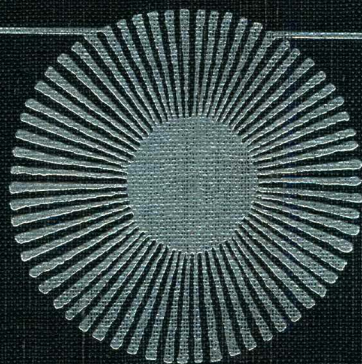

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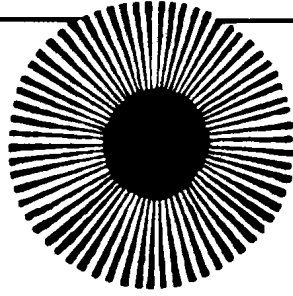
The
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Volume 7

HAROLD BLOOM

General Editor

The
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Volume 7

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General Editor

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FANNY BURNEY

1752–1840

Frances ("Fanny") Burney, novelist and diarist, was born in King's Lynn on June 13, 1752, the daughter of the musicologist Dr. Charles Burney. In 1760 the family moved to London, where Fanny grew up in the midst of a social circle that included Johnson, Burke, Reynolds, Garrick, Elizabeth Montagu, and many members of the aristocracy. In 1778 she anonymously published her first novel, *Evelina*, which brought her much fame when her authorship was revealed. *Evelina* was followed by a second novel, *Cecilia*, published in 1782.

Between 1786 and 1791 she served as Second Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III, and in 1793 married Alexander d'Arblay, a French refugee living in England who had served as Lafayette's adjutant-general during his campaign against the Prussians. A son, Alexander d'Arblay, was born in 1794, and a third novel, *Camilla*, was published in 1796. In 1802 d'Arblay returned to France after being promised his pension if he served in St. Domingo with General Le Clerc. His only condition was that he not be asked to fight the English at some later date, but upon arriving in Paris he learned that his terms were not acceptable to Napoleon. Passport restrictions prevented him from leaving the country, and his wife and son joined him in France, where they lived mostly in Paris, from 1802 to 1812.

After returning to London Fanny Burney published her last novel, *The Wanderer*, in 1814. In that same year, following the death of her father, she and her husband again moved to France, but in 1815 the advancing Napoleon forced them to flee Paris. After passing through Brussels, they returned to England, where in 1818 Fanny Burney's husband died. In her later years she edited her father's memoirs, which appeared in 1832, and following her death in London on January 6, 1840, the *Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay* (7 vols., 1843–46), and *The Early Diary of Frances Burney* (2 vols., 1889) were published. A new edition of her *Letters and Journals*, under the general editorship of Joyce Hemlow, has been published in ten volumes (1972–81).

RONALD PAULSON

From "The Novel of Manners"

Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England

1967, pp. 283–87

Fanny Burney's *Evelina* (1778) (. . .), as a critic has observed, uses "*Humphry Clinker* as a base for operations in the direction of Jane Austen."¹ Austen was a careful reader of Burney, and Burney owes an obvious debt to Smollett. Although the plot of *Evelina* receives a great deal more emphasis than that of *Humphry Clinker*, both novels are structurally a series of letters describing a series of places visited, an itinerary held together by a conventional sentimental plot. Unacknowledged fathers, the lowly who turn out to be highborn, and brothers who find their lost sisters are all ingredients of the sentimental plot in both novels. The themes in both—though different—are conveyed by the cities and country houses visited. *Evelina* goes from the country to London with the acceptable Mirvan family; then back to the country and again to London, this time in the company of the impossible, vulgar Branghtons and Mme. Duval; then back to the country and to Bristol Hot Well with people of quality, the Beaumonts; and finally to Bath with Lord Orville. The effect here is not too different from that of a scene in London or Bath seen through the eyes of Bramble, then Jerry, and then Winifred Jenkins and Tabitha. In a more formalized, static way, these letters serve the function of *Evelina*'s different guides, revealing and opposing "different points of view and incompatible ways of meeting the same experience."² In this sense *Humphry Clinker* points away from the true-false world of formal verse satire toward the infinitely qualified world of the novel of manners.

The central unit of both novels is the test scene in which the attitudes of various types are brought together and analyzed. *Evelina* is a series of these big scenes—*Evelina*'s first assembly, her first opera, the drawing room of the Beaumonts, and so on. In *Humphry Clinker* the moral discourse in which one satirist attacks an evil is the simplest scene of this sort: Bramble attacks the affectation that makes people desire the fashionable waters of Bath, however disgusting and unhealthy. There are also scenes in which more than one satirist appears, and the object of attack is not so clearly defined. As we move north, away from the blatant folly of London, these scenes increase in number and the distinctions between right and wrong become less clear-cut. The practical jokes and counter practical jokes of the Bulford house party, with their repercussions of hurt pride and endangered health, raise the question of who in a given circumstance is right and who is wrong. And what of Micklewhimmen, the sophisticate who pretends to be an invalid in order to excite compassion from the ladies? The alarm of fire being sounded, he proves himself both wholly sound and a coward, knocking down old ladies in his hurry to save himself; but his good-humored acceptance of the unmasking, ending in his dancing a jig, leaves one wondering whether he is admirable or not; whether he or Bramble or a clergyman who enters into the argument or Tabby, who refuses to forgive him under any circumstances, is really right. There are also the scenes in which Bramble, Lismahago, Tabby, and others argue, social types mix, manners are tested, and the norm of behavior becomes, almost inevitably, a compromise between two or more partially correct attitudes.

These scenes place the satirist in a larger context. Like Harriet Byron and Charlotte Grandison, Bramble is finally just one more point of view, one more example, in the larger picture of the novel. In *Evelina* Burney presents the characteristic satiric figures common in Smollett's novels—the sharp-

tongued Mrs. Selwyn, the practical-satirist Captain Mirvan, and in his way even the fop Lovel. But in every case they are regarded coldly, the moral or public content has gone out of their observations, and they are merely private characters, their particular satiric approach a pattern of manners. Mirvan is a case in point; he is the Smollettian sea dog, as well as the prankster and the Juvenalian whose indignation bubbles over into violent action when confronted with such outrages to his native John Bullishness as the preposterous Mme. Duval. He can be found in any of Smollett's novels, but he has undergone the same metamorphosis as Holder and Bulford in *Humphry Clinker*; he has become a prankster and a boor. The difference appears in the one scene in which Mirvan most resembles the early Smollettian satirists, Random, Pickle, and Cadwallader Crabtree—the incident in which he dresses up a monkey to look like the fop Lovel. The monkey is a commentary on Lovel just as the Pygmalion girl Peregrine creates is a commentary on high society, but the monkey proceeds to emphasize the cruelty beyond satire by biting Lovel's ear. The scene arouses only pity for Lovel, who for a moment becomes a human being as well as a fop. By contrast, the moral function is completely absent in all Mirvan's other pranks, and in the pranks he plays on Mme. Duval he appears simply as a coarse lout, like his counterparts in *Humphry Clinker*.

The chief difference between the two novels, however, lies in the fact that in *Evelina* the places and scenes not only are part of a satiric survey of society, but also are stages in the social climb of a young girl. One difficulty in Smollett's novels up to *Humphry Clinker* was his inability to merge his sentimental plot conventions and his real center of interest (the satiric scene); *Evelina* carries Smollett's work a step further, fitting his psychological form to the logical form of the courtship. For this aspect of her novel, Burney drew upon Sir Charles Grandison, omitting the melodramatic end of the spectrum. But the plot Burney follows in *Evelina* is not solely made up of the stages of a courtship; it simultaneously consists of the stages in the social ascent of a young girl. Evelina, the chief letter writer of the novel, has much in common with Harriet Byron, but she has more with Sir Charles Grandison's young ward, Emily Jervois, a naïve observer without Harriet's certainty in her own judgment; Emily's horrible mother becomes Evelina's Mme. Duval, with the implications more fully developed.

Evelina is sharp and critical, and her standards are high; but as Bramble is isolated by his illness, she (like Humphry Clinker) is isolated by her birth. She is outside society, of obscure parentage, and comes from a sheltered life in the country which sets off the vice of London in vivid relief. However, the function of her equivocal position is no longer simply to make her a touchstone or a satirist (though she is a little of both) but to put her outside society—a "nobody" as Lovel calls her—so that she literally does not know who she is; her progression then is not, like Harriet's, toward fulfillment, but toward self-definition and identity.

The same progression is evident in both Bramble and that other "nobody" Humphry. Bramble is shown as a man in search of health, which is finally a knowledge of his own past, achieved by going back over the country of his youth and making an important discovery about himself. But in *Humphry Clinker* searches for self-definition are tangential and subordinate and thus are only other aspects of a larger theme dealing with attitudes toward experience in general. In *Evelina* the satiric aspects, the attitudes toward the world, are subordinated to the protagonist's personal search, which is thus the theme of the novel.

Although Evelina has the satirist's inclination, she is closer to the character of Lydia Melford. What Smollett did not see was the possibility of making the young girl with a finer sensibility than his masculine characters a satirist, perhaps because he knew she lacked the freedom of choice of a man and so could not finally maintain the satirist's standards. Lydia, the naïve, impressionable, sensitive young girl, comes to each new place with wide eyes and (like her uncle and brother) is appalled at what she discovers; pretty soon, however, she recognizes the fashionableness of it and tries to adjust. Lydia is a rough sketch for the figure of a young girl like Evelina, who is an outsider, is sensitive enough to see the wrongness of the society she enters, but still knows she must make common cause with it; she must come to terms with a society she has first seen through.

Notes

1. See Edwine Montague and Louis L. Martz, "Fanny Burney's *Evelina*," in *The Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1949), p. 171.
2. Ernest A. Baker, *The History of the English Novel* (London, H. F. and G. Witherley, 1930), 4, 76.

PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS

From "Dynamics of Fear: Fanny Burney"

Imagining a Self

1976, pp. 175–92

If the collection of Fanny Burney's journals and letters creates the effect of autobiography, a coherent narrative implying an imaginative grasp of experience, her four novels also have aspects of psychic autobiography. One can readily perceive in them versions of the journals' central theme: the discipline and the liberation of a woman's fears of disapproval and of being found wanting—fear, in fact, of the other people who comprise society. But novels, with their capacity to express wish and fantasy as well as reality, allow Fanny Burney to enlarge her communication of her own nature. Her fiction illustrates complex feminine identities of indirection.

Ian Watt, noting that women wrote most novels in the eighteenth century, hints also—in terms more tactful than mine—that most of those novels were bad. In Jane Austen, he suggests, we first encounter an unmistakable example of the fact "that the feminine sensibility was in some ways better equipped to reveal the intricacies of personal relationships and was therefore at a real advantage in the realm of the novel."¹ He does not explain why earlier female writers had proved unable to exploit this advantage. Indeed, the fact—like many facts about literary quality—is profoundly inexplicable. One can describe the aspects of Fanny Burney's novels that make them more moving and more meaningful than Jane Barker's, and it is possible to demonstrate how Jane Austen excels Fanny Burney. Why is another matter; why reduces one to vaguenesses like *talent* and *genius*.

To define the strengths and weaknesses of Fanny Burney's fictional achievement, however, may lead at least to speculation about the reasons for her superiority to her female contemporaries. Her strengths are more far-reaching than has been generally recognized. *Evelina* has been praised as though it consisted only of a collection of skillful character sketches.² Joyce Hemlow has demonstrated its affinities to the "courtesy book," as an effort to outline a scheme of acceptable womanly conduct.³ It has been admired ever since its own time for the

accuracy of its social detail and conversation. But it also manifests a high level of psychological insight closely related to the self-knowledge that emerges from even the youthful diaries. Fanny Burney may write better fiction than other women of her era partly because she has come to terms more fully than they with the realities of the female condition. She is therefore "equipped to reveal the intricacies of personal relationships" as they actually exist in the world and is not blinded by wishful fantasy or by anger, although both manifest themselves in her work.

Self-discovery of a woman in hiding constitutes the subject of the novels, as of the journals. Fanny Burney's heroines hide specifically because they are women, driven to concealments in order to maintain their goodness. They do not, except in brief moments, openly resent their fates. Yet the tension suggested by a formulation that asserts the simultaneity of discovery and hiding pervades Miss Burney's fiction. She constructs elaborate happenings to articulate conflict, locate happiness, and apportion blame. Her transformations of life in fiction, while insisting on the essential order of experience, also hint their author's awareness of the psychic costs of such affirmation. Anxiety dominates the Burney novels, despite their happy endings. However minute its pretexts—and often they seem trivial indeed—its weight is real, deeply experienced by the central characters and, to a surprising extent, shared even by readers who can readily dismiss its nominal causes. In fact, the causes lie deep; the heroines suffer profound conflicts.

Evelina, of the four heroines, has the fewest and most trivial real problems. Like Cecilia and Juliet in *The Wanderer* she is in effect an orphan (her father, though alive, has refused to acknowledge her), but she has a benevolent guardian and devoted friends. A summary of the novel's plot will suggest, though, how profoundly it involves itself with fundamental questions of identity. Evelina is the unacknowledged daughter of an English baronet secretly married to a young woman, half French, who died in childbirth, leaving her infant to the guardianship of a benevolent clergyman until the child's father is willing to admit his marriage as well as his paternity. At the narrative's opening, Evelina, after seventeen years of rural seclusion, goes to visit a friend who soon takes her to London. There she encounters, by chance, her vulgar and disagreeable French grandmother, Mme. Duval, who insists that she associate with equally vulgar English relatives. Evelina, however, feels drawn to the aristocracy. She is sexually attracted to Lord Orville, extravagantly courted by Sir Clement Willoughby. Much of the action concerns her efforts to identify herself with the upper class—her manners are already upper class manners—and to evade her kinship with the bourgeoisie. Finally she claims acknowledgment by her true father, only to face absolute rejection as an impostor, since he believes another young woman to be his daughter. A nurse's confession reveals an earlier baby-switching trick, and the novel ends with Evelina in happy possession of, in effect, three fathers: her paternalistic new husband, Lord Orville; her virtuous guardian, Mr. Villars; and her genuine father, Sir John Belmont. All three confirm her identity of true aristocracy and virtue.

The difficulties the novel nominally concerns itself with, according to its writer's direct assertion, derive mainly from Evelina's social inexperience. Nothing happens except "little incidents," but virtue, feeling, and understanding finally receive their just reward, the heroine's "conspicuous beauty" providing the means to this appropriate end.⁴ More obviously than stories such as Jane Barker's tale of a merman and his paramour, this tale represents a familiar female fantasy: a potent vision of virtue recognized and rewarded despite its

incidental errors—specifically, in this instance, Fanny Burney's own kind of virtue. But the novel has a level of realism lacking in many other fictions by female writers. It concerns itself with a young woman's entrance into a genuinely imagined social world, dominated, like Fanny Burney's own, by forms and manners, and very real in its pressures, cruelties, and arbitrary benignities. "The right line of conduct," Evelina's guardian, Mr. Villars, tells her, "is the same for both sexes" (p. 217). But Mr. Villars lives quite out of the world. Right though he is in theory, and confirmed in his rightness by the wish fulfillment of the ending, he does not understand the practical problems of a woman's following the right line of conduct. Evelina has to come to terms with the disparity between his ideals (which are also hers) and the way life actually takes place in the world, but she also must avoid relinquishing, or even modifying, the standards that attest her virtue. Like Tom Jones, she must learn prudence.⁵ But prudence for her, as for Fanny Burney, constitutes mainly avoidance, and she too is perpetually, and increasingly, dominated by fear of wrongdoing.

Direct comments in the novel about the world emphasize its danger, its superficiality and hypocrisy, and its sinister power. The world threatens individual identity. Mr. Villars, living in retirement, fears its effects on Evelina. He also recognizes the world's inescapable power. Only the frivolous wholeheartedly accept worldly values, but no one escapes them. The choices for women consist mainly of options to refuse or to accept rather than possibilities to act. Evelina acts meaningfully and independently once, when—in an improbable and overwritten scene—she snatches the pistols from a suicidal young man. She then faints. "In a moment, strength and courage seemed lent me as by inspiration: I started, and rushing precipitately into the room, just caught his arm, and then, overcome by my own fears, I fell down at his side, breathless and senseless" (p. 182). Even when the woman possesses and displays strength and courage, she understands (or explains) them as given to her from outside, and her own powerful fears counteract her impulse toward action, reducing her to the passivity more characteristic of the female state and more unarguably blameless. Women aspire to the negative condition of blamelessness. Evelina is constantly beset by fears of being thought bold, or rude, or unwomanly. She fears acting. She writes to Mr. Villars, "Unable as I am to act for myself, or to judge what conduct I ought to pursue, how grateful do I feel myself, that I have such a guide and director to counsel and instruct me as yourself!" (p. 160). And, much later (p. 306), she appeals in similar terms to her lover, Lord Orville. The proper line of conduct is *not* the same for both sexes. Men guide and instruct; women are guided and instructed. Evelina makes quite explicit her desire (which she shares with her creator) to find a lover or husband to fill the same role as father or guardian. She assumes the utter propriety of remaining as much as possible a child: ignorant, innocent, fearful, and irresponsible.

Proving her sagacity, her lover values her for precisely these qualities. Like Evelina's guardian, whom in many respects he resembles, he believes the world is opposed to rationality and values the woman who knows nothing of it. Shortly before he proposes, he summarizes Evelina's character for a group of his fashionable friends, explaining the occasional "strange" elements in her behavior as effects "of inexperience, timidity, and a retiring education," praising her as "informed, sensible, and intelligent," and glorifying "her modest worth, and fearful excellence" (p. 347). Fearfulness has become an index of goodness. Lord Orville recognizes the positive quali-

ties of Evelina's mind, but he praises more the elements of her personality that encourage her to hold back from experience. Strikingly often in all Fanny Burney's novels, the terms of praise applied to women—*artless*, *blameless*—emphasize the negative: the refrainings induced by fear.

But *Evelina* also contains one minor woman character who does not refrain: the redoubtable Mrs. Selwyn. "She is extremely clever; her understanding, indeed, may be called *masculine*; but, unfortunately, her manners deserve the same epithet; for, in studying to acquire the knowledge of the other sex, she has lost all the softness of her own" (p. 268). No one likes Mrs. Selwyn, and since a woman's fate in the world depends largely on the degree to which she is liked, this fact alone presumably urges negative judgment of a female who feels entitled on the basis of her strong mind to act aggressively in company. She alone, for instance, feels free to remark devastatingly (and accurately) on masculine idiocy in the presence of its perpetrators. Evelina observes that this habit makes enemies; she does not comment on the accuracy of Mrs. Selwyn's judgment. Fanny Burney, disclaiming responsibility for Mrs. Selwyn through her heroine's disapproval, yet allows her to remain a provocative image of female intelligence and force. The novelist thus suggests that she is aware, although she has not yet fully acknowledged it, that Evelina's choices, proper as they are, do not exhaust the tempting possibilities for intelligent women.

Evelina chooses dependency and fear, a choice no less significant for being thrust upon her. It amounts to the declaration of the identity that achieves her social and economic security. The identity she cares about most is given her from without by husband and father. The problem in achieving her woman's identity differs from its male equivalent, from Tom Jones's search for his identity, for example. Her education in society teaches her not to relinquish but to use her innocence and her fears.⁶ The discovery of prudence enables her to form new dependency relations. No better solution for women is fully realized in the novel. Yet that disturbing figure, Mrs. Selwyn, who expresses female hostility toward the male without suffering any penalty beyond general dislike, whose mind and money make her sufficiently powerful to resist or endure dislike, suggests an alternative to the dominant fantasy of the woman rewarded for innocence by the dream of scorning the world's judgment while forcing its notice.

But the dominant dream of female withdrawal that preserves individual integrity, protects private feeling, and attracts the perfect lover suggests more clearly than any utterance in her diary the young author's longings and hopes. *Evelina*, like the letters and journals, concentrates on a woman's attempt to preserve and defend herself with the few obvious resources at her disposal. The success of that attempt reaffirms Fanny Burney's personal decisions.

Novels—at least eighteenth-century novels—differ from autobiographies and journals partly in their detailed attention to characters other than the protagonist. Women novelists on the whole had trouble dealing with this aspect of their craft; rarely did they succeed in evoking more than the single female character at the center of their narratives. (In some instances, of course, not even the heroine, paragon rather than recognizable person, was convincingly evoked.) Fanny Burney, on the other hand, seemed to find multiple characterization a vital expressive resource. Through the people she makes Evelina encounter she manages to convey considerable, and rather complicated, hostility. Lord Orville and Mr. Villars, both exemplary males, actually engage little of her attention: they remain wooden presences. But the large cast of distasteful

aristocrats, the equally unattractive petty bourgeoisie, sadistic Captain Mirvan, and vulgar but vigorous Mme. Duval—these figures come splendidly to life. Their satiric portrayal enables the writer to express and to justify her vivid antagonisms. Mrs. Selwyn provides a direct mouthpiece for aggressive impulses, but Miss Burney also conveys aggression through her derogatory character sketches and through her repeated invention of actions expressing extreme hostility: Captain Mirvan's plot to make Mme. Duval think herself beset by highwaymen, the race of two ancient women arranged by the aristocrats, the scene in which Sir Clement is bitten by a monkey.

As autobiography, in other words, this novel reveals more than the diaries. Allowing Miss Burney to articulate repressed aspects of her personality, it reminds us of the degree to which her constant professions of fear and her insistent withdrawals represent not true timidity but a socially acceptable device of self-protection. The writing and publishing of novels—a public act—also involves self-protection; no one holds the author personally responsible for Captain Mirvan's sadism or Mrs. Selwyn's ferocious commentary. Through imagining such sadism and such commentary, she permits herself the impermissible. She both declares the high value of her own mode of dealing with the world and compensates for the restrictions of her propriety.

After *Evelina* came *Cecilia*, insistently moral, carefully controlled, much too long, and containing some disturbing implications. The power of wealth gives its heroine initial security; her experience teaches her insecurity. Altogether a more sinister fable than *Evelina*, despite its insistent morality, *Cecilia* acknowledges more openly the high psychic cost of female compliance. The permeating sense of anxiety here derives largely from the increasingly explicit recognition of the difficulties and inherent limitations of women's social position. Cecilia has wealth, intelligence, beauty, adequate social status, and the nominal freedom to do whatever she wants. In fact, as she discovers, she possesses all the concomitants, but no real freedom and no power. She must use her energies for self-suppression. "Her passions were under the control of her reason, and she suffered not her affections to triumph over her principles."⁷ She must learn to give up, yielding her money as sign and symbol of larger relinquishments. Never does she question—any more than Evelina questions—the necessity to be good. Like Evelina, she is rewarded by marriage. But the diminishment she undergoes in order to achieve it and the torments she endures along the way suggest a dark view of women's fate.

The heroine of *Camilla* suffers yet greater diminishment. Like Evelina, Camilla is inexperienced, powerless, and poor; like Evelina, she learns that she must preserve inexperience, use powerlessness, and emphasize her dependency. Unlike Evelina, she perceives some alternatives to this procedure before discovering their impossibility.

Because of her lack of knowledge of the world, Camilla cannot deal with sophisticated values. Her fiancé Edgar feels that she should not try: she should stay out of the world rather than endeavor to confront it. Knowledge for a woman, from his point of view, constitutes a moral equivalent of rape. Men encourage women to remain ignorant, foolish, and cowardly. They are captivated by the sight of a beautiful woman agitated by a bull: "What lovely timidity!—What bewitching softness!—What feminine, what beautiful delicacy!—How sweet in terror."⁸ *How sweet in terror!* To please a man, a woman, preserving and using her fears and her reluctances, must withdraw. Edgar sees clearly that any "public distinction"—i.e., any social self-assertion—will threaten his plans for

Camilla, spoiling "her for private life" (III, 278). The explicit moral of Camilla's experience—the moral she herself accepts—supports Edgar's view. The ideal woman will be neither too beautiful nor too rich; she will be properly humble. Fearful, sweet, ignorant, and utterly dependent, she acknowledges the superior wisdom of the male to whose guidance she eagerly submits. The lessons Camilla learns elaborate the implications of Cecilia's learning and Evelina's. She discovers that apparent sources of power disintegrate in a woman's grasp, that her fears offer more dependable guides than her ambitions, and that only through dependency can she find female success. The world she inhabits contains more multitudinous causes for terror even than Cecilia's: prison, illness, death, betrayal, and poverty. The anxiety, which in *Evelina* issued most often in the heroine's repeated experience of confusion, now has far more serious correlatives.

The balance struck in *Evelina* between acceptance of female self-concealment as a useful strategy and resentment against the world that makes hiding necessary for women becomes with each successive novel more precarious. Yet Fanny Burney's personal life was increasingly happy; her letters state explicitly that marriage brought her unprecedented contentment. *Camilla*, composed in the joyful period after the birth of her son, expresses a jaundiced view of the world. Personal happiness, one may speculate, weakened Miss Burney's commitment to her own discipline of social fear. More and more in the novels she came out of hiding.

None of these first three novels directly protests women's lot, although each more vividly than its predecessor implies the author's awareness that women's fears acknowledge the intolerable dilemmas of their social position. Yet the ideal marriages that conclude the stories suggest that by willing acceptance of fear and restriction women can achieve happiness. Unhappy marriages also exist in these novels, but their moral causes are carefully specified. The heroines have only to avoid the weaknesses that produce them. Fanny Burney glorifies a fugitive and cloistered virtue as uniquely appropriate for women. Still, the strong women of whom she and her heroines disapprove and the trains of disaster that pursue young women aspiring to even mild independence, hint at some resentment of the social necessities apparently so fully accepted.

In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Some time before 1800, Fanny Burney began writing her last novel, *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties*, published in 1814. There is no evidence that she read Mary Wollstonecraft. Yet *The Wanderer* articulates female protest in terms vividly analogous to the social critic's, although nominally only to refute such protest. Mary Wollstonecraft's attack on the existing system of female education and on the assumptions that governed women's conduct focuses on issues already implicit in Fanny Burney's first three novels. Infuriated that a woman should be made to consider her proper function that of pleasing men, Mary Wollstonecraft inveighs particularly against the encouragement of female passivity: "listless inactivity and stupid acquiescence."⁹ She remarks that women are "kept in ignorance under the specious name of innocence" (p. 23), a comment precisely applicable to Camilla's "education." Men expect of women, she points out, only negative virtues, if any: "patience, docility, good humour, and flexibility—virtues incompatible with any vigorous exertion of intellect" (p. 64). "Kind instructors!" she inquires passionately, "what were we created for? To remain, it may be said, innocent; they mean in a state of childhood. We might as well never have been born" (p. 68).

Concerned with possibilities of social action, Mary

Wollstonecraft interests herself in the question of collective female identity: how women can understand themselves as women. Fanny Burney, as a novelist, involves herself rather in the development of individuals, but *The Wanderer* implies some relation between collective and individual possibility through the striking character of Elinor Joddrell, a young and attractive woman of good family who under the influence of revolutionary ideas from France has developed a rather remarkable vision of her own resources and rights. She claims "the Right of woman, if endowed with senses, to make use of them," moving to eloquent questions about larger privileges."¹⁰ Must even her heart be circumscribed by boundaries as narrow as her sphere of action in life? Must she be taught to subdue all its native emotions? To hide them as sin, and to deny them as shame? . . . Must every thing that she does be prescribed by rule? . . . Must nothing that is spontaneous, generous, intuitive, spring from her soul to her lips?" (I, 405).

These questions, which describe with only slight exaggeration the emotional program followed by Fanny Burney herself, justify Elinor from her own point of view in boldly declaring her love for a man who has indicated no romantic interest in her, claiming her individual right to violate social expectation, and enlarging for herself alone the narrow boundaries of permitted emotional expression. The novel's action makes a fool of her. The man she loves does not reciprocate her feelings. She threatens and attempts suicide repeatedly in increasingly melodramatic fashion but never quite achieves it. She strikes grand attitudes and makes grand speeches, finally to disappear from the scene and reform in quiet obscurity. Juliet, the novel's heroine, concurs in her lover's judgment that Elinor needs to be brought to her senses.

Elinor, like Mrs. Selwyn, exists to be refuted, and like Mrs. Selwyn she survives refutation. However foolish her actions and her extravagant emotional displays, she raises issues that cannot readily be laid to rest. She articulates a point never explicitly acknowledged in Miss Burney's previous books (a point implicit also in the novels by other women treated in an earlier chapter): a woman's individual sense of identity depends necessarily on her generic identity. Men (Mary Wollstonecraft duly noted this fact) have more varied possibilities for action and feeling within the context of their social definition. Woman's nature has been so specifically defined that it largely excludes idiosyncrasy. A girl's individualistic impulses must hide themselves; Elinor must learn on a personal level the inevitable failure of revolutionary hope.

Although Elinor's message rings more powerfully than may be intended, it does not speak unambiguously for the author. Yet, more systematically than *Cecilia* or *Camilla*, *The Wanderer* expresses conscious resentment of the female condition. The "female difficulties" alluded to in the subtitle impede the heroine's attempt to achieve economic and personal independence. Juliet, like Cecilia, is an orphan; like Evelina she suffers from her parents' secret marriage and the resultant mystery about her birth and status; like all the Burney heroines, she falls in love early but faces countless external obstacles to love's fulfillment. Unlike any of her predecessors, though, she must depend on her own resources for emotional and economic survival. An exile from France, where she has been educated, penniless as a result of an accident, forbidden to reveal her origins, background, or even her name, she must make her own way in England. She herself understands her problem, in its particular ramifications, as peculiar to her sex and as illustrating the limitations of social definitions of the female state. "How insufficient, she exclaimed, is a FEMALE to herself! How utterly dependant upon situation—connexions—

circumstance!" (II, 197). An ideal of self-sufficiency dominates Juliet throughout the events that demonstrate its impossibility. She finds female experience to involve utter dependency, endless difficulty, and constant negative judgment from without of all attempts at self-assertion. Like Mary Wollstonecraft, she discovers how women's education forestalls their significant accomplishment: women do not learn to do anything. When Juliet laments to Elinor the severe difficulties of a female trying to make her way in the world, Elinor insists that she need only forget that she is "a dawdling woman" and remember that she is an "active human being," and her difficulties will vanish (III, 36). But Elinor has never faced and cannot even recognize the external difficulties that confront Juliet. Juliet is right, as Mary Wollstonecraft is right. But what use is such rightness?

The most interesting aspect of *The Wanderer* is the degree to which Juliet has internalized the social expectations that nullify her continuing struggle. She wins limited social recognition by demonstrating her mastery of the ladylike accomplishments of harp-playing and singing, and her competence in "the useful and appropriate female accomplishment of needlework" (I, 163). Forced against her will to appear in private theatricals, she thus acquires a further opportunity to display the range of her talents and skills. Perhaps more significantly, the play enables her to demonstrate "those fears of self-deficiency . . . which . . . often, in sensitive minds, rob them of the powers of exertion" (I, 199). In its first scene, she shows herself a totally incompetent actress because of her fears; later she rouses herself to triumph (I, 204). Impossible not to think of Miss Burney with her consistent social display of her fears, but one may be surprised, in the particular novelistic context, to find fear glorified as an index of sensitivity. Juliet brings herself to give harp lessons in order to earn a living, but when her ambiguous status and background make her lose pupils, she is unwilling to use her talents in a public musical performance—partly because Harleigh hints that to participate in such an undertaking might obviate the possibility of honorable marriage. Although financial necessity drives the heroine to determine upon performance at last, on the actual occasion she faints before she has to play. She then takes a job as companion to an irascible and tyrannical older woman, effectively dramatizing her social condition of dependency.

Increasingly Juliet finds herself relying—always limited, of course, by considerations of propriety—on financial, emotional, and physical help from men. Money embarrasses her, as it did her creator.¹¹ She needs it nonetheless, and she needs the self-esteem of winning it by her own efforts, but almost equally she needs the quite opposed self-esteem derived from never even appearing to do wrong. Like Fanny Burney, Juliet comes to recognize that to act as little as possible, if it does not ensure doing right, at least prevents wrong. Her situation forces her to act; her femininity urges her toward passivity.

Elinor points out how inconsistently men—hence, the world—judge women. They declare women unable to act as meaningfully as men because of their natural limitations, although men have in fact barred women from action by controlling their education. On the other hand, while estimating woman below themselves, they also elevate her above, requiring "from her, in defiance of their examples!—in defiance of their lures!—angelical perfection" (III, 42). Juliet, who attempts—largely unsuccessfully—to defy the prohibition of meaningful action, entirely accepts this other impossible standard with its goal of "angelical perfection." For her virtue rather than her action, she wins reward: the man of her choice.

Before the reward, though, apparently hopeless entanglements develop. Juliet, it turns out, is married already. Her

commitment to passive virtue has led her to self-sacrifice for the sake of her guardian, when his life is threatened by revolutionaries. One of these wretches demands Juliet, for the sake of her fortune, promising her guardian's life as her price. She marries him; then before consummation she escapes to England, but when he claims her she must acknowledge his right. In this crisis, her passivity markedly increases. Harleigh begs her not to let "your too delicate fears of doing wrong by others, urge you to inflict wrong, irreparable wrong, upon yourself" (V, 163), but, like her creator, Juliet is dominated by terror of public wrongdoing. She is rescued from her nominal husband, in one instance, by a male friend who commands her "to attend her own nearest relations"; otherwise she would not attempt to evade her fate, controlled as she is "by an overwhelming dread that to resist might possibly be wrong" (V, 326). She can turn only to piety, by which she denies or in fantasy avoids "all present and actual evil," concentrating instead on "an enthusiastic foretaste of the joys of futurity" (V, 208). Her conflicts, multitudinous and irreconcilable, reduce her to total immobility. Her existence becomes one loud plea for help. When her lover describes her as "wholly independent; mistress of her heart, mistress of herself—", she protests: "No, Mr. Harleigh, no! I am not so independent! . . . Had I an hundred hearts,—ten thousand times you must have conquered them all!" (V, 364–5). Her triumph derives from her relinquishment of all claim to self-sufficiency.

On the novel's final pages, the author summarizes Juliet as "a female Robinson Crusoe, . . . 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" (V, 394–5). But only in brief intervals has her survival depended on herself. Elinor seems right about the limited possibilities for women in existent social conditions, although wrong in her hope of enlarging them. Much earlier, Harleigh has complained of the "dangerous singularity" in Elinor's character (I, 376). In the end, he urges Juliet not to worry about the other young woman, who "has a noble, though, perhaps, a masculine spirit." (Applied to Elinor, as to Mrs. Selwyn, *masculine* is a harsh designation.) She will come to see the error of her ways, he continues, returning "to the habits of society and common life, as one awakening from a dream in which she has acted some strange and improbable part" (V, 370–71). Juliet, too, is recovering from her dream of independence. Fanny Burney's imagining of a female Robinson Crusoe is an imagining of despair. For Juliet as a heroine must struggle not only with the obstacles supplied by a hostile physical and social environment but with those created by her own standard of femininity; no psychic or religious conversion can rescue her. Femininity wins; all else is only a dream. Juliet and Elinor in different ways illustrate a female fantasy of self-realization and self-definition through action rather than avoidance. Testing that fantasy, Juliet discovers its frailty. The fear of doing wrong finally controls her, teaching her her helplessness.

"There is no doubt but that *The Wanderer* is Fanny Burney's poorest novel," Michael Adelstein writes.¹² Virtually all critics have concurred, from the time of first publication to the present. Its elaborate plot, didactically disposed characters, and old-fashioned rhetoric compose a moralistic artifice rather than a realized fiction; it seems an imitation of theory, not of life. Yet its relation to life as Fanny Burney knew it lies deeper than one might suppose. What Joyce Hemlow perceives as a schematic arrangement of virtuous and morally defective characters may be seen also as Fanny Burney's most detailed rendition of the female strategy of virtue, its costs, and its

rewards.¹³ That strategy involves manipulation rather than simple acceptance of weakness. To use goodness as a stance toward the world (the tactic adopted by the character Juliet as well as by her creator) embodies some claim of strength: Juliet achieves moral superiority if not economic success. But it is an underdog's device, understood explicitly as such by the character who employs it. Goodness amounts to Juliet's only viable resource; her obsessive fear of wrongdoing implies her terror of losing her single weapon for battling the world. And her resentment of being so handicapped in life's struggle expresses itself in her repeated recognition that women know nothing and can do nothing to help themselves. They must allow themselves to be helped and must invite infantilization; they must avoid so much that finally they virtually avoid life itself. Given the detailed realizations along the way of what the female plight means, the happy ending of *The Wanderer* and the novel's artifices of plot and character seem to comprise a bitter mockery, so inadequate are artifices of plot to solve the problems here richly exposed. Fanny Burney was unable to integrate her deep perceptions of the female condition into a believable fiction—perhaps her habits of fear and avoidance made her fear and avoid the implications of her insight. But *The Wanderer* too contains its autobiographical revelations. Less careful than the journals, the novel reveals that the longing for freedom, confessed in moments of despair at the restrictions of Court life, extended farther than Fanny Burney directly acknowledged, vividly reflecting her awareness that fear of wrongdoing as a principle of action itself exemplifies the severe restrictiveness of female possibility.

No one now reads Fanny Burney's novels, except for *Evelina*, where comedy and youthful exuberance qualify the pervasive anxiety and one can even smile at the anxiety, for its causes are, by and large, so trivial. Yet the later novels, creaky of plot and increasingly impenetrable in rhetoric, seriously explore the possibilities for women to assert individual identities. More clearly than Fanny Burney's letters and diaries, the novels betray her anger at the female condition, although she also acknowledges the possibility of happiness within that condition. Imagining female defiance, she imagines also its futility in those heroines dominated, like herself, by fears of doing wrong. The atmosphere of anxiety she vividly evokes suggests what conflicts attend a woman's search for identity. The Burney female characters face endless struggle between what they want to have (independence, specific husbands, friends, pleasure, work) and what they want to be (angelically perfect): between the impulses to action and to avoidance. However important or negligible the specific images of this conflict, it stands behind the action and the characterization of all the novels.

The record of the journals, extending chronologically far beyond the writer's marriage, makes it clear that her commitment to D'Arblay, fulfilling as it was, did not mark the happy ending to her experience as it did for all her fictional heroines. Marriage resolved or simplified conflicts, granting Fanny Burney permission to act (through writing) while yet remaining conspicuously good; it thus provided energy. It also generated new dramas: classic Oedipal struggles, symbolic dilemmas about where and how to live, and conflicts of interest between Fanny's old family and her new—dramas that the journals expose more freely than they had revealed the problems of the author's youth, although in fact the problems remain in many respects essentially the same. The plot of the diaries thus necessarily differs from that of the novels, which never explore post-marital experience.

Yet the fictional inventions uncover the inner realities of

the writer's mature as well as her youthful life. Indeed, comparison of Fanny Burney's personal record with her novels suggests the possibility that fiction may more vividly than autobiography delineate the shape of an author's private drama. The external events of Miss Burney's life, as reported in her diaries, supply small excitements, minor clashes, and tiny resolutions. The events of her novels increasingly emphasize important happenings—in *The Wanderer*, political as well as personal happening. Her heroines must cope with grotesque misunderstandings, malicious enemies, and bitter strokes of fate. They suffer more than they can comprehend—more perhaps even than their author comprehends. They express both their creator's wishes and her conviction that such wishes must be punished: the real essence of the inner drama that is more palely reflected in the relatively trivial events she chooses to record in diary and letters.

Fiction is fantasy. Both the strength and the weakness of Fanny Burney's novels derives from this fact. The books betray their author's longing for more grandiose experience than her powerful sense of decorum would allow her even to know she wanted. All except *Cecilia*, that fable of the poor little rich girl, rely on the deeply satisfying fairytale structure in which the hero (in these cases the heroine) with no apparent assets survives a series of demanding tests, winning by the power of goodness, triumphing over those seemingly more advantaged, and finally achieving the royal marriage that symbolizes lasting good fortune. But Fanny Burney betrays conflicting fantasies, which lessen her fiction's energy: on the one hand the dream of self-assertion and success in the face of all obstacles, on the other the fearful fantasy of nemesis for female admission of hostility and female attempts at self-determination. However she heightens happenings to melodramatic impossibility, ignoring logic and straining rhetoric to insist on the importance of her tale, her stories work against themselves. In her direct accounts of herself, with her sense of morality firmly in control, the conflict between the impulse to freedom and the commitment to propriety—its resolution in action always predictable and its emotional dynamics often compelling—shapes a persuasive narrative. But the world of fiction holds forth the possibilities of greater freedom, possibilities that Fanny Burney could not adequately handle, although they enabled her to reveal herself.

Fiction is form, and form is fiction. The forms that tempted Miss Burney, in life and in literature, were moral structures that assured her that virtue found its reward. Around her she could see evidence to the contrary, particularly in female fates. Her stepsister Maria and her beloved sister Susanna both married brutes and suffered dire consequences. Susanna died after some years of Irish exile necessitated by her husband's arbitrary decisions. Marriage in real life constituted punishment as often as reward. The structures of fiction, as structures of moral order, made sense of experience. They could be imposed also on records of life. Fanny Burney's narrative of herself, in diary and letters, interpreting all conflict as moral conflict and every choice as an effort to determine the good, rationalizes her relatively quiet life as a struggle for virtue and her happy marriage as virtue's reward. It thus creates shape out of a life's random sequence of events—but a shape, significantly, of conflict.

Fiction is public communication. Fanny Burney's consciousness of this fact expresses itself, characteristically, most often in statements of what she has left out of her novels in order to avoid contaminating young minds. Thus, she boasts that *Camilla* contains no politics because "they were not a *feminine* subject for discussion" and "it would be a better office

to general Readers to carry them wide of all politics, to their domestic fire sides."¹⁴ As usual, she is avoiding wrong. But public communication has a positive as well as a negative aspect. In the youthful diaries, writing for "nobody," Fanny expressed a deprecating sense of self; all her letters and diaries insist upon her modesty. The more impersonal expression of fiction enabled her to enlarge her self-image by splitting herself into infinitely virtuous heroines and ingeniously aggressive minor characters, by dramatizing her sense of virtue through those heroines who suffer endlessly in their efforts toward the right, and by expressing ideas that she could not allow herself to endorse through such figures as Mrs. Selwyn and Elinor Joddrell. Only in rare moments of the private record—as when she complains that Mrs. Thrale showers her with too many gifts—does Fanny Burney betray her hostility. The open record of fiction provided greater protection: she could simultaneously convey both anger and her disapproval of anger. Much more successfully than her female contemporaries, she found ways to manipulate and use her own psychic experience, not simply to avoid it through wishful fantasy or ethical didacticism.

Fiction, finally, may constitute autobiography. Through Fanny Burney's novels, through their flaws and their positive achievements, she conveys her private self more emphatically, more explicitly, than she does in the diaries. Not needing to exercise reductive moral control over every character, she can use her fantasies to communicate her feelings and her conflicts, the interior drama that her decorous life largely concealed. She quotes Mme. de Genlis: "The life of every Woman is a Romance!"¹⁵ The remark, implying an interpretation of actual experience in terms of literary categories, suggests a useful way to read the diaries and letters—perceiving the extent to which, even in her personal record, it is Fanny Burney's fictions that reveal herself. Writing novels, she allows herself to convey the impermissible sides of her nature and to enlarge the permissible. Writing journals, she confines herself largely to the surfaces of her life; yet she uncovers the depths by the unchanging form of her self-interpretation, by her wistful, persistent fantasy of flawless virtue, and by her insistence on shaping her account of all that happens to her in terms of the struggle for virtue. She tells the story of an uneventful life as a romance rich in drama.

Fanny Burney's novels and her journals alike reveal the dynamics of fear in a woman's experience. They also reveal some ways in which the imagination deals with emotion, demonstrating how useful are the disguises of fiction in clarifying the truths of personality and how much the forms and perceptions of fiction become necessary material for the autobiographer.

Notes

1. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), p. 310.
2. Kemp Malone, "Evelina Revisited," *Papers on Language and Literature*, 1 (1965), 3–19.
3. *The History of Fanny Burney* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), pp. 91–95.
4. See *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, ed. Edward A. Bloom (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), preface, pp. 7–8. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
5. The introduction to Bloom's edition of *Evelina* argues the importance of prudence as a lesson the heroine must learn, pp. xix–xxiii.
6. Michael Adelstein enunciates a commonly accepted view in suggesting that *Evelina* learns nothing of importance, having "merely exchanged snobbery for sweetness, and sympathy for

indifference," and demonstrating "that social education is all." *Fanny Burney* (New York: Twayne, 1968) p. 38. It will be clear that I disagree.

7. *Cecilia; or, Memoirs of an Heiress*, 2 vols. (London, 1914), I, 244.
8. *Camilla; or, A Picture of Youth*, 5 vols. (London, 1796), I, 322. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
9. *The Rights of Woman* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1955), p. 68. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text. The book was first printed as *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792.
10. *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties*, 5 vols. (London, 1814), I, 403. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
11. See *The Wanderer*, III, 175, where Miss Burney writes directly from her own emotional experience. Compare: "There is something, after all, in money, by itself money, that I can never take possession of it without a secret feeling of something like a degradation: money in its effects, and its produce, creates far different and more pleasant sensations" (*Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, ed. Austin Dobson, 6 vols. [London: Macmillan, 1904], III, 142).
12. *Fanny Burney*, p. 129.
13. *The History of Fanny Burney*, p. 342.
14. #198, To Dr. Burney [for 6 July 1796]; *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, ed. Joyce Hemlow with Patricia Boutilier and Althea Douglas (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1973), III, 186.
15. #410, To Mrs. Waddington, 4 April 1801; *Journals*, ed. Joyce Hemlow (1973), IV, 483.

JANET TODD

From "The Literary Context"

Women's Friendship in Literature

1980, pp. 312–19

The search for the correct female friend forms part of the (. . .) complicated plots of Fanny Burney, the main painter of sentimental female friendship in England and France in the late eighteenth century. Although less perfect than *Evelina*, her first, triumphant novel, her later works more engagingly depict female relationships, and both *Cecilia* and *The Wanderer* deeply probe the dangers and rewards of female ties. If in the main Burney paints with dark colors, the sombreness conveys regret for a lightness she rejects from both fear and principle. Haywood and Lennox find friendship an asylum in a predatory world; Mme de Graigny wishes it were so but cannot discover it. Burney seems close to Richardson in seeing it not only rare but dangerously tempting.

In *Cecilia*, the heroine's path is strewn with uncomfortable women. She inherits some from childhood and has no strength to repudiate the legacy; others she takes to meet her psychic needs. Lonely and rich, she wants mother-figures to guide her (feeling betrayed when they prove flexible), and daughters to call forth her benevolence. Like Wollstonecraft's Mary, similarly rich and isolated, she seems unable to find and like an equal.

In Mrs. Delville, the parent of her lover, Cecilia discovers a kind of mother. Initially the older woman repels with her haughtiness, but later she is won by Cecilia's exemplary resignation to her will. Certainly Cecilia's position is unconventional: she will inherit a fortune on marriage only if her husband agrees to take her name, so playing the woman. It is a humiliating condition no man of metal seems ready to meet, and Mrs. Delville is heartily opposed to her son's marrying so ignominiously. Finally she comes to accept a clandestine

marriage, but it is to Cecilia as penniless orphan not mastering heiress. For her condescension, she sinks in Cecilia's esteem, and her raptures over her new daughter-in-law fail to impress: "Your mother, in her tenderness forgot her dignity," Cecilia remarks icily to her lover.¹ Little mitigated by Mrs. Delvile's approval, the antisocial, secret marriage still horrifies, and Cecilia repeats its shocking facts, as fascinated and appalled as the Sadian heroine exulting over her intricate incest.

In the young daughterlike Henrietta, Cecilia tries to unite friendship and benevolence, as Wollstonecraft's Mary and Austen's Emma also try. Henrietta interests through her youthful need, her melancholy state, her loveliness and "the uncommon artlessness of her conversation," all of which excite in Cecilia "a desire to serve, and an inclination to love her."² But the friendship is a disturbed one. Cecilia soon discovers that her friend and she crave the same man, and their joint infatuation disperses for a while their dream of living together. They cannot unite, muses Cecilia, unless they are both rejected. The man determines their relationship and rules their affection.

A striking example of this male ordering of friendship occurs when, after a long absence, Cecilia and Henrietta reencounter each other in front of a male visitor. At once they dissolve into the raptures of sentimental friendship, but are interrupted by the man commenting rudely: "The young ladies . . . have a mighty way of saluting one another till such time as they get husbands: and then I'll warrant you they can meet without any salutation at all."³ The quick put-down, so reminiscent of Lovelace's insistent belittling of female friendship, chills Cecilia, and she immediately checks "the tenderness of her fervent young friend."

Toward the end of the novel after the two women have lived for a time together, Cecilia is abruptly isolated and plunged downward. Burney is adept at such dramatic reductions, which deprive her characters of all props of money, caste, and gallantry. Impoverished and alone, Cecilia is finally driven insane—headed, it seems, for the exemplary, eulogistic death of Clarissa. But women novelists are less prone to kill their heroines, and, when the mandatory delirium is past, Cecilia is en route for the happy ending. Awakening from her healing sleep, she first encounters Henrietta, who has rushed to her bedside and answered her friend's madness with her own frenzied love. Lost friendship appears to lead both women to insanity; psychic health requires a reunion.

Although decently happy, the ending of *Cecilia* is marred by the heroine's earlier suffering. No wedded bliss can compensate for such degradation. The bliss is further diminished when Henrietta is ejected, packed off with an old lover of Cecilia's. While rich and powerful, the heroine could entertain and support her friend, but seemed unfit for her male lover; shorn of money and weakened into dependence, she is a proper wife, and the symbol of her earlier independent power must be dismissed.⁴ As Clarissa well knew, when women grasp a legacy, they somehow dissolve it. Severely qualified as the rhapsody of marriage is, then, it is no accident that the novel's last word should be "resignation."⁵

Many of the motifs of female friendship recur in Fanny Burney's final, little appreciated novel, *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties*, which presents her most ambiguous and complex portrait of female relationships.⁶ Like Cecilia, the heroine of this work is degraded to the depths of society, severed from friends and relatives, and deprived of all signs of domestic worth. Like Cecilia again, she treads a bitter path through defective women who fail her at every turn and, worse, humiliate her with a nastiness not seen in fiction since

the whores baited the saintly Clarissa. But at the end her suffering is rewarded and she receives the sentimental prize denied Cecilia—a sister-friend.

The story of *The Wanderer* is Burney's most improbable; it concerns Juliet, a young woman whose name we learn only in the third volume and whose circumstances are divulged even later; indeed her tale is so complex it is little wonder she refuses to tell it. Reduced initially to the denuded state of Cecilia toward the end of her novel, Juliet must prove over and over again the difficulties of females. Her sorry lot is darkened by disjunction of character and circumstance: socially anomalous as a lone woman, she must strive for self-respect and independence. "Is it only under the domestic roof,—that roof to me denied!—that woman can know safety, respect, and honour?"⁷ she cries at one point, and the answer is for her certainly yes; teaching a little music, sewing a fine seam, and companioning the old and irascible do not ward off destitution, and more public, less feminine efforts appall. In this difficult context, then, Juliet must discover the limits and strengths of female association.

The heroine enters two contrasting relationships, both extreme in their way. One is with the extraordinary Elinor, a woman deeply impressed and impeded by French and feminist sentiments; the other unites her with the gentle Aurora, a young girl who remains always sweetly amiable and feminine. Juliet is bandied about between these extremes, confounded by the one, comforted by the other, but she never wavers in her allegiance. She may sometimes benefit the wild Elinor, but her heart is always Aurora's and it is for her she sheds the most copious and delicious tears.

Elinor is mocked from the start as "the champion of her sex," a fierce Wollstonecraft who insists like the older sister in *Lassellia* on forcing her love on a man. She is most feminist when most demented, hysterically asserting "rights . . . which all your sex, with all its arbitrary assumption of superiority, can never disprove, for they are the Rights of human nature; to which the two sexes equally and unalienably belong."⁸ To prevent our accepting such assertion, it is given a bizarre context. Elinor is threatening murder and suicide, wielding not the feminine penknife but a real pistol; yet like her predecessors she is easily disarmed and all her exotic suicide attempts fail. Violence—both verbal and physical—should be masculine.

Nonetheless, Elinor impresses in spite of coercion from her context. Indeed the novel's horrifying picture of female degradation in Juliet strengthens Elinor's rhetoric (even as Elinor's grotesqueries underscore Juliet's stress on feminine propriety):

Why, for so many centuries, has man, alone, been supposed to possess, not only force and power for action and defence, but even all the rights of taste. . . . Why, not alone, is woman to be excluded from the exertions of courage, the field of glory, the immortal death of honour;—not alone to be denied deliberating upon the safety of the state of which she is a member, and the utility of the laws by which she must be governed:—must even her heart be circumscribed by boundaries as narrow as her sphere of action in life. . . . Must every thing that she does be prescribed by rule? Must every thing that she says, be limited to what has been said before? Must nothing that is spontaneous, generous, intuitive, spring from her soul to her lips?⁹

Nothing destroys the power of this, but Burney clearly worries about its effect. Elinor, so fitted in principle to bond with Juliet against the vicissitudes of female fate, is rendered friendless, coupled in rivalry not love.

In a world where femininity is virtue and the heroine seeks only to embrace it, the feminist Elinor is ridiculous, mocked by her exaggerated actions, her uncontrollable passions, and her desperate shiftings from principle to love. As the book proceeds, she disintegrates, appearing only in quixotic episodes. Madened by rejection, for example, she "rent open her wound, and tore her hair; calling, screaming for death, with agonizing wrath."¹⁰ She seeks death as she had sought a man, parodying the passive exemplary ending Clarissa achieved and Cecilia almost suffered, but her impotent frenzy suggests only the author's sadism. Elinor is denied active love and active death.

Juliet's second friend contradicts Elinor in all her postures. Lady Aurora enters first to sustain the fainting heroine, and her other actions are as discreetly supportive. The two women join in a sentimental, tearful friendship, blessed and sanctioned by the hero and reversing the feminist alliance fitfully imagined by Elinor:

while generally engaging to all by her general merit, to Lady Aurora she [Juliet] had peculiar attractions, from the excess of sensibility with which she received even the smallest attentions. . . . Pleasure shone lustrous in her fine eyes, every time that they met those of Lady Aurora; but if that young lady took her hand, or spoke to her with more than usual softness, tears, which she vainly strove to hide, rolled fast down her cheeks"¹¹

Indeed the two women seem to vie with each other in emotional display, and the joint ecstasy often leaves Juliet literally breathless.

Later in the novel we learn that all these aching raptures are justified, for Aurora is discovered to be the younger half-sister of Juliet. Sanctioned by blood, the union reaches new heights. "How you have engaged my thoughts," Aurora cries out to Juliet, "rested upon my imagination; occupied my ideas; been ever uppermost in my memory; and always highest,—Oh! higher than any one in my esteem and admiration!"¹² Expecting once to part from Aurora, Juliet watches her in her sleep: "in looking at her, [Juliet] thought she contemplated an angel. The touching innocence of her countenance; the sweetness which no sadness could destroy; the grief exempt from impatience; and the air of purity that overspread her whole face, and seemed breathing round her whole form, inspired Juliet, for a few moments, with ideas too sublime for mere sublunary sorrow."¹³ The blood link demands the loverlike language. When friend and family unite, the bond is mystical, sensuous, and delicious.

In *The Wanderer*, friendship reaches new heights in sisterly love. Yet in its success it reveals its flaws. If the novel supports the display of friendship, it seems to vitiate its substance. Elinor, though given room to show her force, is rejected, and Aurora herself is more a rapturous shade of Juliet than an equal. Women in both *Cecilia* and *The Wanderer* may console each other and compensate for loss, but they can rarely spur to action. Both heroines ultimately act alone, if they act at all, and come to grief in solitude. The most promising tie of Juliet with Elinor is rejected in ridicule, although their union might have released the androgynous power Wollstonecraft described. Certainly Juliet could have used such a union as

psychic model when she sought her own feminine strength. As it is, Elinor is cast out and the feminine left to grow effeminate.

Sentimental friendship in the novel is extreme and radical in expression but limited in action. In the works of Richardson, Lennox, Haywood, Grafigny, Burney and a host of other writers, it seems an ideal, avidly sought for its promise of female growth and autonomy. It provides a relationship into which two women can enter with passion and propriety, and it supplies a code of behavior that eases them toward each other. Yet, when it approaches fulfillment as it does in *The Wanderer*, its limitation appears. Seemingly the last bastion of the female self against the reductive claims of patriarchy, it yet fearfully retrenches when it might subvert, rendering the woman more accepting, not more desperate. In the structure of the novel, too, sentimental friendship defuses. The heroine avoids working out her difficult tie with the man who will define her, but instead flees him or simply accepts him on the final page. Left with an impotent friendship, the two women may become not androgynous but schizophrenic, while the model of the female alliance remains the duplication of sisters.

Notes

1. *Cecilia; or, Memoirs of an Heiress* (London: J. M. Dent, 1893), III, 282.
2. *Ibid.*, I, 249.
3. *Ibid.*, III, 125.
4. In *Imagining a Self* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), Patricia Spacks discusses Cecilia's development from security to insecurity, her progress in renunciation. "She must learn to give up, yielding her money as sign and symbol of larger relinquishments," p. 181.
5. Defending the muted ending of *Cecilia*, Burney wrote "the hero and the heroine are neither plunged in the depths of misery, nor exalted to UNhuman happiness." And she asks, "Is not such a middle state more natural, more according to real life, and less resembling every other book of fiction?" Quoted in Joyce Hemlow's *History of Fanny Burney* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 150.
6. Thomas Babington Macaulay exemplifies the negative opinion of this book: "In 1814 she [Burney] published her last novel, *The Wanderer*, a book which no judicious friend to her memory will attempt to draw from the oblivion into which it has justly fallen," *Edinburgh Review* (January 1843). Burney's modern biographer, Joyce Hemlow, calls the book "intolerable" and remarks that "every reference to *The Wanderer* must serve to poke it further into the shadows," *The History of Fanny Burney*, pp. 338–39.
7. *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* (London: Longman, Hurst, et al., 1814), IV, 253.
8. *Ibid.*, I, 399. It is notable that, in spite of her eccentric behavior, many of the characters persist in speaking well of Elinor. Indeed there seems a discrepancy between her action and the response to it, which might indicate Burney's ambivalent feelings about her. Similar ambivalence occurs in the presentation of the "masculine" Mrs. Selwyn in *Evelina*.
9. *The Wanderer*, I, 404–5.
10. *Ibid.*, II, 445.
11. *Ibid.*, I, 257–58.
12. *Ibid.*, V, 261.
13. *Ibid.*, V, 331. In *La Destinée féminine dans le roman européen du dix-huitième siècle 1713–1807*, Pierre Fauchery discusses the imagery and decor of sister reunions and gives a full account of the conventions marking the sisterly relationship (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972).

ROBERT SOUTHEY

1774–1843

Robert Southey was born in Bristol on August 12, 1774. The son of a well-to-do draper, he entered the Westminster School in 1788, but was expelled in 1792 for a satirical essay on corporal punishment, published in a school paper. In 1793 Southey entered Balliol College, Oxford. Here he formed a friendship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, with whom he conceived of Pantisocracy, a utopian scheme to establish an egalitarian commune in America. While at Oxford Southey also wrote two plays, *Wat Tyler* and, in collaboration with Coleridge, *The Fall of Robespierre*, both of which clearly demonstrate his early sympathies with Jacobinism. Southey left Oxford in 1794, without a degree, and in the following year had a falling out with Coleridge, based on increasing political and philosophical differences. Later in 1795 Southey, despite the resistance of his family, secretly married Edith Fricker (whose sister Sara had married Coleridge) and shortly afterwards left for Portugal. *Poems by Robert Lovell and Robert Southey* (1795) and *Joan of Arc* (1796) both appeared during his absence, and in 1797, after his return to England, Southey published *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal*.

Between 1796 and 1798 Southey wrote many of his best-known poems, including the ballads "The Inchcape Rock" and "The Battle of Blenheim," and the shorter poem "The Holly Tree." In 1800, after a reconciliation with Coleridge and a half-hearted attempt at studying law, Southey went back to Portugal. On his return in 1801 he settled in the Lake District, where he remained for the rest of his life. In 1801 and 1805 respectively Southey published *Thalaba the Destroyer* and *Madoc*, two long narrative poems on fantastical subjects. In 1809 he began writing for the conservative *Quarterly Review*, which was to provide his only regular income for the rest of his life. *The Curse of Kehama*, a narrative poem, appeared in 1810, and in 1813, the year he was appointed Poet Laureate, Southey published what is now his best-known prose work, *The Life of Nelson. Roderick: The Last of the Goths*, another long narrative poem, appeared in 1814, and in 1821 Southey published *A Vision of Judgment*, a poem in commemoration of the death of George III. In the preface to this latter work Southey bitterly attacked Byron, who replied in kind with a parody of Southey's poem, also entitled *The Vision of Judgment* (1822), in which Southey is accused of having betrayed his earlier revolutionary principles.

Southey was involved in many literary projects over the next twenty years, although none of them has been very well remembered. These include a *History of the Peninsular War* (1823–32), *Sir Thomas More; or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (2 vols., 1829–31), and *The Doctor* (7 vols., 1834–47), a mass of anecdotes, homilies, and curious bits of information. Southey's first wife died in 1837, and in 1839 he married Caroline Bowles. Southey, whose last years were marked by increasing mental deterioration, died on March 21, 1843.

JOSEPH W. REED, JR.
"Southey's Nelson"

English Biography in the Early Nineteenth Century,
1801–1838
1965, pp. 83–101

Of more than fifty biographical productions¹ on Horatio Nelson's life, victories, and death published in the early nineteenth century, one is still widely read. Portions of it have been shown to be factually inaccurate,² its grasp of naval tactics has been declared woefully inadequate by a succession of naval historians,³ a highly important correspondence not accessible at the time of writing has become available,⁴ and many definitive studies of Nelson have been published, but this brief account is still read, reread, and republished.⁵

Popularity (even enduring popularity) can be evinced as an emblem of quality only with many qualifications. It is cited here as perhaps the most telling demonstration that the biographer's art cannot be judged in terms of the accuracy of its facts, its volume of materials, its definitive intent, or its exhaustive method. There is a creative art in tracing a life, in

the plan and organization of its elements, in the creation of a living presence in words that is far more important.

Robert Southey did not set out with the high intent of constructing a biographical landmark: he was dragged to an unwilling effort. It came to him as a distraction from what he felt to be his serious literary work, his poetry. Four lives of Nelson⁶ were forwarded to him from the *Quarterly* as part of his regular duty-packet of review books. He wrote a review which (in the manner of many contemporary reviews) contained his own brief biographical sketch of Nelson.

The review adhered to his accustomed line of biographical criticism. These books were too long and too heavy ("So ponderous a concern. . . . Is it to be supposed that they can possibly digest one-and-twenty pounds of biography, even when Nelson is the subject?");⁷ or else they were undertaken with a misguided intent—to turn a penny ("hastily compiled for the sake of obtaining some temporary relief in his embarrassments") or to grind a particular axe ("friends . . . were in search of a writer who would undertake to justify the only culpable parts of his conduct").⁸ Compilation was no substitute for composition ("They have professed to form a narrative, but the main part of the book consists of extracts . . . , so that it is rather a work of reference than a biographical composition").⁹

These points were not just ad hoc, spur-of-the-moment criticism. Brevity, simplicity, a connected and coherent narrative, and the necessity of a clear example had been articles of his biographical criticism in the *Annual Review*. Southey's systematic destruction of William Godwin's *Life of Chaucer* had denounced pointless voluminous compilation.

Some centuries ago, when an author was about to write a book, he considered that all his readers were unlearned; that they who should read his volume had perhaps never read another; and, therefore, he usually gave them the whole stock of his knowledge, beginning generally with Adam, and so proceeding regularly down to his own subject. This is the case with Mr. Godwin: . . . taking it for granted that all who read his book were to be as ignorant as he was himself when he began to write it, he has therefore told them all he knows.¹⁰

Insistence upon the creativity of the biographer is a leading principle in most of Southey's reviews. The use of autobiographical materials might be the current fashion, but overdependence upon them could end in abdication of artistic responsibility.

This [autobiographical] method is lively and entertaining, and carries with it a strong impression of authenticity; it has, however, obvious defects. . . . The thread of the narrative is broken, and all the proportion of length, to importance of matter, destroyed by such an intermixture. . . . We are persuaded, that it will seldom be employed, unless where the biographer is conscious of a paucity of materials for his own share of the work, or of some nice and delicate points in the story, upon which he does not choose to express himself with the responsibility of an author.¹¹

With all of these principles, of course, Southey is exercising the prerogative of the critic to be critical. The test of his preachings is his own biographical method, but this proves to be surprisingly consistent with the principles from which he argued in criticism. The sketch in the *Quarterly* opened with an announcement of what he felt to be the ideal biographical approach to Nelson: "The best eulogium of Nelson is the history of his actions; the best history that which shall relate them most perspicuously."¹² After the review appeared, Murray contracted with him for its expansion into a small book, evidently convincing Southey that he should undertake further research and writing by an argument based on utility and the book's value for exemplary purposes. Southey described the projected work to Grosvenor Bradford as "such a life of Nelson as shall be put into the hands of every youth destined for the navy—a five-shilling volume, for which he gives me a hundred guineas."¹³ By some publisher's mistake or change in plans, the book appeared in two volumes, which Southey felt would defeat its avowed purpose and "materially . . . injure the sale."¹⁴ The first edition appeared in 1813, with a foreword proclaiming an unchanged exemplary intent.

Many lives of Nelson have been written: one is yet wanting, clear and concise enough to become a manual for the young sailor, which he may carry about with him, till he has treasured up the example in his memory and in his heart. In attempting such a work, I shall write the eulogy of our great naval Hero: for the best eulogy of NELSON is the faithful history of his actions: and the best history, that which shall relate them most perspicuously.¹⁵

The strength of Southey's *Nelson* is produced by both the best and worst biographical thought of its time, written partly in conformity to contemporary principles and partly in reaction against them. Southey's adherence to the exemplary principle sets his book in the central stream of biography usually characterized by conscience rather than art, piety rather than heroism. But he builds on Nelson's example in such a manner that it becomes an organizing and creative, rather than a normalizing and destructive, force. By emphasizing brevity, Southey registers his discontent with both the autobiographical fashion and the low ebb of the biographer's responsibility, the triumph of encyclopedic compilation over artistic composition. At the same time, however, his particular motive for brevity in this book is the maintenance of its utility as example, the preservation of its character as "a manual for the young sailor."

That his understanding of "example" differed from that of his contemporaries becomes apparent in reading the first few pages of his *Nelson*. In the opening chapter, young Horatio is shown on a bear hunt ignoring his commanding officer's orders (1, 15–17). As anecdote succeeds anecdote, it becomes clear that this story is included not just to demonstrate youthful exuberance but is the germ of a major characteristic of Nelson's nature—one which is to dominate the book. The bloodless child of the pietistic exemplary life may be guilty of one such insubordinate act, but he quickly reforms after this token expression and leads out his life in wholly proper, wholly virtuous monotony. Southey's *Nelson*—the essence of the man that he managed to extract from the twenty-one pounds of anecdote and document—never reforms, but is a direct extension of that boy. The example presented is, superficially considered, courage and heroism without reward; patriotism and hatred of the French. Considered more critically, it is the example of stubborn, rather self-centered individualism—the example of a man commanded by no one but himself, serving the cause of his nation's honor, but serving it (like Hotspur) more as honor than as nation.

Some contemporary critics saw that this was essentially a dangerous book, and criticized it accordingly. One of the highly offended critics of Lady Hamilton's correspondence with Nelson took time out from his righteous indignation to get in a lateral jab at Southey.

The impatience of command which we have noticed, leads to a remark respecting this great man's public life, not unworthy of notice. He seems to have been formed by nature not only for the highest station—but for no other; and to have been alike incapable of occasionally falling into a subordinate part, and of contenting himself with a share of any joint operation. Mr Southey, in his life of him, is perpetually throwing out insinuations against the other officers who refused to concur in all Nelson's projects; as if those distinguished characters were bound to disobey orders from home, in order to gratify the curiosity of this commodore—whose projects on shore would almost always have led to a mere experiment upon the bravery of English soldiers and sailors. . . . If every commanding officer had acted so completely for himself, and with such disregard of orders or combined plans from home; nay, if only a very few officers had acted so, the speedy ruin of our affairs must have ensued; the army and navy would have become one scene of confusion.¹⁶

The critic misinterpreted. He thought that Southey's vision of Nelson was a function of the biographer's single-