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"The silent observant Miss Fanny": Narrative Position in Burney's Early Journals

SARA K. DAVIS

On the thirteenth of June 2002, a memorial windowpane with Fanny Burney's name and dates was added to Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey. When the pane was selected over a memorial plaque, space considerations squelched the Burney Society's debate on the appropriate order of the potential epitaph, "Novelist, Playwright, Diarist." Such discussion, as Lorna Clark points out, reveals that "Burney's reputation as a novelist has preponderated over that of diarist" in the minds of today's critics (283). This is easily proven by the amount of critical work done on her fiction. In the last twenty years, there have been multiple biographies on Burney, several book length studies of her novels, and new critical editions of all her novels and plays. Yet as Peter Sabor, editor of Burney's plays and current general editor of her correspondence, notes: "[F]or all the current interest in Burney, the focus for most discussions of her fiction is still *Evelina*" (43). Indeed, it is Burney's fiction,[1] especially *Evelina*, that has brought her critical attention; and it is her fiction that continues to be the main focus for today's scholars.[2] Unfortunately, the rich avenues of exploration offered by her journals and journal letters are relatively neglected.

As Lorna Clark points out, this neglect may be due to the "sheer magnitude of the task"; with over ten thousand letters written, consisting of tens of thousands of pages of private writing and encompassing (what will be) a total of twenty-four published volumes, it is no wonder Burney's journals and correspondence remain relatively untapped.[3] In her article "The Diarist as Novelist: Narrative Strategies in the Journals and Letters of Frances Burney," Lorna Clark has added to the discourse on Burney's private writings through

her study of the fictional aspect of Burney's journals; she maintains that Burney creates a fantasy in her journal in which she "places herself firmly at the center of a narrative that validates her own personal and domestic concerns," and, furthermore, that Burney "represents the planetary sun around which revolve the other characters, whose parts are written in dialogue like a play" (290). Bluntly put, Clark argues that Burney "places herself at the center of every scene" (289). Yet there are numerous scenes in which Burney is simply an observer, especially in her early journals.[4] I agree that Burney uses novelistic elements in her journals, but contrary to Clark, I assert that Burney's journals and letters, especially her early ones, demonstrate the same narrative distance and observing eye found in her novels.

A number of Burney's contemporaries highlight Burney's silent observatory nature. King George said she was "always on the watch" and Alexander Seton calls her "the silent observant Miss Fanny" (Sabor and Troide xvii; Burney, *Diary and Letters* 212).[5] And Mrs. Streatfield reveals her recognition of Burney's penetrating and perceptive gaze when she exclaimed, "Ah! . . . how I see those *little Dove's* [Burney's] *Eyes* reading us all! – what would I give to know her real opinion of me! – She *glances* at me with such *enquiring Eyes*, that I die to know what they will tell her of me! –" (134). In her early journals especially, Burney rarely takes an active role in social events but is ever faithful to "read" the attendees, as Mrs. Streatfield puts it, and re-constitute them in writing. For example, in her diary Burney feels free to vilify Dr. Shebbeare, a man who had ruined the evening with his miserable ways, but Judy Simons notes that "on the evening in question, Burney kept her thoughts to herself, remaining a silent observer" (25).

Critics today agree with Burney's contemporaries concerning her observing role. Joyce Hemlow remarks that Burney "listened as well as watched, and with an acute ear for speech and a remarkable memory she recorded in the corpus of her work the characteristic idiom of many ranks in life from that of illiterate common folk to the King on the throne" (xvi). Lars Troide, who succeeded Hemlow as the general editor of Burney's correspondence, notes in his introduction to

the first volume: "in this volume at least [Fanny] is more observer than actor" (I: xviii). Judy Simons also discusses Burney's position as onlooker: "Fanny Burney's main source of enjoyment was her sense of herself as privileged observer, reporting covertly on daily events. Mock-heroically she commented on the Burney household that 'But for my pen, all the adventures of this noble family might sink into oblivion!'" (26). Although I believe Clark's assessment of Burney's narrative position is inaccurate in reference to her early journals, my argument is not whether we find Burney a silent observer or an active participant; a quick perusal of her early private writing will confirm Troide's, Simon's, and my own opinion. Rather, the remainder of this article will focus on the ways in which the three aspects of the writer's triangle—writer, text, reader—are affected by Burney's chosen narrative position. The writer's triangle releases Burney from her traditional female role as object of the gaze, endowing her with the powerful male-active role of gazer, and allows Burney to paint each narrated scene with discernment and depth. Ultimately, Burney establishes a unique relationship between herself and her reader in which she carefully conscripts her reader's reactions and opinions to correspond with her own, powerfully altering her position from peripheral "Nobody" to inside opinion maker.

Burney as Representing Nobody

Burney's peripheral position figures her as the symbolic female "Nobody" to whom she addresses her journal because she is both uninvolved in the action of the scene and hidden from the reader's eye. As the observing narrator, we see the scene through her eyes, identifying with her. But, then, since we are seeing the world *through* her eyes, we necessarily cannot *see* her. Despite an awareness of her presence, she is, in a sense, transparent, allowing us to view the scene through her. She is a conduit, a medium. At fifteen, Burney begins her journal with the now famous entry addressed to "Nobody":

> To whom, then, *must* I dedicate my wonderful, surprising and interesting adventures?—to *whom* dare I

> reveal my private opinion and my nearest Relations? the secret thoughts of my dearest friends? my own hopes, fears, reflections and dislikes—Nobody!
>
> To Nobody, then, will I write my Journal!

And she ends the entry with: "why, permit me to ask, must a *female* be made Nobody? Ah! My dear, what were this world good for, *were* Nobody a female?" (2). The Nobody described here is, in many ways, the observing Burney of Burney's early journals. Thoughts, wishes, and confidences are revealed to Nobody. Nobody is always there. No secret can be concealed from Nobody. There is nothing to fear from Nobody. And, most of all, Nobody is a female. When Burney is silently observing, she too, seems to be all these things. For example, note her observations of Mr. Sheridan:

> I . . . think him every way worth his beautiful Companion. And let me tell *you*, what I know will give you as much pleasure as it gave *me*, that by all I could observe in the course of the evening,—and we stayed very late,—they are extremely happy in each other; he evidently adores her,—and she as evidently idolizes him. The World has by no means done him justice. (106-07)

Similar to her imagined Nobody, by keen observation Burney is made aware of the thoughts, wishes, and confidences of those around her. By analyzing her observations, she is apparently privy to the private lives of her subjects. In addition, she seems always present, which means nothing is concealed from her. But even with the privileged knowledge gained through her observing nature, there is little to fear from this apparently mousy, unobtrusive female "Nobody."

Burney as Gazer

Through her position of silent observer, Burney embodies the female Nobody she addresses, but she also, paradoxically and

simultaneously, plays the role of the male/active gazer that Laura Mulvey theorizes about in the context of film. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Mulvey takes a Lacanian approach to film watching, arguing that looking or viewing conflates image (the image on the screen) and self-image (one's image of one's self), bringing about an understanding of subjectivity: "Quite apart from the extraneous similarities between screen and mirror . . . , the cinema has structures of fascination strong enough to allow temporary loss of ego while simultaneously reinforcing the ego" (588). Because Burney is an observing bystander, I suggest that Burney views the world around her, the conversations she witnesses and the morning parties, dinners, and musical events that she attends, as a modern cinema audience views a film. Like them, Burney gains two things: she gains pleasure through the act of gazing because she identifies with the people she observes, and she experiences simultaneously a temporary loss of ego, making her, symbolically, the Nobody she addresses, and a reinforcement of her ego as she identifies with the "characters" she views. Her temporary *loss* of ego comes in that she is not gazing at self; she is lost in the people she observes. Yet, in viewing the "movie stars" of the eighteenth century, Dr. Samuel Johnson, Hester Thrale Piozzi, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and David Garrick among others, she *gains* an ideal ego, seeing herself in them. At twenty-seven, when *Evelina* was published, she had an underdeveloped sense of self. Rather than pride in her accomplishments, and perhaps even an earned sense of exhibitionism, she was painfully shy and overly modest—traits she manifested from early youth. Her father writes, ". . . in company, or before strangers, [Fanny] was silent, backward, and timid, even to sheepishness: and, from her shyness, had such a profound gravity and composure of features" that she was nicknamed "Old Lady" from the age of eleven onward (qtd. in Burney, *Memoirs* 143).[6] From childhood through adulthood, Burney's anxiety when positioned as object of the gaze continued to manifest itself in her shyness, modesty, backwardness, and timidity. Dr. Johnson recognizes her modesty as "neither pretense nor decorum; 'Tis an ingredient of her Nature; for she who could part with such a Work [*Evelina*] for Twenty pounds, can know so little of its worth, or of her own, as to leave no possible doubt of her native

humility" (125). Burney did not recognize herself as either an exceptional writer or a worthy object of the gaze, but she saw her ideal self in the active writers and wits she observed around her, gaining narcissistic pleasure from her "cinematic" gazing.

Mulvey genders the gazer as an active/male role, whereas the object of the gaze is the passive female, who plays a "traditional exhibitionist role" (589). But significantly, the viewer in this study is female—Burney is not the object of the gaze but rather the gazer. This creates an intriguing paradox in that as a peripheral and passive narrator, she represents the female Nobody, but as the active gazer, she takes on a male gendered role, a role infused with importance and dignity, which reinforces her ideal-ego. But more than this, her role as gazer provides her with power—power to digest, interpret, and represent. She shuns the public power that comes with being the exhibited object (as popular author) for the private power of narrating gazer.

Perhaps Burney's preferred role as gazer provides a psychological explanation for her anxiety when forced into the action of the scene. By entering the action, Burney must necessarily exchange the comfortable role of gazer with that of object of the gaze; losing her chosen peripheral role brings her deep apprehension. For example, she would happily play the harpsichord when alone, but stubbornly refuse to perform for company, despite being "repeatedly urged and realizing that her behaviour is inexcusedly 'hippish'" (Troide, I:xvii). Note also her ambivalent participation in private plays. Despite her interest and excitement during rehearsals, she is terrified and paralyzed when the actual exhibition arrives. In April 1777, on noting the entrance of a few audience members, Burney exclaims, "this frightened me so much . . . I was quite sick, and, if I dared, should have given up the part" (75).[7] Her desire to remain the gazer may also be the motivation behind her lack of interest in games. When asked by the meddlesome socialite Mrs. Cholmondeley, "What Games *do* you like, Miss Burney?" Burney replies, "I play at none, ma'am," to which Mr. Burke, who is playing cards, responds, "This is not very politic in us, Miss Burney, to play at cards, and have *You* listen to our follies" (104). The emphasized "you" implies that perhaps some other person could

observe their games and follies without causing them anxiety, but *not* Miss Burney. She, as the practiced, active gazer who regularly refuses to be the object observed, presents a threat. To Burke, she does not represent the female "Nobody" but rather the powerful gazer. Burney privately revels in Burke's response: "There's for you! *I* am to pass for a censor*ess* now!" (104).

When she was revealed as the author of the wildly popular *Evelina* in 1778, Burney instantaneously became the fascinating object of the reading public's gaze. As such, we find her in numerous circumstances that underscore her deep anxiety regarding the gaze, and we witness her various strategies for extricating herself from them. In one episode, during a party hosted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Burney is introduced to an over-exuberant Mrs. Cholmondeley. A strong advocate of *Evelina*, the social hostess had long desired to be acquainted with its anonymous author. At this initial meeting, according to Burney's correspondence, the woman instantly placed Burney in the position of object of the gaze when she "fixed her Eyes full on My face," and then "looked at me yet more earnestly" (103). As if this were not enough, she then, "hunted me quite round the Card Table, from Chair to Chair . . . at last, I got behind a sofa, out of her reach" (Troide and Cooke, 3: 215). When Sir Joshua takes hold of Mrs. Cholmondeley and pulls her away from Burney, stating "Come, come, Mrs. Cholmondeley, I won't have her over-powered here," Burney exclaims, "I love Sir Joshua much for this" (103). But Mrs. Cholmondeley quickly returns, and taking Burney by the hand, she leads her to another part of the room where the socialite "viewed and re-viewed [Burney's] whole person!" (103). Burney makes repeated attempts to free herself from the gaze, and when she finally does, she immediately returns to her preferred role as gazer by "again look[ing] over Miss Palmer's Cards" (104). Not to be outdone, the ever-persistent Mrs. Cholmondeley again engages Burney in a lengthy and rather comical conversation, and Burney's thoughts run thus: "During all these pointed speeches, her penetrating Eyes were fixed upon me; and what could I do?—what, indeed, could *any* body do, but colour and simper? *all* the company watching us! though all, very delicately, avoiding joining the confab" (105). Her anxiety clearly stems from

Mrs. Cholmondeley's "penetrating Eyes" and the eyes of "*all* the company" watching her. She cannot fill both roles simultaneously, and her evident dread of one and wholehearted love for the other is evident to her contemporaries, as seen in Sir Joshua's rescue attempt and the company's delicate avoidance of the "confab." Indeed, her apprehension of the gaze was so well known that prior to her arrival, the party attendees had been cautioned "by Sir Joshua himself" to be delicate in showing their interest in Burney (104).

Being observed by someone less gregarious, aggressive, and intrusive than Mrs. Cholmondeley does nothing to assuage Burney's dread. When Mr. Seward, whom Burney herself refers to as "a very polite, agreeable man," enters the library, where Burney is reading in solitude, and begins to discuss *Evelina*, Burney is deeply troubled, and in her journal she labels his intrusion an astonishing and provoking "attack" (71, 91). Her response to his friendly conversation opener was, "with the coldest gravity," to seat herself and look "another way" (91). Here, her strategy both for enduring and dismissing the gaze is to bear it with "gravity" and deny it by diverting her attention elsewhere. She notes that once he realized that she found such an "attack" distressing, he "forbore distressing" her any further "by such *Home* strokes" (91). Still, it took his keeping her there for "near 2 Hours" discussing anything *but* herself or her book to tranquilize her. The peculiarity lies in the fact that few would find praise of their own literary work to be an "attack," but her sense of anxiety arises more from the notice and the gaze, than from the praise. Mr. Seward's attention to her and her work so distresses Burney that she begs Mrs. Thrale to keep her authorship a secret. But when Mrs. Thrale indicates that she has already told everyone she has seen (if she liked them), Burney laments: "my Case was so desperate" (99).

Contemporaries more discerning that Cholmondeley or Seward attempted to cajole Burney into trading her empowering role as discerning observer and reporter for that of exhibit. In a letter to "Daddy" Samuel Crisp Burney recalls Dr. Johnson's subtle and clever attempt at doing so through his comical portrayal of several of *Evelina*'s most memorable characters:

> The Doctor, however, with a refinement of delicacy of which I have the deepest sense, never once cast his eyes my way during these comic traits, though those of every body else in the company had scarcely for a moment any other direction. But imagine my relief and my pleasure, in playfulness such as this from the great literary leviathan, whom I had dreaded almost as much as I had condescension! He clearly wished to draw the little snail from her cell, and, when once she was out, not to frighten her back. He seems to understand my queeralities—as some one has called my not liking to be set up for a sign-post—with more leniency than any body else. (Burney, *Memoirs* 142)

Dr. Johnson, in perspicaciously recognizing Burney's anxiety when positioned as the "sign-post" to be gazed at, never once casts his eyes in her direction. Yet despite his clever attempt, Burney clings to her snail's shell. Her increasing fame is distasteful to her not only because it reveals her as "a scribbler" which she was loath to disclose, but also because it all but secures her position as permanent object of the public's gaze. Now, no matter how often she refuses to play the harpsichord, how many plays she watches rather than acts in, how many card games she observes rather than participates in, Burney sees her case as "desperate" because the publicity of her authorship firmly, permanently, and irrevocably forces her out of her preferred role and into the dreaded role of object of the gaze. In her later journals, Burney transitions from peripheral observer to central actor; thus, they more closely resemble traditional diaries with the narcissistic focus of "I."

The Effects of the Gaze on Her Text

Because Burney stubbornly and energetically maintains her observing stance, her gaze translates into masterfully written re-creations. Clark argues that Burney, "ever the consummate artist . . . selects and shapes her material carefully" (290). Burney emphatically

declares that she always presents the absolute truth in her journals, but there is no denying the observing artist's touch of perspicacity, wit, humor, tone, and selection in order to create an exceptional portrait. In fact, one might say that Burney's ability to paint a scene embodies Sir Joshua Reynolds's theory of aesthetics, which he expounds upon in his *Discourses* to the Royal Academy. He claims that although a truly great painter must be a keen observer of nature, nature must not be "too closely copied . . . [for] a mere copier of nature can never produce any thing great" (1205). For Reynolds, taste and genius are in direct proportion "to our attention in observing the works of nature, to our skill in selecting, and to our care in digesting, methodizing, and comparing our observations" (1206). And so, a truly great painter (or, as I argue, diarist) must keenly observe nature, but then, instead of directly copying it, she must be able to capture the full essence of it—its depth. The painting must reveal a deeper truth. Such a portrait can only be painted by a discerning and keen observer.

Burney relates one of David Garrick's many visits to the Burney home:

> He marched up stairs immediately into the study where my Father was having his Hair Dressed, surrounded by Books and Papers innumerable. . . .
>
> My Father was beginning a laughing sort of Apology for his letter and so forth,—but Mr Garrick interrupted him with—'Ay, now, do be in a little Confusion,—it will make things comfortable!'
>
> He then began to look very gravely at the Hair Dresser; He was himself in a most odious scratch Wig, which Nobody but himself could dare be seen in: He put on a look, in the Abel Drugger[8] style, of *envy* and sadness as he examined the Hair Dresser's progress;—and when he had done, he turned to him with a dejected Face, and said '—pray Sir,—could you touch up *This* a little?' taking hold of his frightful scratch.
>
> The man only Grinned, and left the Room. (42-43)

Here, Burney has cleverly painted the scene in terms that Reynolds would admire. Her observer stance gives her readers a cursory view of the whole room, the "Books and Paper," the "odious scratch Wig," and her hero—the laughing, engaging, and seemingly self-assured Garrick. She indicates Garrick's affectation with his "Abel Drugger" style and his mock look of "*envy* and sadness."

But, as Reynolds notes, a truly great painter must not just deceive the eye but also address the mind. Therefore, he must not "waste a moment upon those smaller objects, which only serve to catch the sense, to divide the attention, and to counteract his great design of speaking to the heart" (1209). By not diverting the reader's attention with miscellaneous details of the Garrick scene, Burney follows this aesthetic method; she does not waste words in describing more of the surroundings, people, or dialogue than is necessary for her to engage the mind of the reader. Reynolds holds that a painter is not just painting a portrait of a man, he is showing the soul, mind, and character of the man—the portrait tells a story. Burney's "portrait" reveals the depths of David Garrick, his winning ways, his breezy manner, and yet something more—perhaps it relates his tireless drive to entertain or his overwhelming desire to always act a part rather than expose his genuine self. Does it hint at his tenuous hold on self-doubt and a debilitating lack of confidence that threatens to shatter his façade, or does it simply show his deep love of play-acting and humor? Because of her subject position, Burney, like a portrait painter, has the luxury of closely observing the scene before her and discerning its hidden depths. Then, her "painting" does not just copy nature. It tells a story; it reveals depth.

Burney's Interpolated Readers

Burney's distanced, observing position allows her to conscript her readers' reaction. In *Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*, Garrett Stewart theorizes the fiction reader's role, and although he is specifically dealing with nineteenth-century social problem novels, his theory is useful in discussing how Burney's narrative choice affects her readers. Pertinent to this study

is his observation that an author uses distinct narrative techniques to enjoin her readers to respond in a certain way. In a sense, the author is scripting her readers' response. One such technique is *mise-en-abyme*, a narrative within a narrative. The readers are watching Burney watch the scene, image or discussion before her. Thus, the audience is forced to distance themselves from the scene, seeing it solely through Burney's observations. Through this extrapolation, the readers are enjoined to identify themselves with Burney so that, they, as Stewart notes, become "part of the script" (6). The reader is "not only narrated to but also narrated" (7). In a sense, they are conscripted to share Burney's feelings because in seeing the scene through her eyes, they identify with her. For example, when describing to Samuel Crisp the attendees of a morning party, Burney writes:

> Mrs. Thrale is a very pretty woman still,—she is extremely lively and chatty,—has no supercilious or pedantic airs, and is really gay and agreeable. Her Daughter is about 12 years old, stiff and proud, I believe, or else shy and reserved: I don't yet know which. Miss Owen, who is a Relation, is good humoured and sensible enough; she is a sort of *Butt*, and as such, a general favorite: for those sort of characters are prodigiously useful in drawing out the Wit and pleasantry of others. (71)

We have no choice but to see these women through her eyes. And her incisive descriptions give us the impression that she is providing a truthful interpretation of their characters. Yet at one point Samuel Crisp accuses her of exaggerating or fictionalizing her accounts. In defending herself against this charge, in a 1779 letter to Crisp, Burney replies:

> I never mix Truth & Fiction;—all that I relate in Journalising is *strictly*, nay *plainly* Fact: I never, in all my Life, have been a sayer of the Thing that is not . . . the

> world, and especially the Great world, is so filled with absurdity of various sorts, now bursting forth with impertinence, now in pomposity, now giggling in silliness, and now yawning in dullness, that there is no occasion for invention to draw what is striking in every possible species of the ridiculous. (Burney, *Diary and Letters* 312)

No matter whether her accounts are strictly accurate or not, her readers see each scene through her eyes, identifying with her. Thus, we come to see her perspective as truth. We, too, come to believe Mrs. Thrale lively and chatty, her daughter stiff and proud (or shy?), and Miss Owen good-humored because Burney is the medium through which we meet them. Although we are distanced from the narrated scene by Burney's subject position, she provides observations in a transparent and seemingly artless fashion, and so we come to trust her judgments.

This conscription also occurs in her description of Dr. Johnson. Although she describes his physical ailments—"he has almost perpetual convulsive movements, either of his Hands, lips, Feet, knees, and sometimes of all together," she goes on to make very clear:

> [T]he sight of them can never excite ridicule, or indeed, any other than melancholy reflections upon the imperfections of Human nature; for this man, who is the acknowledged first Literary man in this kingdom, and who has the most extensive knowledge, the clearest understanding, and the greatest abilities of any Living Author,—has a Face the most ugly, a Person the most awkward, and manners the most singular, that ever were, or ever can be seen. But all that is unfortunately in his exterior, is so greatly compensated for in his interior . . . His Conversation is so replete with instruction and entertainment, his Wit is so ready, and his Language at once so original and so comprehensive, that I hardly

> know any satisfaction I can receive, that is equal to listening to him. (92)

Although Burney claims to write nothing but the truth, it is still a subjective truth. In this scene, Dr. Johnson is known to her readers only through Burney, and in identifying with her, her audience comes to respect and admire Dr. Johnson, eliding, as Burney does, his peculiar and negative physical attributes in favor of his intellectual stamina. Her physical description of him could produce laughter or derision, but her fuller description of the man and her feelings towards him does not allow it. She schools her readers with phrases like "[T]he sight of them can *never* excite ridicule" and "[Johnson] has the *most* extensive knowledge, the *clearest* understanding" (emphasis added). This journal entry has "Nobody" as its intended audience. However, as Judy Simons points out, "even at this early stage in her literary endeavours, Fanny Burney was writing as a conscious artist, formulating her ideas with more than half an eye on her non-existent audience" (24). That eye, which observes the reality around her, is also aware of her audience, scripting their response through her writing.

Along with Burney's conscription of the audience through *mise-en-abyme*, she also interpolates them, as Garrett Stewart would say, through direct address. Although this would not seem odd in a letter, Burney's are worth closer examination because many are written with the specific intention of enjoining her reader's response. An obvious example comes when Burney writes to Samuel Crisp: "Ha, Ha, Ha,—don't you laugh at her having a Lesson of Attention from an Otaheitan?" (67). Burney's transcription of her own laughter followed by the second person direct address "don't you laugh . . .?" enjoins Crisp to follow suit. A more subtle interpolation is found when Burney relates to Susanna Mrs. Cholmondeley's "grave" request to say "one thing" to Burney. When Burney agrees, the socialite exclaims, "'Why it is—that I admire you more than any human Being! And *that* I can't help!—' Then, suddenly rising, she hurried down stairs" (106). Burney finishes relating the scene with, "Did you ever hear the like?—" (106). Here, Susanna (and, in turn, modern readers) is interpolated.

With the interrogative, second-person direct address, Susanna is conscripted to share Burney's shock at Mrs. Cholmondeley's abrupt nature and embarrassing candor. This episode could easily invoke feelings of sympathy for Mrs. Chomondeley, who was a rather simpering woman lacking in social grace. Likewise, it could evoke admiration for Chomondeley because of her willingness to be vulnerable. Yet Burney makes it clear that the reader is to dismiss those feelings in favor of incredulity.

Burney's most significant interpolation is found in her letters concerning her marriage to Alexandre D'Arblay. Here, more than anywhere else, she is careful in her campaign to control her readers' responses because her decision is unpopular with her father due to D'Arblay's doubtful financial suitability. In her letter to her brother Charles Burney, after some playful stalling, she begins: "Do you remember seeing, at a Concert in Titchfield Street, a Gentleman—whose Face, you said, looked *any thing* but French?—Now your Eye brows begin to arch—" (365). Whether or not her brother's eyebrows were arched at the time of reading is immaterial because Burney here slyly implies that they should be. And with her comment, she conscripts her brother's response, preparing him for the impending story. She goes on to note Alexandre D'Arblay's fine qualities and the closeness of their friendship before she explains that D'Arblay wishes for "a Companion—an English Companion,—with whom he may learn to forget some measure of his own misfortunes, or at least to sooth them" (366). It is obvious where she is leading, but she further conscripts Charles with, "Can you guess the Companion he would elect?" (366). Again, Burney conscripts through a direct address with a question. It would obviously be insulting if the reader could not guess, and so Charles is led to guess the appropriate name. She continues, "I can only tell my dear Charles that if I should here give him another Brother—he will find him one whom he can no sooner know than he must love and respect" (366). Burney makes it very clear how she wishes Charles to feel. This conscription of her siblings (in her letter she notes that she has sent by "this post similar Letters to my sisters and to James") is especially important because her father is "coldly averse to this transaction" (366). Burney closes her letter

with, "may you have good news to send me of yourself with good wishes for your truly affectionate F. Burney" (366). Burney's closing is significant because she tends to end her letters with neither closing nor signature. If she did include a closing, it was usually general ("your affectionate" or "your most obedient") and without signature, with her last line or two sending well wishes to the recipient. Here she conscripts Charles, asking him to send "good wishes" to her, enjoining him to reflect positively on her decision.

In a letter to Georgiana Waddington relating the news of her marriage, Burney writes:

> Do you recollect at all, when you were last in Town, my warmest interest for the loyal part of the French Exiles?—do you remember my eloge of a French officer, in particular—a certain M. d'Arblay?—
>
> Ah, my dear Marianne—you are quick as lightening—your sensitive apprehension will tell my tale for me now without any more aid than some details of circumstances. (367)

Once more, she conscripts through direct address via interrogation. She begins by asking if she remembers d'Arblay, but whether Marianne does or not, she has now been reminded. And like Charles, whether Marianne is as "quick as lightening" and has intuited Burney's story is immaterial. What is significant is that Burney interpolates Marianne, makes it clear how she should react. Marianne should understand that, obviously, Burney's affection for a certain d'Arblay has blossomed into love, and, naturally, the two have married. Similar to her closing conscription of Charles, she enjoins Marianne in her letter's closing: "give me your kind wishes—your kind prayers, my ever dear Marianne" (369).

Conclusion

Burney's early journals are intriguing because they do not adhere to the typical narcissism of most diaries, and her peripheral narrative

position offers rich and intricate implications of duality. As peripheral observer, Burney simultaneously embraces the contradictory roles of female Nobody and powerful male Gazer, and in interpolating her readers' response, Burney concurrently maintains the opposing roles of peripheral outsider and powerful insider. Furthermore, Burney's narrative position places her between her reader and her subject, affecting the readers' identification with her and their focus on her interiority; in this way, Burney intriguingly embodies the dual roles of peripheral narrator and centered subject.

NOTES

[1] In using the term "fiction," I am including Burney's plays, which have been the focus of increasing interest since the publication of Tara Ghoshal Wallace's dissertation-turned-critical edition of Burney's *A Busy Day* in 1984.

[2] The modern resurgence of interest in Burney began with the publication of Joyce Hemlow's critical biography of Burney in 1958. Attention on Burney surged in the 1980s due to the work of critics like Margaret Anne Doody, Julia Epstein, and Kristina Straub.

[3] There are, of course, notable exceptions. Specifically, Patricia Meyer Spacks, Julia Epstein, and Judy Simons have all added to the critical study of Burney's private writings. For Spacks' study on Burney's private writing, see "Dynamics of Fear: Fanny Burney" in *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (1976); for Epstein, see *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women's Writing* (1989); and for Simons, "The Fear of Discovery: The Journals of Fanny Burney" in *Diaries and Journals of Literary Women From Fanny Burney to Virginia Woolf* (1990) and "Miss Somebody: The Diary of Fanny Burney or a Star is Born" in the *Burney Journal* 1 (1998), 3-17.

[4] The early journals encompass the years 1768-86.

[5] Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from and references to Burney's journals and letters are from the Penguin edition of Frances Burney's *Journals and Letters*, edited by Peter Sabor and Lars E. Troide (2001).

[6] Fanny Burney indicates that this quotation was found in one of Dr. Burney's Memorandum Books for the year 1808.

[7] This is just one of several examples of her deep anxiety concerning performance and exhibition. See Troide's *The Early Journals*, 1: 116-17 and 161-63 for further examples.

[8] A character made famous by Garrick on stage.

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