," *Journal x: A Journal in Culture and Criticism* 9.1 (2004): 17-51. Claudia Johnson argues that these characters demonstrate that "Burney uses misogyny to advance mildly progressive social criticism" in *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s: Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995) 177. While not denying that these women reflect ugly female stereotypes, I suggest that their behavior and their relationships with Juliet can be read as part of a larger dynamic at work in Burney's fiction; her concern with exploring mentor relations is not limited to her female characters, and as Chapone's letter demonstrates, this relationship was part of a larger cultural understanding of female subject development

[5] Frances Burney, *Cecilia, or, Memoirs of an Heiress*, ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 469. All subsequent references to this edition of *Cecilia* will appear in parentheses in the text and notes.

[6] "Reluctance," *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989).

[7] Cecilia confesses her love for Delvile only to Delvile's dog, Fidel, believing herself to be alone (but, of course, in good novelistic fashion, Delvile is watching her and overhears her sighs and laments). Patricia Meyer Spacks discusses Cecilia's two scenes with Fidel as part of her argument about the difficulties of privacy for women in *Cecilia*. See Spacks, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003) esp. 99-101.

[8] An extensive body of criticism documents, since the time of *Clarissa* (and before), that readers understood fictional heroines' displays of emotion as markers of their sensibility—their faculty for feeling, capacity for extremely refined emotion, and quickness to display compassion for suffering—and thus of their moral worth. See Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986) and G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992). Of course, as Spacks points out, sensibility itself can become a form of concealment: "itself a mode of display, sensibility lends itself also to deception" (Spacks 11). I am concerned not with the way Cecilia manipulates her sensibility to protect herself but, rather, with how that sensibility renders her vulnerable. I focus upon displays of sensibility that accurately reflect inner emotional states to emphasize the confessional aspect of involuntary displays of emotion.

[9] Mrs. Delvile uses her position of authority over Cecilia to know her: "The state of [Cecilia's] mind seemed read by Mrs. Delvile, who examined her with eyes of such penetrating keenness, that they rather made discoveries than enquiries" (501).

[10] We see the same dynamic at work between Mrs. Delvile and her son: when she finally forces Delvile to consent to give up Cecilia, he acknowledges his agreement by shouting "in a transport of rage . . . 'you have conquered!'" (677); Mrs. Delvile responds with, "'Then you are my son! . . . now I again know my Mortimer!'" (677). Stating knowledge of another becomes a verbal means of conquest as forceful as a physical one.

[11] In *Camilla*, Burney explores the dangerous potential of a confessional dynamic in the model of male mentorship. Dr. Marchmont believes his position as mentor grants him almost omniscient knowledge of Edgar and his character. He announces this knowledge

and control: "I see the situation of your mind" (Frances Burney, *Camilla: Or, a Picture of Youth*, ed. Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom [Oxford; New York: Oxford UP, 1999] 149). As Edgar's tutor, Dr. Marchmont has been authorized to guide his student's mind, but with this declaration of almost divine perspective, he claims the authority not only to know Edgar's thoughts and feelings but also to dictate what those feelings should be. Dr. Marchmont redefines Edgar—telling him how to think, look, and see, and how to understand himself in relation to his love—against Edgar's own "nature," thereby making Edgar into the image of his own distrust and misogyny. Burney's language unequivocally expresses the violent nature of Dr. Marchmont's attempted psychological reshaping of Edgar disguised as mentorly advice:

> Mandlebert, filled now with a distrust of himself and of his powers . . . felt struck to the soul with the apprehension of failing to gain [Camilla's] affection, and wounded in every point both of honour and delicacy. . . . [H]is confidence was gone; his elevation of sentiment was depressed; a general mist clouded his prospects, and a suspensive discomfort inquieted his mind. (161-62)

Edgar has been psychologically beaten: "struck to the soul," "wounded," "depressed," "discomfort" all evoke the aggression of Dr. Marchmont's assault on Edgar's identity. Dr. Marchmont's mentorship and his proclaimed knowledge of his pupil erode Edgar's own sense of self.

[12] Frances Burney, *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties*, ed. Robert L. Mack, Margaret Anne Doody, and Peter Sabor (London: Oxford UP, 2001) 614. All subsequent references to the novel will appear in parenthesis in the text and notes.

[13] Margaret Anne Doody reads Juliet as uniting themes from her other novels; like Doody, I see Juliet as successor to Burney's other heroines and suggest that considering female mentor relations is one way to understand *The Wanderer* as Burney's final novel. See Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1988) 323.

[14] In addition to these relationships Burney also depicts Juliet's attempted guidance of Flora (which fails to change Flora and only

leaves Juliet vulnerable to attacks from both men and women) and Mrs. Ireton's other protégées, including the young girl explicitly identified as such whom she sends to charity school (478).

[15] See Margaret Anne Doody's discussion of Burney's economic critique in *The Wanderer*, esp. 350–61.

[16] The word "protégée" refers twice to children who are innocent but threatened, like Juliet: once to the orphan abused by Mrs. Ireton and once to the children of the poacher/smuggler.

[17] William Hazlitt, "A Review of *The Wanderer: Or, Female Difficulties*," *Edinburgh Review* 24 (1815): 358.

[18] David Marshall, "Friday's Writing Lesson: Reading *Foe*," *Historical Boundaries, Narrative Forms: Essays on British Literature in the Long Eighteenth Century in Honor of Everett Zimmerman*, ed. Lorna Clymer and Robert Mayer (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2007) 246.

[19] Crucial to Juliet's project of survival is her ability to see herself as other and separate from others, and Burney uses race (not unproblematically) both to mark Juliet as other and to render more visible the aggression manifest in these mentor relations between women. Ellis/Juliet uses blackface as part of her disguise in fleeing France, and much of the hostility of her fellow travelers towards her takes the shape of openly racist commentary. Part of the problem with Burney's model of female mentorship is that her heroines are unable to see themselves as separate from their supposed protectors. Ellis/Juliet's supposed blackness becomes a visual marker of her status as other and separate; although it evokes an ongoing series of racist attacks, it also allows her the kind of separation and distance that she needs for survival. Additionally, when she works for Mrs. Ireton as her paid companion, Burney explicitly aligns the wanderer's position with Mungo, the black page. For a thorough critique of Burney's use of the tropes of race and slavery in *The Wanderer*, see especially Sara Salih, "'Her Blacks, Her Whites and Her Double Face!': Altering Alterity in *The Wanderer*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 11 (1999): 301–15.

[20] Critical readings of Elinor tend to focus upon her dramatically expressed Jacobin views and her role in the Harleigh love triangle. Claudia Johnson argues that Elinor's suicide attempts become an

exaggeration of the confessional (176). Doody asserts that "Juliet's experiences offer a feminist and social view complementary to the theories of Elinor. They are 'Two Ways of looking at the same Thing,' 'Two Sides of a Question'" (350). Juliet McMaster, in "The Silent Angel: Impediments to Female Expression in Frances Burney's Novels," *Studies in the Novel* 21 (1989), argues that Harleigh's choice of Juliet over Elinor reflects his choice of female silence over expression and thus implicates him as part of oppressive patriarchy (235-52). Andrea Austin reads the relationship between the two women, not their relationships with Harleigh, as the central emotional focus of the novel. See "Between Women: Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*," *English Studies in Canada* 22 (1996): esp. 248-49.

[21] For a discussion of the tradition of the female Robinson Crusoe, see Doody 350 and 423, n. 52.

[22] Claudia Johnson, for example, argues that the effort of the novel to bring about the happy conclusion by freeing Juliet from her first marriage (proving in multiple ways the invalidity of that marriage before finally killing him off) only serves to reinforce further its strictures for feminine propriety (esp. 169). Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook argues that although Burney's use of the georgic mode as a "narrative framework for women's lives" could be "potentially revolutionary," the ending of the novel organizes identity around patriarchy. See "Crown Forests and Female Georgic: Frances Burney and the Reconstruction of Britishness," *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850*, ed. Donna Landry, Gerald MacLean, and Joseph P. Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 197.

[23] Indeed, nearly all of Harleigh's attempts to help Juliet are part of this sexual economy: although motivated also by his sense of his own moral obligation and her intrinsic goodness, Harleigh involves himself in her affairs largely because of his romantic interest in Juliet. Neither does Sir Jaspar, who is certainly the most successful in *The Wanderer* in offering Juliet protection and money, offer a disinterested or positive model for mentorship. His pinning Juliet's gown to the ground with his crutches at Arundel Castle and his proposal to her make visible the violence of his demands to know her story and demonstrate that even his age and benevolence cannot prevent him from seeing her as a sexual object.

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