What Is a Woman?
Nobody as “Some Body” in Frances Burney’s
The Wanderer

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Abstract

In Burney’s novelistic worlds, to will a female subjectivity amounts to desire “a nobody”. This “nobody” ultimately stands for the Burneyan subject itself; it reveals Burney’s idea of the female subject proper and her female imaginary: the heroine becomes something (counted as a subject) only after being deprived of names and identities, i.e., empirical features that support her social roles. “A nobody later counted as somebody” is the most succinct way to describe Burney’s heroines. The article contends that in The Wanderer Burney presents a series of corporeal styles to “embody” and “materialize” that nobody through performativity. Namelessness as a device, therefore, provides a space for Burney to create a female representation by making a distinctive mode of corporeality. Burney creates an “embodied self” via performances of fragment body gestures. She presents a series of corporeal styles that add up to a special body whose practices mark themselves as a new modality of embodiment. In the end, the paradox of conformity to social demands and criticisms of those demands results in an alternative approach of grounding subjectivity not in the whole person, but in bits and pieces, i.e., in a series of fragment body practices.

Keywords: nobody, subjectivity, body, embodiment, Frances Burney, The Wanderer

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What is woman,—with the most upright designs, the most rigid circumspection,—what is woman unprotected? She is pronounced upon only from outward semblance:—and, indeed, what other criterion has the world? Can it read the heart? (*The Wanderer* 344)

Burney’s literary works can be viewed as a response to the question: What is a woman, especially when she is unprotected, deprived of the father’s name and the means for survival? Are women’s innate qualities counted as nothing when being stripped of both fame and fortune? The last sentence “can it read the heart?” specifies Burney’s central concern of resisting the social mandate imposed upon a woman. Are women really those external social mandates of naming who she is? In a way, *The Wanderer* (1814) as a whole is a dramatization of “NO” to such a question. Burney intends to convey the message that a woman is more than those external constraints being forced upon her. *The Wanderer* attempts to explore the crucial question of the female body and the brand names to which the body attaches. What happens to the female body once a woman is separated from the father’s name, once the body is severed from the family name it carries? What kind of body do a woman and the society need?

“Woman as nobody” has become one of the common conditions of Burney’s heroines. Burney’s heroines are never directly included in the patriarchal order: they are included (accepting the pressure to maintain propriety and femininity) at the very point where patriarchal signification breaks down. “Unknown, unnamed,

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2 In a letter to her father prefixed to *The Wanderer*, Burney denies any political interest or intention on her part. She states that her aim is “to make pleasant the path of propriety” by pointing out that “an exterior the most frivolous may enwrap illustrations of conduct” (9). *The Wanderer* can be considered as a modern definition of what the “feminine” is rather than an obsolete response to an obsolete theme of the revolution, as most her contemporary critics would presume. William Hazlitt, one of Burney’s contemporary reviewers, targeted the outdated exploration of the domestic virtue versus revolutionary femininity as an attempt to raise a dead
without any sort of recommendation,” these are the words Burney repeats throughout her work to describe her heroines. Like her heroines, Burney was continuously caught in a struggle between publicity and namelessness. Her first novel, *Evelina* (1778), was published anonymously because Burney is acutely aware of the fact that “the novel as a genre, having passed out of the hands of the greats—Fielding, Richardson, Stern and Smollet—was in a state of limbo, its reputation poised between the respect commanded by the relatively few classic works and the suspect nature of those abundant popular novels written for circulating libraries (Howard 12). The term “limbo” is a proper metaphor that sets the stage for her work. In her preface to *Evelina*, while Burney considered her work in the same league with Fielding, Richardson and Smollet, she distanced herself from these “predecessors” by relegating them to the past. Such a gesture puts her work in a state of limbo, where she belongs neither to the past nor the present, and thereby creates an opening and a space for later writers who hope to make their name. Therefore, more than a restraining concept that limits one’s agency, nobody and namelessness allow a woman to speak for herself and to act for herself.

For Burney, the heroine has value only when she does not belong to anybody else, when she does not have a family name, and when she belongs to “nobody.” In Burney’s novelistic worlds, to will a female subjectivity amounts to desire a nobody. This nobody ultimately stands for the Burneyan subject itself. It might be an empty concept without any qualities, but it is also a gap filled with positive qualities. Burney’s formula of nobody reveals her idea of the female subject *proper* and her female imaginary: the heroine becomes something (counted as a subject) only after

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3 The imaginary is a series of related images, symbols, metaphors, and representations through which we understand and make sense of social body as well as determine their values. The imaginary is not “fictive” or “fictional” and it is unconcerned with the question of true or false, as the literal meaning of the term would suggest. This term is borrowed from feminist Luce
being deprived of features that support her social identity. “A nobody (later) counted as somebody” is the most succinct formula to describe Burney’s heroines.

However, as long as Burney’s authorship remains anonymous, her efforts to create a name would be in vain. So, the question remains: how is nobody counted as somebody? How does such a transformation work in this novel and in Burney’s works in general and how does “some body” account for Burney’s authorship? Catherine Gallagher, in *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace*, proposes the notion of “nobody” to bridge the connection between female authorship and literary property. She suggests that only when fictional characters are marginalized and trivialized (counted as nobody) do female authors begin to assert authority and to own their works as intellectual property. For her, “nobody” is a stand-in for authors, characters, as well as readers. Her main point is that the more fictional a work and the more obscure a character, the more an author might claim to own her intellectual product. In a word, female authors are counted as somebody and are able to claim their authorship only when they reduce their fictional characters to nobody. There is no body physically present in textual relations. For female writers to embody as authors and for them to successfully assert authorship, they must extract themselves from the text. For Gallagher, the transformation from nobody to somebody is played out in a textual relation between typographical disembodiment of the character and embodiment of the author. While Gallagher makes abstract characters and authors by de-materializing both, the

Irigaray’s revision of the female imaginary. She claims that we need new female imaginary—new ways of thinking about female body—for the emergence of new modes of being. The article uses this term to illustrate the fact that caught between classical male novelists and hacks (those who write for money without considering or worrying very much the quality of their writing) Burney makes use of nobody as a proper metaphor for her female subjectivity and as an appropriate strategy for her to enter the literary market. For more sustained discussions on the imaginary, see Margaret Whitford and Moira Gatens.

4 Gallagher asserts female writers in this period represent their experience of authorship as one of dispossession, a form of disappearance under the commodification of the literary trade. “Nobody” is an enabling concept and a productive mechanism.
question of the status, the function, transformation or representation of the female body within the notion of “nobody” remains a conundrum that awaits further examinations. This article aims to explore the materiality of nobody and to examine what “props up” or “fills in” the space opened up by nobody. It argues that instead of claiming authorship in an abstract term, Burney provides a specific way to claim her ownership and authorship by embodying and materializing that nobody. Namelessness as a device, therefore, opens a space for Burney to create a certain female representation by making a distinctive mode of corporeality as its ideal.

Representations of the female body have been one of Burney’s central concerns. They are more prominent in *The Wanderer* than in any other Burney’s works. The novel offers a striking illustration of representations of the female body by foregrounding two contrasting characters, Juliet and Elinor. Critical discussions tend to treat them as a complementary pair, one rational, calm, and prudent, the other irrational, fanatic, and reckless. Margaret Anne Doody indicates that “Elinor is insistently physical” (*Frances Burney* 343). While much emphasis has been placed on the honest and brazen display of Elinor’s body as a direct demonstration of her emotions and her political ideals, critical receptions rarely observe a different kind of existence of the wanderer’s body (or non-body). Catherine Frank remarks that “[r]evolution sets the doubled domestic body into motion and ideally remakes it into something better” (430). What remains unanswered is how to transform this body into “something better.” Is this “something better” still a body that refers to its crude, material, and physical existence subject to illness, corporeal weakness and

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5 Victoria Kortes-Papp observes that “Juliet is the silent partner . . . she is partner to outspoken Elinor” (103). Andrea Austin considers two characters’ treatment of female difficulties as “masculine” and “feminine” and sees Elinor as the mouthpiece for feminist ideas: “we have Elinor’s radical, theoretical, apparently ‘masculine’ approach to the constraints of patriarchy, and on the other hand, we have Juliet’s practical, negotiational, ‘feminine’ approach” (258). Justine Crump traces medical and moral treatment of madness in the eighteenth century and points out that Elinor’s disorder is hysterical and must be controlled through moral conversion and containment.
changes through time? Or is there another materiality of the body that consists of immutable features (thus, perceived as “better”) that is not exposed to external circumstances? Something must have already been added onto this “better body,” such that we consider it better than it originally is. In other words, there is another dimension of the body: an indestructible and invincible body which persists beyond the weakness of the physical body. This other body within body is pliable and can endure all torments and injustices. We might as well name this better body with its institutionalized name—virtue—in the domestic domain. Although Harleigh from the beginning of the novel believes Juliet is a person of a special kind, somehow he cannot specify and pinpoint whether it is her character or temperament which makes her particular. He perceives in this nobody something special, something he cannot specify and verify, something appropriate for a suitable wife.

While Elinor persistently asserts her rights and existence through dramatic exhibition of her lived body, the novel’s portrayal of the wanderer’s disembodied performance expresses both Burney and Juliet’s anxiety of public display of the female body. In the same play where Elinor acts as Lady Wronghead, the wanderer has an impeccable performance when she plays the role of Lady Townly:

> Her performance . . . seemed the essence of gay intelligence, of well bred animation, and of lively variety. The face of her motions made not only every step but every turn of her head remarkable. Her voice modulated into all the changes that vivacity . . . Every feature of her face spoke her discrimination of every word; while the spirit which gave a charm to the whole, was chastened by a taste the most correct. . . .(94)

In the last act, “the state of her mind accorded with distress, and her fine speaking eyes, her softing touching voice, her dejected air, and penetrating countenance, made quicker passage to the feelings of her auditors, even than the words of the author” (96). In the public space such as the theater, the novel describes Juliet’s flawless performance as if her whole body no longer exists, as if the body as a whole and its crude reality are left behind. Only bodily fragments remain: the eyes, the voice, the
air, countenance, all of which refer to a static quality that aims to freeze the wanderer in a moment of truth and beauty. Compared with the wanderer, Elinor is “insistently physical,” for Elinor lives her body in blatant dramatic displays. Her limbs, trunks, and sometimes her whole body tremble constantly in a state of agitation and emotional candidness. According to Mary Russo, the grotesque body is the antithesis of the beautiful body, insofar as it is “the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process and change” against “the Classical body which is monumental, static, closed, and sleek, corresponding to the aspiration of bourgeois individualism” (62-3). Burney produces Elinor as a “grotesque other” for every beautiful and accomplished heroine she creates, a perverse figure who has lost her mind and her self-governance. What might these representations of a grotesque body mean when the heroine strives to emulate conduct book femininity? In a way, Elinor’s loss of composure and its concomitant near madness exhibited through outlandish display of body gestures serve as demonstrations of a female’s mistakes and failures. The loss of her potential suitor in the end insinuates that Elinor deserves to be punished for not being “good enough” or not being as good as the wanderer. In this sense, Elinor serves as a cautionary tale for what the wanderer might become. Yet, this does not mean that the wanderer is “good enough.” Even if she is, the novel aims to show that her “good qualities” fail to work in a harsh economic world.

Unlike Elinor, who constantly longs for public display, the wanderer’s greatest apprehension is perhaps publicity. Juliet fears not only publicity but also body and emotional openness associated with publicity. In the concert hall where out of economic necessity the wanderer is compelled to perform on the stage, she “insisted upon seating herself behind a player, and as much out of sight as possible . . . From her dislike to being seen her eyes seemed riveted upon the music paper” (357). As an enigma, the wanderer at the outset is (un)staged to avoid as well as fascinate other people’s gazes. Whether or not Juliet reluctantly or purposely stages a bodily performance and whether or not she puts her body in the foreground or background, the effect is the same. Juliet is bound to stage a spectacle that invites, attracts, and
fascinates the gaze of those who endeavor to penetrate her mystery. Gazes play an ambivalent role in the novel, both to Juliet’s advantage and disadvantage. Juliet attempts to avoid attention and recognition in the public, for fear that her allegedly infamous husband, her persecutor from France, would easily find her out. Yet to a certain degree Juliet needs those gazes to maintain her benefactor’s curiosity and sympathy. Juliet’s demeanor does persuade the sympathetic Harleigh who believes Juliet is genteel and cultivated in spite of her peculiar situation: deficient means and lack of connections and recommendations. Harleigh says:

I think her . . . an elegant and well-bred young woman, under some extraordinary and inexplicable difficulties: for there is modesty in her air, which art, though it might attain, could not support; and a dignity in her conduct in refusing all succour . . . that make it impossible for me to have any doubt upon the fairness of her character. (159)

Harleigh fends off suspicions against the wanderer by appealing to a revelatory rather than specific and verifiable truth when he says: “I can defend no single particular, even to myself; but yet the whole, the all-together, carries with it an indescribable, but irresistible vindication” (48). Harleigh says that it is by Juliet’s silent sufferings, that she cannot speak for herself, that she does reveal herself even though this form of proof may be “thought insufficient by the world” (186).

The implication of the wanderer’s rank as a well-bred gentlewoman takes its life from those disembodied and fragmented body parts, which gradually build up a sense of the wanderer’s singularity and specificity. The whole novel is replete with passages that suggest endless iterations of gesture as another form of performance and corporeality.

[She] gave a general, though unpremeditated dance lesson to every one, by the measured grace and lightness of her motions, which, little as her attire was adapted to such a purpose, were equally striking for elegance and for modesty. (84)

[I]t was from the ease with which she wore her ornaments, the grace with
which she set them off, the elegance of her deportment, and an air of dignified modesty, that spoke her not only accustomed to such attire, but also to the good breeding and refined manners, which announce the habits of life to have been formed in the superior class of society. (92)

Burney invokes the “ease,” “grace,” “elegance,” “manner,” and “dignified modesty” as alternative performances of the wanderer’s essence. Burney’s depictions of the wanderer’s “every step,” “every turn of her head,” “every feature,” and “every word” reconstitutes her visibility in detailed gestures. The novel is filled with these redundant discoveries that gradually add up to the impression of the wanderer’s distinctiveness. As a female disconnected from her symbolic position and suffered from the dissolution of the network of social relations, the wanderer must rely heavily on these material gestures as performative power to invoke an interiority beneath gestural surfaces. Harleigh articulates his attraction to Juliet in a language that implies the wanderer’s stylized comportments, showing that his interest in her only reinforces his denial of another forward woman, namely, Elinor:

How could she [Elinor] imagine such a one calculated to engage my heart? . . . Her spirit I admire; but where is the sweetness I could love? I respect her understanding; but where is the softness that should make it charm while it enlightens? I am grateful for her partiality; but where is the dignity that might make it as refined as it is flattering? Where—where the soul’s fascination, that grows out of the mingled excellencies, the blended harmonies, of the understanding with the heart and the manners? (188-9)

Here Harleigh equates the wanderer’s corporeal distinctions and gestural qualifiers with “the soul’s fascination.” As an unnamed and impoverished woman, the wanderer has no explicit “signature” (i.e., father’s name) to mark her social position;
it is only through these repeated corporeal and external gestures that a distinctive mode of signature can be discerned as a marker of character.\(^6\)

However, dancing, writing, and wearing fine clothes do not explicitly indicate the wanderer’s interiority. The lack and resistance of depth in the wanderer has become one of Burney’s imaginary, which should be considered as one of Burney’s innovation rather than her shortcoming as a measure of feminism. In fact, the gestural remainders resist meaning and interpretation. They stay purely on the surface, insinuating rather than confirm the existence of an interiority. That is why physical reminders require constant repetitions and accumulations in order to invite interpretations that create a sense of unfathomable mystery. Helen Thompson pointes out that this is why Burney’s text must increase its volumes, precisely because it must assert repeatedly the self-evidence of the wanderer’s aristocratic upbringing without claiming openly that title and lineage. The wanderer has no alternative, Thompson suggests, but to rely on “doing” and “performing” her femininity and her class (967-78). For critics like Claudia Johnson, such performative gestures are “theatricality of gender,” which can be characterized as a “stylistic drag”(145).\(^7\)

Unlike Elinor’s body that is subject to upheavals of emotions and outlandish demeanors, Burney diverts the wanderer’s physical body to an immaterial body

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6 In her discussion of *Evelina*, Irene Fizer maintains that “[t]hough Evelina is an heiress, she is recognized only as a bastard daughter. Lacking a proper name, Evelina is most immediately effected on the level of language. Her letters circulate throughout the novel, yet none are authorized” (79). Likewise, if Evelina is effected on the level of language, then Juliet the wanderer is effected on the level of her corporeal distinctions and gestural styles.

7 Johnson uses “stylistic drag” to discuss excessive sentimentality in Burney’s *Camilla* (1796): “Sentimentality, of course, is normatively excessive. And in the world of Burney’s imagination, the already excessive stranglehold of sentimental propriety can be loosed only by excessive compliance. This makes her fiction campy where it is most dutiful, for norms here are so saturated with excess that they lose their sway as norms” (145). This comment also applies to the wanderer’s behavioral codes as performative gestures. Following Judith Butler’s claim in *Gender Trouble*, both Thompson and Johnson argue for gender’s performative power.
through the use of subtle gestural embodiments. The point is not that Elinor serves as an underside and an unacknowledged support of the wanderer. The pair should not be mistaken as one showing the body and the other its simple mirror-reversal of denying it. The point is that such a contrast is mediated by an impossibility: since Juliet cannot publicly acknowledge her heritage, the only thing that remains for her is to “live out” her situation, i.e., to embody that denial and negation herself, and to organize her bodily life as an ongoing renunciation. As soon as the wanderer occupies the place of “non-being” or “nothing” and functions as nobody, her behaviors are critically examined. In turn the wanderer is viewed either as an object of fascination or an object of disgust. Those who intend to read the wanderer are nevertheless caught in the following paradox: is she effectively and substantially what her corporeal behaviors suggest (a gentlewoman) or is she just an imposter? Is the wanderer an impersonator or is she someone with aristocratic properties? Those who despise the wanderer assume that she must be a deceptive semblance that does not exist; it is precisely for this reason that the wanderer is so dangerous. It is precisely because of a fundamental delusiveness, i.e., a nobody acting as somebody and counted as something, that the wanderer must be rejected and despised by any means. In this sense, the function of nobody \textit{redoubles} the wanderer’s very body.

\footnote{The English community’s response to the odd coupling of namelessness and remarkable accomplishments (one indicating the possibility of an imposter, the other the possibility of a noble birth) in the wanderer can be divided into three categories: compassion, fascination, and contempt. With compassion, Miss Matson and Miss Arbe are those who attempt to patronize the wanderer as their protégé in order to display their social privilege under the pretext of charity. Those who show fascination and infatuation are mostly men. Many are ready to believe that Juliet is attempting to make a fortune through her outstanding accomplishments and through selling herself in marriage. However, this does not mean that no other characters in the novel can truly discern and appreciate the wanderer’s talents and their correspondence to her noble birth. Precisely at the moment of her greatest abasement, she arouses absolute fascination and compassion. Harleigh and Juliet’s half sister and brother, Lady Aurora and Lord Melbury, are among those who can truly discern her characters. Mrs. Ireton, Mrs. Maple, and Mrs. Howel, the “Three Furies” (872) in the novel, belong to the last category. They are what Johnson calls “creature of opinions” (180). For them, being anonymous is equivalent to being an imposter.}
and assumes an immaterial quality, producing a split between the material, visible, and fleeting body and another special body made of immaterial stuff. Perhaps this is the central issue Burney’s writing of nobody elicits—the immateriality of the body. This special body can endure all sufferings and survives with its integrity unharmed.

Indeed, in Burney’s world, the special body and money (doing remunerative work) do not mix; one cannot have money without losing virtue and morality. The sacred body beyond the physical body must constantly bear “pecuniary distress” in order to maintain one’s probity. In other words, only through enduring “pecuniary distress” is the wanderer’s sacred body and personal integrity able to demonstrate themselves. The novel is replete with the assumption that if Juliet needs money, she must sell herself as she is to sell goods or services. This tacit assumption is everywhere implied by the opposing view that only poverty can prove the true existence of the feminine virtue. There is no other means for a woman to relieve financial distress unless she uses her body as the means to achieve economic independence. Harleigh makes this impossible equation between poverty and femininity unequivocal when he rebukes the rake Ironton’s calumnies of the wanderer: “ask your own sagacity, I beg, how a female, who is young, beautiful, and accomplished, can suffer from pecuniary distress, if her character be not unimpeachable?” (149) Domestic virtues that were supposed to guarantee Juliet respect and protection would be considered virtue as such only when they are totally useless and when she shows helplessness in the public economic world. Harleigh, the novel’s hero, strongly remonstrates when Juliet decides to earn money by performing in a public concert, seeing such an action as immodest self-display. His didactic lecture exposes the futility of the translation of domestic accomplishments into labor market: “[Y]our accomplishments should be reserved for the resources of your leisure, and the happiness of your friends, at your own time and your own choice . . . would you not rather have allowed it to be called by that word,

Demanding and overbearing, these “Three Furies” exemplify the unappealing image of (old) rich women in power.
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Beauty, good manners, innocence, and domestic talents are completely ineffectual outside the domestic domain. Once they are taken out of their context, they become Juliet’s greatest impediments because her attempt to commodify those domestic talents leads to a potential commodification of her body as well. One cannot sell domestic talents without compromising one’s virtue, integrity, and dignity. Harleigh’s typical view of domesticity and femininity demonstrates the fact that domestic virtues and talents will be fully appreciated and be treated as an indicator of character only when they are totally useless in the economic world. Juliet’s integrity would be intact if she shows both her inability to sustain herself financially and her reluctance to accept help from men. Any sign of active and determined behavior on her part to seek economic independence or to accept men’s support will impair her reputation.

Therefore, the wanderer is constantly caught in double-bind situations. On the one hand, it is her suggestive gentility that induces and incites Harleigh’s constant reading and observation. “The clearness of her hand writing, and the correctness of her punctuation and orthography” have convinced Harleigh that she has been educated “for intellectual improvement as well as for elegant accomplishments” (83). Juliet must get credit by inadvertently revealing who she really is from “her language, her air, and her manner” (75). For her to arouse men’s protective instincts and to earn the right to those aids, Juliet must remain passive, poor, and helpless. On the other hand, her passive and virtuous nature revealed through domestic accomplishments would be lost once she actively seeks aids or makes public her artistic and domestic talents. In other words, accomplishments can only be revealed by chance and observed by others. Actively seeking self-advertisement and self-promotion is equivalent to turning herself into a “public woman,” a derogatory term which implies both moral and sexual corruption.

Burney seems to imply that it is difficult, if not impossible, to have an honest trade and to do business based on one’s conscience. One cannot do business without compromising one’s morality. Furthermore, this immaterial body implicated within the function of nobody is made to endure all sorts of menial jobs,
with their torments and difficulties, and is not susceptible to change over time: “she [Juliet] has a courage that, upon the most trying occasions, is superior to difficulty; and a soul that, even in the midst of injury or misfortune, depends upon itself, and is above complaint” (613). Burney allows the wanderer to learn the ways of the world through observations without articulating and opening up a space for social change. From a milliner, a mantra-maker, to a shop keeper, Juliet suffers from menial and underpaid labor and she accepts those sufferings with composure. Labor in this novel seems like a convenient plot device to test the wanderer’s feminine forbearance and resignation and to cultivate and discipline the heroine’s physical body up to the point of showing its transcendent nature. It is a device that further confirms Juliet’s aristocratic virtue. What we have here, then, is the reversal of denial and obliteration of her name into an embodiment of that denial via the test of menial labor. The wanderer as nobody that lives a life of denial, therefore, assumes a positive existence through her bodily renunciations.

Despite Juliet’s sigh, tears, and blushes, her effort to seek economic independence and her practice of self-reliance seem much more like a paradigm of the economic individual, only to prove the Wollstonecraftean observation that the doctrines of femininity cripple women and prevent them from fully entering the economic world. Although due to her namelessness Juliet is almost everywhere mistaken for excelling at delusory art, she is by no means close to the kind of seductive and degrading femininity Wollstonecraft denounces and condemns. In opposition to the Wollstonecraftean view of femininity, Burney presents a version of femininity through prudence and propriety embedded within corporeal manners that produce an indefatigable body. Thus said, when femininity meets the harsh reality of the economic world, Burney seems to put femininity on the pestle with its pure decorative function and its function of performance. What are the political significance and the political function of this pure “decorative femininity” in relation to Burney’s social criticism? Burney grants a shaky solution to the economic insecurity. The novel stipulates that conformity to the most stringent and inflexible ideas of feminine delicacy and propriety would provide the middle-class
gentlewoman a protecting shield against economic vulnerability and sexual threat. In other words, Burney’s desire to expose social injustices without contesting the existing system which in the first place generates the great divide of a corrupt public economic world and virtuous domestic sphere places her in an ideological double bind. The wanderer is thwarted not merely by female difficulties but also by the creeds that constitute her femininity. Elinor’s radical view is justified when she chides Juliet’s lament of difficulties of a female with such a response:

“Debility and folly! Put aside your prejudices, and forget that you are a dawdling woman, to remember that you are an active human being, and your FEMALE DIFFICULTIES will vanish into the vapour of which they are formed . . . To make people wise, you must make them indifferent; to give them courage, you must make them desperate. (397)

Going through a series of menial jobs, Juliet is by no means a “dawdling woman.” What Elinor means here is that Juliet wastes time in a passive behavior of contemplating what others might think of her. She is wasting time speculating the consequence of her behavior, taking into account the way she sees others seeing her. Burney ends her novel by calling Juliet a “female Robinson Crusoe, as an unaided and unprotected, though in the midst of the world, as that imaginary hero in his uninhabited island” (873). “Female Robinson Crusoe” is the final but the only positive naming that connects the protagonist to the most famous paradigm of an economic individual and an advocate of self-determination. Ironically, the connection to the image of “Robinson Crusoe” evokes more disparities than correspondences. Juliet is not as isolated as Robinson Crusoe; she is caught in a web of social interactions and speculations.

In this sense, Burney is not radical enough and her social criticism in the novel is limited. She cannot afford to be radical like Elinor without losing those she holds dear, i.e., those conventional practices with social validity. Although The Wanderer is the most radical of Burney’s novels insofar as the heroine is stripped of her fortune...
and her name, it may be too quick to label her works as feminist. The whole point and strength of Burney’s forceful argument of female difficulties lies in her demonstration that female domestic behavior codes are in conflict with the demands of the market and there is no easy solution to female difficulties. Female propriety, delicacy, or timidity, behavioral codes of domesticity, are useless outside the domestic domain; they are useful only for catching a potential suitor’s attention. However, we should not view such an inadequacy in social criticism as a shortcoming. Instead, such a limitation is a basic paradox symptomatic of Burney’s female subjectivity proper. Burney needs an individual whose desire is always impeded, dissatisfied, and constitutively frustrated. The wanderer’s needs must always remain hindered and unfulfilled, i.e., alive as dissatisfied. Such a constitutive dissatisfaction functions as the precondition that clears a space for the wanderer’s corporal practices. This paradox answers why Burney’s female characters always seem to remain passive and submissive in an active way. Somehow they can always benefit from such passivity, because the same paradox (the constitutive failure to satisfy one’s needs) also defines the status of freedom. In other words, Burney must externalize the impediment and transform it into a repressive force, which opposes it from outside (from the society), such that Burney’s wish to show “the path to propriety” would remain open and alive. For Burney, complete freedom is impossible; the fact that freedom is always inhibited allows the possibility to open up the space of desire for propriety and femininity.

9 Criticisms in the eighties attempt to write Burney into feminist agenda. In The Iron Pen, Julia Epstein maintains, “[m]aking her heroine nameless was Burney’s boldest stroke as a feminist novelist” (178). Doody considers The Wanderer Burney’s “most feminist” and “most political novel” (“Heliodorus Rewritten” 118). See also Julie Shaffer.

10 That is perhaps the reason why several critics have qualms labeling Burney as a definite feminist or an anti-feminist, because, from the above discussion, it could be argued that Burney belongs to both categories while simultaneously fits into neither. See Rose Marie Cutting, “Defiant Women: The Growth of Feminism in Fanny Burney’s Novels.” Claudia Johnson uses the term “equivocal beings” from Mary Wollstonecraft as her book title to explore a displacement of the masculine by the feminine and the confusion thereafter. The term “equivocal” can be applied
Elinor exemplifies the failure of complete freedom; the moment Elinor wants complete freedom, she acts out immediately what she wants. The ramifications of her action cancel out what she desires. In contrast, for Juliet there is a huge gap between what she wants and what she actually gets; such a gap is productive in creating the space for Burney to display propriety and its concomitant domestic bliss as the ultimate freedom.

Burney is trapped in the conflict between the desire to censure female difficulties and the urgency to defend the corporeal practices as her feminine ideal that causes those difficulties. As a result, the novel chooses to claim its femininity in gestural repetitions. As an automatic response to this impossible ideal, a grotesque body (Elinor) is created, registering the failure to fulfill that feminine ideal and at the same time to sustain the necessary distance idealization demands by making the wanderer trapped in a financial (no money) and nominal (no name) difficulties. Burney needs to keep excessive repetitions, which seem at first sight to reiterate a cultural stereotype and to generate individual affect (the wanderer’s interior monologues of sufferings and protests) within the confines of idealized femininity that appears to limit and constrain the depth of female expression. Burney’s insistent focus on body comportments and movements is perhaps nothing new, for they are part and parcel of the wider social identification with the automaton, a model and an artifact of perfect intimation appeared in the eighteenth-century conduct literature. What is new about Burney’s move is to push these gestures to their extreme by appealing to excessive repetitions, by over-emphasizing them, and by testing them under economic and social demands rather than merely encapsulate.
or reiterate a cultural stereotype. By overly adhering to the laws of propriety and femininity, Burney not only sticks to her desire of following “the path to propriety” but also lays bare the impossibility to please and obey those laws. So, Burney is a proto-feminist, using ideology of femininity against its grains. Her obedience to idealized femininity unwittingly exposes the limitation of that ideology. She has it both ways. The paradox of adopting prevalent ideology of conduct books while simultaneously discloses the impossible nature of that ideology is reflective of Burney’s desire to develop a form of authorship. The paradox as an authorial strategy is constitutive of Burney’s authorship and is part of her self-fashioning as a professional writer. The desire to have it both ways—conformity to social demands and criticisms of those demands—results in an alternative approach of grounding subjectivity not in the whole person, but in bits and pieces, i.e., in a series of fragment body practices.
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何謂女人?
波妮《流浪者》小說中的身體與無名氏
林松燕*

摘要

在波妮的小說中，欲望一個女性主體就是欲求一個無名氏，無名小卒最終代表了特定的「波
妮式主體」。「無名氏」的概念顯示出所謂的「適當」女性主體，也流露出波妮的「女性想像」：
女主角只有剝奪了名字、社會身份、角色與地位之後，才能真正其所是，以流露自身特質地成
為「某人物」(按：成為主體)。一個無名的小人物之後成重要的人物，弔詭地成為波妮式
的女性主體。本文指出波妮透過身體的肢體展現與表演方式，將身體予以「具體化」及「物質
化」。「無名氏」做為文學的主題，它以特定的向身開展與表現，生產著女性主體的再現空間。
波妮透過片片斷斷的身體姿勢，創造了「具體化的自我」，一連串的身體實踐與身體風格產生
了一個特殊的身體，波妮經由徹底、重複與多餘的身體展演，以表達她的社會批評：遵從社會
要求與規範，並且從過度的實踐中呈現這些要求的侷限與不合理。此一弔詭即是波妮式主體，
非一完整之個體性，而是一片斷的身體展現。

關鍵詞：無名氏、主體、身體、具體化、波妮、《流浪者》

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