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Editor's Note

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Editor's Note

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This volume of *The Burney Journal* features essays that focus on Frances Burney's position in literary history and on her literary artistry. Betty Schellenberg analyzes Burney's reticence to name her literary foremothers in her essay, "Why Frances Burney 'Forgets' Her Foremothers." Unlike some of her contemporaries, like Clara Reeve and Jane Austen, Burney does not discuss the women writers who preceded her, and Burney's silence was significant and influential. Schellenberg argues that Burney's silence does not reflect a desire to marginalize her predecessors so much as it reflects Burney's efforts to construct herself as a writer in a changing print culture—and in a professional culture that was influenced by the members of the Streatham circle. For Schellenberg, Burney's vision of a professional woman writer avoids both Bluestocking amateurism and pragmatic entrepreneurialism—the available models for women writers of the period—and in so doing, Burney largely frees herself from essentialized feminine identity.

While Schellenberg's essay places Burney in a dialogue with women writers within her generation and across generations, Elaine Bander's essay, "Male Ambitions and Female Difficulties in 1814: *Waverley, Patronage, Mansfield Park,* and *The Wanderer*" locates Burney and her work in a particular year. Although *The Wanderer* might have seemed old-fashioned to contemporary novelists, Burney's novel shares a number of preoccupations with the novels published by Scott, Edgeworth, and Austen in 1814: concerns regarding the politics of patronage; a skepticism of men of leisure and a valorization of working men who merit advancement through their efforts and talents; the triumph of the modest, private woman over her worldly, public counterpart. Yet Bander

argues that Burney's social and gender critique in *The Wanderer* moves beyond the works of Scott, Edgeworth, and Austen, as Burney's heroine is a working woman—not the hero, who as a man of leisure, not only fails to provide the heroine with support, but fails to ensure the moral compass of society.

The Wanderer is also the primary text in Emily Friedman's "*Wanderer*'s End: Understanding Burney's Approach to Endings." For Friedman, the volume endings of *The Wanderer* are experiments in closure and literary craft, at once invoking and moving beyond the forms of closure that Burney used in her earlier novels. While recognition of the heroine's true character remains central to Burney's sense of an ending, Friedman argues that the rushed, compressed ending of *The Wanderer* reveals Burney's efforts to grapple with the challenges of developing new, satisfying closure in fiction.

In "Noisy Homes and Stubborn Ears: the Social Significance of Sound in Frances Burney's *Evelina*," Elles Smallegoor addresses Burney's skills as an aural artist. Smallegoor contends that Burney uses sound as a class signifier, as she characterizes the urban family—and especially the aspiring tradesman—through the volume and volubility of their discourse in public and domestic spaces. Evelina seeks to manage the sound in the Branghton household to no avail; her frustrations with the noise and raucous behaviors of her relatives at once embarrass Evelina and allow her to feel superior. As Smallegoor demonstrates, Burney was a deft chronicler of the aural urban experience, and her depictions of auditory experience not only characterize Evelina's development from a country-bred, urban neophyte to an urban sophisticate, but also enable readers to conceptualize sound as a means to discern and maintain social distinctions.

Burney's keen ear is central in Lori H. Zerne's analysis of Burney's encounters with Omai in "'Having a Lesson of Attention from Omai': Frances Burney, Omai the Tahitian, and Eighteenth-Century British Constructions of Racial Difference," the Hemlow Prize essay of 2007. Burney's journal entries and letters express her interest in Omai: Burney respected the Tahitian who seemed more polite than members of the

ton, yet laughed at his mispronunciations and cringed at his faux pas. As Zerne argues, Burney's descriptions of Omai and his reception in England represent the contradictory responses of the British towards racial difference. Omai's ability to adapt to British society challenged Western notions of racial superiority, at once eliciting admiration and anxiety from his British hosts. Cultural difference no longer secured racial identity, as Omai's visit to England made apparent; in light of such evidence, Zerne suggests that anatomical theories of racial difference became more commonplace, as the British persisted in envisioning desirable exotic others and dangerous savages from faraway places.

As Burney locates herself as a professional writer, experiments with genre conventions, captures the aural urban experience, and documents cultural and racial encounters, she remains a pivotal figure for our understanding of the long eighteenth century in Britain.

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