

NOBODY'S STORY

THE VANISHING ACTS
OF WOMEN WRITERS IN THE
MARKETPLACE,
1670-1820

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Nobody's Debt

Frances Burney's *Universal Obligation*

on the kindness of friends, even as she insisted on her rights and complained of her dispossession, led many writers to ignore and practice the principles of authorial self-reliance they proclaimed. Did Lady Vane write the "Memoirs of a Lady of Quality" that occupy the center of *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*? Did Sarah Fielding help write chapters 4 and 5 of book 2 of *Joseph Andrews*? Did Johnson write the climactic penultimate chapter of *The Female Quixote*? That scholars continue to debate these questions attests to the general diffuseness of authorship in the period.

What does seem to distinguish "our Charlotte," as Johnson called her, was the skill with which she broadcast her dispossession and thereby invited the investment of time, labor, and money in her career. As an author, in other words, she functioned rather like one of her own fictional characters. Johnson, for example, was required to "stand in her place" whenever he impersonated her in a dedication or introductory address, and he is never more "the author of the *Female Quixote*" than when calling attention to some deficiency in her experience or being: "My Sex, my Age," he writes for her, "have not given me many Opportunities of mingling in the World." *The very fact the mentions here is the occasion for the sympathy of the reader that motivates him to write the preface for her.* *It implies her need both in the sense that he creates it as a part of the public persona and in the sense that he compensates for the loss of a more personally effective.* Lennox thus became a type of the authorial figure in that the same way that nobody became everybody. *Johnson's relative by standing for a definitive lack of property.* She was celebrated, sympathized with, puffed, pitted, and impersonated because she could never become her own person.

101. *Shakespeare Illustrated*, p. 101.

Frances Burney was only fifteen when she started writing to Nobody. Her first "private journal" (1768) begins:¹

To whom . . . must I dedicate my wonderful, surprising & interesting adventures?—to whom dare I reveal my private opinion of my nearest Relations? the secret thoughts of my dearest friends? my own hopes, fears, reflections & dislikes?—Nobody!

To Nobody, then will I write my Journal! since To Nobody can I be wholly unreserved—to Nobody can I reveal every thought, every wish of my Heart, with the most unlimited confidence, the most unremitting sincerity to the end of my Life! For what chance, what accident can end my connections with Nobody? No secret can I conceal from No-body, & to No-body can I be ever unreserved. Disagreement cannot stop our affection, Time itself has no power to end our friendship. The love, the esteem I entertain for Nobody, Nobody's self has not power to destroy. From Nobody I have nothing to fear, (the)'s secrets sacred to friendship, Nobody will not reveal, when the affair is doubtful, Nobody will not look towards the side least favourable.

. . . In your Breast my errors may create pity without exciting contempt; may raise your compassion, without eradicating your love. (1:1-2)

I quote this passage at length to demonstrate how the conceit, which seems at first merely to express Burney's intention of keeping her journal private, proceeds toward general social satire as the writer explores the linguistic paradox of a substantive that overtly

1. It was labeled "Old juvenile private Journal No. 1" by Frances Burney d'Arblay when she edited it many years later. "Private Journal" distinguishes it from the many journal letters Burney wrote for distribution inside the family circle. It is published in *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, vol. 1, 1768-1773, ed. Lars E. Troide (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1988). Subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

2. The editor of *Early Journals* uses angled brackets to indicate uncertain readings.

proclaims the nonexistence of its referent but nevertheless has all the grammatical functions of any proper noun. One can make Nobody the subject of a sentence, as if one were talking about anybody else, but to posit anything of Nobody is to deny that quality in everybody. To delineate Nobody's virtues ("From Nobody I have nothing to fear") is also to cast aspersions on everybody. To declare one's confidence in Nobody's perfect "compassion" is to make a terse joke out of the Humean puzzle discussed in the preceding chapter: sympathy flows most freely when one of the parties to it is nonexistent. Nobody, the juvenile Burney implies, is an especially necessary companion to all properly reserved young females "to No-body can I be ever unreserved," she writes twice, with minor variations. And the more this necessity is insisted upon in the language of sentimental enthusiasm, the hollower that very language sounds and the more broadly applicable the satire becomes. Burney's earliest extant writings thus link the ideas of private self-reflection and satire through witty play with the concept of Nobody. The concept, moreover, quickly suggests the idea of an explicitly fictional addressee, making the easy transition between writing to and writing about Nobody. Since the reader is Nobody, anything can be supposed of her:

I will suppose you, then, to be my best friend; tho' God forbid you ever should! my dearest companion—& a romantick Girl, for mere oddity may perhaps be more sincere—more tender—than if you were a friend [in] propria personae [sic]—in as much as imagination often exceeds reality. (1:2)

This move, however, is immediately identified as humorously reversible: "[B]ut why, permit me to ask, must a *female* be made Nobody? Ah! my dear, what were this world good for, were Nobody a female?" (1:2). Through the concept of Nobody, Burney clears a linguistic space that can be occupied by a suppositional being; but since this "romantick Girl" stands in the place of Nobody, she represents the very void that made room for her. Moreover, feminine reserve is so deeply implicated in this fiction-making process (by necessitating Nobody in the first place and then defining her ideal qualities),³ that its reversibility facetiously threatens the very existence of the female.

3. Family and friends explicitly told Frances that her journal writing might be a

Nobody helped Burney reinvent the novel, and in this chapter I explore Nobody's social and economic conditions more fully in order to understand how she became so helpful and what sorts of inspiration she provided. First, I briefly outline Nobody's history and identify the gender, class, and literary characteristics that make the fictional Evelina, her intended readers, and her author all into Nobodies. Second, I discuss the Burney family's lack of independent social and economic substance, especially their reliance on both the literary marketplace and a widely ramified patronage network; this double dependence, strikingly figured in the division of literary labor between Frances Burney and her father, made the Burney family itself seem a phenomenon of representation in which the normal patriarchal order was sustained by fictions. Third, I explore the sense of placelessness and universal obligation that attended these circumstances, arguing that Burney's perception of ceaseless circulation and unpayable debt aroused the transcendent ethical aspirations, a new way of longing to be Nobody, that shaped her second novel, *Cecilia*, and that those very aspirations introduced moral self-criticism into the heart of the novel form.

Most of Burney's jokes about Nobody were very old by 1768, dating back at least to the *Odyssey*.⁴ The early modern period in northern Europe saw the widespread use of the figure of Nobody in popular social satire, and the tradition lived on longer in England than anywhere else.⁵ Richard Burton used the conceit in the *Anatomy of Melancholy* in ways that were typical of a late medieval and Renaissance tradition that would still be evident in Burney's journal 150 years later. Wondering who should *not* be locked up in a madhouse, he remembers that "Nemo is wise at all hours, Nemo is born without faults, Nemo is free from crime, Nemo is content with his lot, Nemo in love is wise, Nemo is good, Nemo's a wise man and perfectly happy and therefore Nicholas Nemo or Monsieur No-body shall go free."⁶

dangerous pastime because it left a record of thoughts that a young woman, especially, should keep to herself. See the diary, pp. 18–22.

4. Greta Calmann traces the history of Nobody in "The Picture of Nobody: An Iconographical Study," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23 (1960): 60–104, beginning with the trick Odysseus played when he told the Cyclops his name was Noman, thus causing the monster's fellows to ignore him when he called out that no man was tormenting him.

5. Calmann, pp. 93–104.

6. *Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York, 1951), p. 99; quoted in Calmann, p. 93. For

In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries though, Nobody evolved some peculiarly English qualities, which although not emphasized at the beginning of Burney's private journal, probably kept Nobody's fictional possibilities alive in her imagination during the long gestation of *Evelina*. First, the English word "nobody" allows a pun that was not possible in other European languages, "and by the seventeenth century he is pictured as a manikin composed of head and limbs only, without a trunk." The title page of a 1606 play called *Nobody and Somebody*, for example, represents Nobody as a man with a head, arms, and enormously long pantaloons, starting just under his chin. The figure excuses himself for his lack of fashionable clothes by explaining that he has "no body," thereby emphasizing bodilessness, or minimal materiality, among Nobody's characteristics. This personage became even more grotesquely disembodied when Hogart capped a long iconographic tradition by drawing Nobody as merely a head attached to a pair of calves and feet.⁸

The young Burney invokes Nobody's physical, as well as metaphorical, nonbeing when she praises her addressee's eternal sameness and simultaneously alludes to her impotence: "Time itself has no power to end our friendship. The love, the esteem I entertain for Nobody, No-body's self has not power to destroy." Nobody is thus at once the prototype and reductio ad absurdum of the fictional character, she names a "persona" who is emphatically detached from all that normally defines a "self"—the particulars of time, place, sex, class, and age that no real body can escape—and who therefore cries out for imaginative embellishment. But in eighteenth-century England Nobody was not a complete cipher, for the name had come to signify a common person, a

person of no social consequence. Henry Fielding, for example, defined "No Body" as "All the People in Great Britain, except about 1200."⁹ Hogarth also seems to have intended his Nobody to stand for the common man, and "opposed him . . . to the pretentious Somebody."¹⁰ Somebody was used throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as Nobody's foil; the two figures were common enough, for example, to form a pair in a deck of playing cards and were stock masquerade characters. Somebody was often depicted as nothing but a substantial, well-dressed body, with dwarfed limbs. Often a fop, he "was a person of consequence, whose name was perhaps intentionally suppressed."¹¹ Hence, just as Nobody might be seen as the prototype of fictional characters, Somebody might be seen as the prototype of scandalous reflections.

Nobody's social profile reminds us that the eighteenth-century preoccupation with reference in representation had always been tied closely to issues of status. If we see Nobody, the addressee of Burney's juvenile journal, as the progenitor of the author's first heroine, therefore, Evelina's social insubstantiality looks all but inevitable; her lack of social status, even social identity, is both an extension and an obfuscation of her fictionality. Her constant teetering on the brink of social nonbeing, the frequency with which she is reminded that she is "a person who is nobody,"¹² even the

an account of St. Nemo, the progenitor of Burton's Nicholas, see Calmann, pp. 60–61; and Heinrich Denifle, "Ursprung der Historia des Nemo," *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 4 (1888): 330–48.

7. Calmann, p. 94.

8. Hogarth's drawing of Nobody is the tailpiece of an illustrated text by Ebenezer Forrest titled *An Account of what seemed most remarkable in the five Days Pergrination . . . Initiated in Hindustricks by one well acquainted with some of the Traveellers, and of the Places here celebrated*. Written and illustrated in 1732, the text went unpublished until the 1770s. The identification of the tailpiece as a portrait of Nobody and that figure's iconographic history in England are given by Charles Mitchell in a twentieth-century edition, *Hogarth's Pergrination*, ed. and introd. Charles Mitchell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. xx–xxxi.

9. *The Covent Garden Journal*, no. 4 (January 4, 1752); rpt. in *The Covent Garden Journal* by Sir Alexander Drawcansir, Knt. Censor of Great Britain, ed. Gerard Edward Jensen, vol. 1 (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1915), p. 156.

10. Mitchell, introduction to *Hogarth's Pergrination*, p. xxx.

11. Calmann, p. 93.

12. *Evelina; or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, ed. and introd. Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), p. 32. Subsequent quotations from this edition are cited parenthetically in the text. Recent studies of *Evelina* include Joanne Cutting-Gray, *Woman as "Nobody" in the Novels of Fanny Burney* (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 1992), pp. 9–31; Julia Epstein, *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women's Writing* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1989), pp. 93–122; Irene Frizer, "The Name of the Daughter: Identity and Incest in *Evelina*," in *Refiguring the Father: New Feminist Readings of Patriarchy*, ed. Patricia Yaeger and Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 78–107; Susan Fraiman, *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 32–58; Judith Lower Newton, *Women, Power and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778–1860* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1981), pp. 23–54; Toby A. Olsahn, "To Whom I Most Belong: The Role of Family in *Evelina*," *Eighteenth Century Life* n.s. 6:1 (October 1980): 29–42; Ronald Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 158–92; Mary Poovey, "Fathers and Daughters: The Trauma of Growing Up Female," in *Men by Women*,

memory of the ease with which her mother, Caroline Evelyn, dwindled in the vacuum of social ostracism into the bodilessness of a mere letter—all this discourse of nonentity indicates the vanishing point, the absence of reference that makes realistic fictional perspective possible and simultaneously seems to give that very absence a referent in the specific social situation of an illegitimate daughter. As is the case in reading *The Female Quixote* or any number of other eighteenth-century novels, therefore, to be mindful that *Evelina* is nobody's story and to be oblivious of the fact are practically the same thing.

To get a full sense of the uses of Nobody in Burney's career, though, we need to note yet another of the figure's contemporary associations, one that brings us back to the implications of writing for as well as about Nobody. As Fielding's definition suggests, Nobody was easily interchangeable with Everybody. Indeed, Hogarth used the conceit of writing for Nobody/Everybody to define the situation of the writer whose works were intended for the

ed. Janet Todd, *Women and Literature n.s.*, 2 (1981): 39–58; Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 158–92; Susan Staves, "Evelina: or, Female Difficulties," *Modern Philology* 73 (1976): 368–81; Kristina Straub, *Divided Fictions: Fanny Burney and Female Strategy* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1987), pp. 23–108; and Jennifer A. Wagner, "Privacy and Anonymity in *Evelina*," in *Fanny Burney's Evelina*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1988), pp. 99–109.

For recent assessments of Burney's career as a whole, see Margaret Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, and Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988); and Lillian D. Bloom and Edward A. Bloom, "Fanny Burney's Novels: The Retreat from Wonder," *Novel* 12 (Spring 1979): 215–35; Rose Marie Cutting, "Defiant Women: The Growth of Feminism in Fanny Burney's Novels," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 17 (1977): 519–30; Martha G. Brown, "Fanny Burney's Feminism: Gender or Genre?" in *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670–1815*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 29–39; Marjorie Dobbin, "The Novel, Women's Awareness, and Fanny Burney," *English Language Notes* 22 (March 1985): 42–52; Eva Figgis, *Sex and Subterfuge: Women Novelists to 1850* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 33–55; Juliet McMaster, "The Silent Angel: Impediments to Female Expression in Frances Burney's Novels," *Studies in the Novel* 21 (1989): 235–52; John F. Bissett, "Voice and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: Haywood to Burney," *Studies in the Novel* 19 (1987): 263–71; Katharine M. Rogers, "Fanny Burney: The Private Self and the Published Self," *International Journal of Women's Studies* 7:2 (March/April 1984): 110–17; Jane Spencer, "The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen" (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 95–98; Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers before Jane Austen* (London: Pandora, 1986), pp. 270–86; Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angelica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660–1800* (London: Virago, 1989), pp. 273–87. See also Joseph A. Grau, *Fanny Burney: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1981).

general public rather than for a patron or coterie. He planned to preface a semiautobiographical book on the arts and artists of England with "The no Dedication":

Not Dedicated to any Prince in Christendom for fear it might be thought an Idle piece of Arrogance.

Not Dedicated to any man of quality for fear it might be thought too assuming.

Not Dedicated to any learned body of Men as either of the universities, or the Royal Society, for fear it might be thought an uncommon piece of Vanity.

Not Dedicated to any particular Friend, for fear of offending another,

Therefore Dedicated to nobody.

But if for once we may suppose Nobody to be every body, as Every body is often said to be nobody, then is this work Dedicated to every body.¹³

"The no Dedication" has obvious affinities with Johnson's letter to Lord Chesterfield, discussed in the preceding chapter; it announces the author's independence as a corollary of his willingness to rely on a theoretically unlimited multitude of readers. Hogarth, however, draws out the paradox that the larger this crowd grows (the more it equals Everybody), the more its individual members shrink in significance. His joke is ostensibly pointed toward the absurd arrogance of the Somebodies who think almost Everybody is Nobody; nevertheless, the metamorphosis accomplished here reveals the necessary insubstantiality of any particular unit of that aggregate giant the public. When writers like Fielding, Johnson, and Hogarth equated their authorial virtue with their allegiance to this entity, a sense of its problematic ontological status was already well developed.

Indeed, one might argue that the upright author in the marketplace of letters was bound to imagine his reader as Nobody in order to tell the truth and avoid flattery. His integrity, as the earl of Shaftesbury claimed in his "Advice to an Author" at the beginning of the century, depended on the reader's de-realization. In an interestingly gendered metaphor, Shaftesbury complained about "the coquetry of a modern author, whose epistles dedicatory, pre-

13. Quoted in Mitchell, p. xxxi.

faces, and addresses to the reader are so many affected graces, designed to draw the attention from the subject towards himself." He recommended writing dialogues in which the author would, through a pair of personae, interrogate his own opinions instead of rhetorically embellishing them to cajole and seduce the reader-lover. In true philosophical dialogues, he confidently claimed, "the reader, being no way applied to, stands for nobody."¹⁴

Writing for Nobody, therefore, was what both the talented literary entrepreneur and the serious, self-effacing philosopher were said to do in the eighteenth century. Keeping a journal addressed to Nobody and publishing a book for Everybody's consumption were thus perhaps in Burney's mind not so much polar opposites as paradoxical counterparts. Nobody clears a space not only for Evelina but also for the unknown and unknowable reader, who must be kept a cipher if the author is to preserve her integrity. Recalling Shaftesbury's chastisement of authorial "coquetry,"¹⁵ moreover, we can speculate that the pressure to make the reader "stand for nobody," to annihilate the addressee in order to escape the censure of carrying on a flirtatious correspondence, might have been even stronger for a female than for a male author. The increasing demands for female modesty during the century might have dovetailed conveniently with the growth of the reading public to blur the distinction between privacy and publication. Paradoxically, the larger and more impersonal the audience became, the more writing for it could be conceived in the same innocent terms as writing only for oneself, that is, as writing for nobody.

This last point brings us back to the most obvious referent of Burney's "Nobody": herself. To say that she writes for Nobody is

14. Anthony, earl of Shaftesbury, "Advice to an Author," in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. John M. Robertson, introd. Stanley Grean (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), vol. 1, p. 131.

15. The coquette has an interestingly ambiguous gender in the eighteenth century. She seeks to gratify her vanity by achieving emotional ascendancy over men; she wishes to be loved without loving, and hence she represents the "common" female vice of narcissistic self-preoccupation. However, the very word "coquette," deriving from "coq," reverberates with associations of masculine vainglory. The coquette reverses the "natural" relations of male and female by assuming the role of the preening barnyard rooster surrounded by a flock of admiring men. Hence coquetry is unfeminine. The masculine behavior it mimes, however, is generally regarded as foppish when observed in the salon rather than the barnyard, and hence it is strongly tinged with femininity. Thus coquetry can be imagined as doubly androgynous: it is practiced by women in imitation of effeminate men.

to say that, as she later told a companion, "my Journal was solely for my own perusal" (*Early Journals*, 1:21). Hence critics have pointed out that the writer becomes Nobody, counting the journal's mode of address as the first of Burney's characteristic authorial self-effacements.¹⁶ It presages, for example, both the emphatic anonymity of *Evelina's* author and the namelessness of Evelina as author: the heroine signs her first letter in this epistolary novel "Evelina _____" and then proceeds to ask, "what other name may I claim?" All of this would seem to point toward a strong association between authorship and blankness or emptiness of reference.

Moreover, the namelessness of Evelina and her creator, which seems to place them at the brink of existence, is thematically linked to their fathers' power to "own" or "disown" them.¹⁷ That is, anonymity is explicitly marked as a daughter's condition. The author's reluctance to identify herself, she contends in the dedicatory poem, addressed "To _____," stems from her refusal to make what might be seen as an illegitimate use of the patronym. She defers to her father as author, characterizing herself as a mere representation:

Oh author of my being!—far more dear
To me than light, than nourishment, or rest,
Hygieia's blessings, Rapture's burning tear,
Or the life blood that mantles in my breast!

If in my heart the love of Virtue glows,
'Twas planted there by an unerring rule:
From thy example the pure flame arose,
Thy life, my precept—thy good works, my school.¹⁸

16. Margaret Doody, for example, links the "Nobody" trope, anonymity, and the general social insignificance of young women: "In her novel, Burney explores the universal adolescent experience of making an entrance into the world as 'nobody' without an established personality or fixed social self. But Burney explores that experience from the female point of view. . . ." (*Frances Burney: The Life in the Works*, p. 41). On Burney's address to "Nobody," see also Cutting-Gray, *Woman as Works*, "Nobody" in the *Novels of Fanny Burney*, pp. 109–30; Bloom and Bloom, "Fanny Burney's Novels: The Retreat from Wonder," and Straub, *Divided Fictions*, pp. 160–61.

17. For other interpretations of the significance of Burney's father to her life and work, see Fizer, "The Name of the Daughter: Identity and Incest in *Evelina*"; Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 9–11, 22–23; O'Leary, "To Whom I Most Belong: The Role of Family in *Evelina*"; and Poovey, "Fathers and Daughters: The Trauma of Growing Up Female."

18. These lines allude to two passages in *Paradise Lost* that Burney may have

That the stanza's fiery language ("light," "burning," "glows," "flame") itself seems to murmur the unwritten name "Burney" only increases our sense of the difficulty of the suppression. As the dedication continues, the author-daughter asserts that her status as her father's work, and therefore as his representation, makes it impossible for her to claim her own work, which must belong ultimately to him. To name herself is to name her father and thereby to interfere in his self-representations:

Could my weak pow'rs thy num'rous virtues trace,
By filial love each fear should be repress'd

The blush of Incapacity I'd chace,
And stand, recorder of thy worth, confess'd:

But since my niggard stars that gift refuse,
Concealment is the only boon I claim;

Obscure be still the unsuccessful Muse,
Who cannot raise, but would not sink, your fame.

Here the "burning" life blood—the "spark" of life provided by Dr. Burney—becomes a "blush" at the daughter's comparative weakness as an author. To match her father's authorship would be to replicate the best part of her own "being," but since the poem assumes a diminution in vitality from author to work, from substantive being to mimesis, such a feat is impossible. As imitation the daughter necessarily represents the father imperfectly, and as feckly; hence it is doubly imperfect as a representation of the father. But what else can a daughter do? Unlike a son, a daughter cannot become the "author" of bodies that bear her father's name; she cannot restore the full, warm, breathing substance to the word "Burney," for her legitimate offspring would necessarily bear some

conflated in memory. The first is Eve's speech to Adam, which would make the Burneys' relationship embarrassingly sexual: "My Author and Disposer, what thou bidst / Unargu'd I obey" (4.635–36). The second is even more problematic, but the linguistic echoes are undeniably strong: "Thou art my Father, thou my author, thou / My being gav'st me" (2.864–65). This is Sin's address to Satan! Yet another source for the lines, almost as weird, is Coneril's flattery of Fear:

Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter;
Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour.

(*King Lear* 1.1.56–59)

I am grateful to Janet Adelman for pointing out these similarities.

other name. In her father's name, she can only come up with cold, pale substitutes, representations twice removed: no bodies. Burney's dedication puts the dutiful daughter in a double bind: she must try to imitate the authorial act in her father's name, but her attempts to pay her life debt through writing must also always be deficient.

By imagining fatherhood as the original act of authorship, therefore, Burney, drawing on an ancient tradition of thought about women, gives herself the secondary ontological status of representation.¹⁹ Her existence, like that of the heroine she has in turn created, is contingent, a mere reflection of an entity at a higher level of reality. The dedication, then, partly answers the question of the fifteen-year-old journal writer—"why . . . must a female be made Nobody?"—by showing that females, in relationship to their fathers, start out with a deficit of being. Their deficiency, moreover, stimulates authorship, which paradoxically adds to the daughter's sense of diminishing "life." Thus, as I noted at the beginning of this chapter, female writing about Nobody brings to mind the regrettable precariousness of female existence in general: "what were this world good for, were Nobody a female?"

We should not, however, be too quick to associate anonymity entirely with the figure of Nobody, for both the author and the heroine claim by their very "_____"s to be related to Somebody. "_____" as we have noticed in previous chapters, is the sign of nonfictional writing, the mark of scandal, the tear in the text that indicates an outside where a referent too important to be named waits to be discovered. In this sense, to go nameless and to be Nobody were opposite conditions. The dedication to *Evelina* tells the reader that there is matter and substance behind the author's unwritten name, just as Evelina's "_____" is the first step she makes toward asserting her relationship to her aristocratic father: "_____" erases "Anville" and clears a space where "Belmont" will eventually appear.

Authorial anonymity in Burney's early works, therefore, does not indicate a lack of substance without simultaneously calling attention to the significance of the author's patronym by making an issue out of the daughter's right to use it. The dedication claims

19. See R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1991).

that Burney is Somebody's daughter and therefore neither Somebody in her own right nor Nobody. For Evelina, too, " " is simultaneously the erasure of a name and a line drawn between the status of Nobody (Evelina) and that of Somebody (Belmont), a kind of rope on which the writer suspends herself. Even in the case of the teen-aged journal writer, "Nobody" applies to the writer as reader of her own secrets, and to assert the existence of such secrets is to move toward self-substantiation.

In sum, Burney wrote for, about, and from the point of view of "Nobody," stressing the questionable ontological and/or social status of her characters, her readers, and even herself, but in each case Nobody is transformed into one of her doubles. *Evelina* becomes a book for and about Everybody by Miss Somebody. As critics have pointed out, in her very blankness Evelina becomes a prototype for all young women, a diminutive, modern Eve.²⁰ And her readers' receptivity to the satirical discourse that supposedly issues from her pen relies on their identifying with her lack of defined being in the world. As we will see in the next section, Burney expected her readers to be nobodies. The shift from the altogether private to the altogether public is thus merely the fluctuation from one meaning of "Nobody" to another.²¹

Nobodiness, therefore, seems to spread out from *Evelina* and touch all parties to the literary exchange, as if fictionality itself were leaking out of the novel and into its surrounding conditions of production and reception.²² However, as I have specified, the idea of Nobody already informed notions both of the reading public and also be seen as an absorption of the terms in which the literary marketplace was described. It was not surprising that Frances Burney's writings are remarkably saturated with those terms, for discourse about nonentity had special resonance for people who lived off their representations.

Burney's relationship to the literary marketplace differed from that of the other authors we have surveyed because she was born and raised in a "literary" milieu. Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Charlotte Lennox had all claimed to be the orphaned daughters of military officers, claims on which their status as gentlewomen rested. But the daughter of a man who was a musician, music teacher, composer, and author had few secure social credentials. Authorship was the highest activity to which Burney's father aspired; without it, he was a mere hireling. He had apparently cultivated a gentlemanly demeanor early in life, which made it easy for him to find employers, but for many years his relationship to them was much more that of servant to master than that of artist to patron. He was an apprentice to the composer and orchestra leader Dr. Thomas Arne in 1748, when Fulke Greville, in need of a musician who would be "fit company for a gentleman,"²³ bought his indenture for £300. Through Greville, he made numerous contacts and some lasting friendships with broad-minded gentlefolk, but his status in many of their homes was ambiguous, something between music teacher and guest. The Thrales, for example, paid him a salary of £100 for "dining [at their house] once a week and remaining for the evening, departing as early as he wished in the morning."²⁴

When Frances was summoned to meet the Thrales after the appearance of *Evelina* and the revelation of her authorship, she was at first perceived by Hester Thrale not as a lady novelist, but as a performer: "[H]is Daughter is a graceful looking Girl, but 'tis the Grace of an Actress not a Woman of Fashion—how should it?"²⁵ The Burney family, she pointed out elsewhere, was on display: "[E]very individual of it must write and read & be literary."²⁶ Their accomplishments were less marks of leisure than of semiprofessional training. Indeed, Frances's understanding of the tasks of authorship came from her exhausting work as amanuensis to her

20. See for example Eva Figgis, *Sex and Subterfuge*, pp. 34–35.
 21. Critics have offered various treatments of the relation between public and private in Burney's work: see, for example, Rogers, "Fanny Burney: The Private Self and the Published Self"; Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist*, 95–98; and Wagner, "Privacy and Anonymity in *Evelina*."
 22. Steven Knapp makes a similar point about eighteenth-century uses of personification, in *Personification and the Sublime: Milton to Coleridge* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1985), chapter 2.

23. Quoted by Joyce Hemlow in *The History of Fanny Burney* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), p. 2.
 24. Hemlow, p. 70.
 25. From *Thraliana*, 1:368; quoted in Doody, p. 59.
 26. *Thraliana*, 1:399; quoted in Doody, p. 21.

father. She had to copy all of *Evelina* in a "disguised hand" before sending it out because her own handwriting was already familiar to London composers. In a sense, then, she was raised to the trade, and authorship could not be imagined in her case as a step down from a previous state of gentility. When we remember that publication was thought of as an upwardly mobile strategy in the Burney family, the anonymity of Frances's first novel might begin to seem downright pretentious. Was she, the daughter of a mere musician and writer, entitled to the anonymity she claimed?

There is no "true" answer to this question, since the response would always be based on the perceiver's relative social position. We should notice, though, that the Burneys' title to the gentility implied by anonymity would not have been universally recognized. Frances Burney's "_____" might therefore be said to register not only the individual author's claim to belong to Somebody but also the desire for social recognition and status of a relatively new category of people: those whom Pierre Bourdieu has described as the holders and producers of "cultural capital."²⁷ The accumulation of such assets in the Burney family was intense: Charles Burney the elder began as an indentured servant; his son Charles ended as a famous classicist and doctor of divinity. Another son rose to be an admiral and authored naval histories. Two of the daughters were accomplished musicians who performed at Dr. Burney's soirées and helped turn the family home into a gathering place for musicians, painters, actors, authors, and patrons. Two other daughters, Sarah Harnet and Frances, did arduous secretarial work for their father and wrote novels. Cultivating talent, polishing performance, making and improving contacts, and collecting and disseminating knowledge were the economic activities of the Burney family, and they were conceived of as contributing to a collective property, a corporate *façade*. They puffed each other, sought patronage for each other, introduced each other to the right circles, negotiated each other's contracts, and advertised each other's subscriptions. Their accretion of cultural capital and the development

of relationships that would make it grow was bound up with their most intimate sentiments and deepest sense of identity. The social significance of the family name, however, was not a given. The family was self-consciously engaged in the project of creating it. They had no rent roles, no pedigrees, no real or invented histories of military or public service; they had only talent and knowledge, copyrights and such "symbolic capital" as Dr. Burney's degree from Oxford and (much later) Frances's place at court. The writings of other families might have been imagined as second-order realities, as accomplishments indicating a (past or present) economic independence, but the writings of the Burneys were the business of their lives.

Once we notice the family's dependence on cultural and symbolic capital, the dedicatory poem of *Evelina* takes on a different significance. The "_____" I have suggested, announces what might easily have been disputed at the time: that the author's father is Somebody, a man of substance. The first line of the poem then goes on rather slyly to place, if not to name, him. "Oh author of my being!" may at first appear simply to repeat, with its Miltonic echoes, the familiar author-male, pen-penis metaphors that have so often been the object of feminist analysis. But insofar as those metaphors assume that the ability to father precedes the ability to author, that authorship depends on phallic power, Burney's line potentially upsets the usual order of precedence. When we read it with the Burneys' actual situation in mind, it seems a covert acknowledgment that the father has achieved the authority of a traditional *paterfamilias* through the quite untraditional means of authorship. Indeed, the metaphor collapses into a kind of facetious literalism: Dr. Burney's authorship of his books is the basis of Frances Burney's being because it is her economic provision. Frances's place in her father's household was assured by her employment as his secretary and copyist. In this sense, representation could be said to have preceded substance. Reread as a comment on the specific relationship between Frances Burney and her father, rather than as a comment on daughters and fathers in general, the dedicatory poem hints at a possible reversal of the assumed primacy of "life" over writing, substance over representation. Such a hint in turn destabilizes the very thing the poem so loudly pro-

27. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984), esp. pp. 1-96, and "Social Space and Symbolic Power," in *In Other Words*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990), pp. 123-39.

claims: the priority of the father over his mere representations, including his daughter.²⁸

If Frances Burney's father was Somebody, therefore, he differed from other Somebodies by virtue of the difficulty of distinguishing his substance from his representations. The father, like the daughter, was sometimes on the edge of Nobodiness. That was, perhaps, why the daughter had to be particularly chary (as a "Burneyed" child) of his and her name/fame: they were all her father had. The dedicatory poem, then, was at once pretentious and apt; it may have exaggerated the father's social status, but it simultaneously admitted his "fame" was so fragile and so all-important that he could be materially damaged by his daughter's literary failure. The poem might be read, then, as both a clever piece of puffery and a reminder to us modern readers that aristocratic patriarchal assumptions (even in the revised version used by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women writers) are inappropriate to cultural capital accumulation. The patriarchal language obscured the father's dependence on representation; the social and economic conditions of the Burneys revealed it. The anxiety underlying the naming of the father in the dedicatory poem to *Evelina* might stem from both an exaggerated sense of the father's loftiness and a recognition of his peculiar vulnerability: a father who lives by the pen can be injured by the pen.

The very appropriateness of authorship to Frances Burney's social milieu, therefore, entailed risks for the fledgling novelist and her family: the risk of exposing the incorporeality of the family's substance. She seems to have believed that the novel was an especially risky genre for a Burney to undertake,²⁹ but for that very reason she may also have been drawn to it. The explicit fictionality of the form allowed her to explore the theme of nobodiness, but it might also have revealed too much about the author's situation.

The social meanings of genres, however, are not stable, and they cannot be inferred from formal properties alone. A full sense of

why novel authorship was specifically associated with nonentity in this period, and thus why it might have seemed a hazardous departure from the family enterprise, requires a brief description of changes in the production and dissemination of novels in the later decades of the eighteenth century.

It was during this period that novels became the favorite reading matter of that common avatar of Nobody: Everybody. The market in novels during those decades appears to have expanded even faster than the swelling general marketplace in books. Historians of the book trade and of literacy credit this general expansion to a growing population and the extension of the market into the middle ranks of society: the appearance, that is, of the numerous nobody readers discussed earlier. In the preceding chapter, I noted that the middle decades of the century, when the novel was beginning to establish itself, were not a period of growth for the book trade. Indeed, there was a slump in the 1740s, when the total number of publications in England was only 10,000, and the recovery of the 1750s was modest: the 11,794 titles produced in that decade were only 270 more than the number published in the decade 1710–19. Although historians often generalize about the dramatic increase in publications of the second half of the eighteenth century, most of it actually occurred in the last three decades: the 1770s show an increase of 2,400 (approximately a 20 percent increase over the total number of publications of the 1760s); the 1780s again produced a 20 percent increase; and the statistics for the 1790s (which are admittedly questionable) show a whopping 64 percent increase.³⁰ Many of the new nobody readers were women, and judging by the rate of increase at which women began publishing in these decades, the expanding market was receptive to female authors of all forms of belles lettres. The number of previously unpublished

28. Others who have discussed *Evelina* as a possible subversion of patriarchal norms include Newton, *Women, Power and Subversion*, pp. 42–50; Figgis, *Sex and Subterfuge*, pp. 59–83; and Straub, *Divided Fictions*, pp. 23–26.

29. When her father told her he could not understand why she had published her novel anonymously, why she had anticipated his disapproval, she explained that she thought the form too far below his standards.

30. These numbers come from Michael Crump, "Stranger than Fiction: The Eighteenth-Century True Story," in *Searching the Eighteenth Century: Papers Presented at the Symposium on the Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue in 1982*, ed. M. Crump and M. Harris (London: British Library, 1983), pp. 61–62. The number of publications of the 1790s might be greatly inflated by Crump's decision to include all publications dated 1800 by the ESTC, thus creating an eleven-year decade. Moreover, many works dated 1800 by the ESTC might well have been published a few years later. As Crump explains: "I have chosen to combine the final decade with the searches for 1800 because it is ESTC policy to date undated material to the nearest five years and to flag the conjecture with a question mark. This means that a considerable number of works around the end of the century have the date: [1800?]" (p. 61).

women writers was augmented by 50 percent every decade starting in the 1760s.³¹ The biggest gains were made among poets and novelists, but writers of religious meditations, authors of collections of letters, autobiographers, and playwrights also increased markedly. In the decade 1760–69, for example, only two new women playwrights were published, whereas between 1770 and 1779, thirteen published for the first time; another thirteen first appeared in the 1780s, and the number of novice women playwrights rose to sixteen in the last decade of the century.³² Poetry was the genre that attracted the largest share of new women writers in these decades,³³ but the novel was almost as popular a choice. The rate of increase in new women novelists was greater than the overall increase in women writers, matching the figures for increases in the total number of novels published in each decade. In 1770, there were nineteen women novelists; in 1790, there were approximately seventy-five.³⁴

Although the new readers were by no means exclusively interested in novels, the genre certainly benefited from their emergence. Or so it would seem from the rate of growth in publications *calling themselves novels*, which is even more striking than the overall expansion of the literary marketplace, especially in the last two decades of the century: the 1770s show a 24 percent increase, the 1780s a 90 percent, and the 1790s a 149 percent increase.³⁵ These numbers could indicate either an increase in prose fiction or simply an increase in the use of the word “novel” on title pages. In either case, though, they attest to a new acceptance of the term and desire for the form. Despite the frequent attacks on “novels” in the second half of the century,³⁶ the label was an asset in marketing books. The

31. Judith Phillips Stanton, “Statistical Profile of Women Writing in English from 1660 to 1800,” in *Eighteenth-Century Women and the Arts*, ed. Frederick M. Keener and Susan E. Lorsch (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), esp. pp. 248–51.
 32. Stanton, p. 251.
 33. Indeed, poetry was the preferred genre for women’s first publications all through the second half of the century. In the first half, religious writings in prose dominated. Stanton, pp. 250–51.
 34. Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 37.
 35. Crump, “Stranger than Fiction: The Eighteenth-Century True Story,” p. 61.
 36. See John Tinnon Taylor, *Early Opposition to the English Novel: The Popular Reaction from 1760 to 1830* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1943) and F. W. Gallaway, “The Conservative Attitude towards Fiction, 1770–1830,” *PMLA* 50 (1940): 1041–59. See also Chapter 6 of this book, pp. 273–88.

changing reading habits of upper-class men, their shift to what Johnson called “general and easy reading,”³⁷ was no doubt partly responsible for the augmented use of the term “novel”; but contemporaries and modern historians agree that the term was most enticing to the new readers: women of all classes, country people, and lower-middle-class townspeople. Indeed, one might argue that the term was designed to demarcate a class of books suitable for these readers.

For example, in 1779, immediately after the Donaldson dispute had been finally settled in the House of Lords and numerous copyrights that had formerly been held de facto in perpetuity became public property, John Cooke began putting out cheap (sixpenny) editions of Fielding, Richardson, Defoe, and others under the rubric “Novelists’ Magazine.”³⁸ It would appear, then, that in picking up a lucrative former property for which no copyright money need be paid and marketing it to a rapidly increasing lower-middle-class readership or to young women on small allowances who were actively seeking “novels,” Cooke and other booksellers helped retroactively to put Fielding and Richardson in a category the writers themselves had resisted. The cheap editions thus strengthened a classifying and marketing trend that had begun at mid-century when Defoe, Fielding, and Richardson were classified as “novelists” in the catalogues of the circulating libraries.³⁹ Although novels by no means constituted the majority of volumes in the large circulating libraries, there was a strong belief at the time that the dissemination of fiction among a new class of readers was their *raison d’être*.

Market expansion and new modes of dissemination thus gave the novel “classics,” creating a national “tradition” of prose fiction, which could be considered the common property of everybody who could read. Such a development had contradictory effects on the genre’s prestige, both sides of which can be seen in the preface to *Evelina*. The book came out the very year the copyright dispute was settled in favor of the publishers of cheap editions, and Burney

37. Quoted in A. S. Collins, *The Profession of Letters: A Study of the Relation of Author to Patron, Publisher, and Public, 1780–1832* (London: Routledge, 1928), p. 65.
 38. Collins, pp. 58–59.
 39. K. A. Manley, “London Circulating Library Catalogues of the 1740s,” *Library History* 8 (1989): 74–79.

Handwritten notes:
 Market expansion and new modes of dissemination thus gave the novel “classics,” creating a national “tradition” of prose fiction, which could be considered the common property of everybody who could read.

enlisted "Fielding, Richardson, and Smollet" in the preface to raise the rank of "the humble Novelist" (preface, p. 1). But the means by which these writers became undisputed "classic" novelists were also the means by which they were cheapened, and their cheapening attested to the appeal of the whole genre to an undiscriminating audience. Thus Burney jokingly suggests that the word "public" was perhaps too dignified a title for the readers she was likely to get: "The following letters are presented to the public—for such, by novel writers, novel readers will be called" (p. 7). She assumes a tone of decided superiority to novel readers in general:

Perhaps were it possible to effect the total extirpation of novels, our young ladies in general, and boarding-school damsels in particular, might profit from their annihilation: but since the distemper they have spread seems incurable . . . surely all attempts to contribute to the number of those which may be read . . . at least without injury, ought rather to be encouraged than contemned. (p. 8)

In competing even with the classics for a share of the new down-scale market, *Evelina* claims only to be innocuous fare for undiscerning but voracious appetites.

When cheap booksellers, circulating libraries, and new writers like Burney insisted that Fielding and Richardson were, after all, simultaneously homogenized and legitimated the genre, but they works and lumped the whole under "light" reading fit for the unlearned. In simply becoming a novelist, the author of *Evelina* thus wandered far from the authorial path marked out by her father. Furthermore, she imagined herself to be even more errant, to be writing for the least learned among the new readers. She claimed that she had expected *Evelina*'s "only admirers wd be among school girls."⁴⁰ Her description of the writing, printing, and dissemination of her first novel shows once again the elision of the "I had written my little Book simply for my amusement, I printed it . . . merely for a frolic to see how a production of my own would figure in that Author like form . . . [But I] destined [*Evelina*] to no

40. Quoted in Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney*, p. 100.

nobler habitation than a circulating library."⁴¹ *Evelina*, she claimed, was intended to have readers rather than buyers; it was destined for people who would consume it without even owning it. The imagined relationship between text and reader here is not only anonymous but also transitory. Such books were intended to be constantly circulating among subscribers, who paid between 10 and 16 shillings per year; finally, tattered and no longer "novel," they were discarded. Often merely "sewn" or half-bound, their physical form declared their ephemeral status.⁴²

Burney's readers barely existed in her imagination as individuals; they were diminished in every sense. In another often quoted letter, she describes them as artisanal nonentities:

I have an exceeding odd sensation, when I consider that it is now in the power of *any* and *every* body to read what I so carefully hoarded even from my best friends, till this last month or two,—and that a work which was so lately lodged, in all privacy of my bureau, may now be seen by every butcher and baker, cobbler and tinker, throughout the three kingdoms.⁴³

The place of *Evelina*, then, was really no place because it was every place: it was the state of circulation itself, where it belonged to nobody because its readers were "*any* and *every* body."

In short, to publish a novel, especially one for the circulating libraries, in the late 1770s was to embrace all that was most impermanent and insubstantial about the literary marketplace; it was not to court immortality but to solicit a big audience of little people for a short time. Frances Burney's first book thus appeared in an "Author like form" that differed widely from that of her father's books. Dr. Burney's publications were certainly economic enterprises, but they were by no means intended for those newest additions to the reading public, the Miss Nobodies who frequented the circulating libraries. They were, rather, aimed at discriminating

41. It was widely believed that subscribers to circulating libraries, as one reviewer of *Evelina* remarked, "are seldom in more elevated situations than the middle ranks of life" (quoted in Hemlow, p. 101). There is evidence, however, that circulating libraries were patronized by the upper classes as well.

42. See Hilda M. Hamlyn, "Eighteenth-Century Circulating Libraries in England," *Library* 5th ser. 1 (1946–47): 197–222. See also Raymond Irwin, *The English Library: Sources and History* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1960), chapter 14.

43. Quoted in Hemlow, p. 101.

readers, and they were obvious occasions for exploiting the network of powerful acquaintances the author assiduously developed. He published his first book, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*, at his own risk, and, according to his admiring daughter, "sent a multitude of them to his particular friends as presents" (*Early Journals*, 1:146-47). By undertaking the gentlemanly pursuit of letters and making presents of his product, Dr. Burney stressed his equality with those gentlemen and ladies who had admitted him to their society; it was an important step in his climb from musician to music teacher to composer and then to "man of letters."⁴⁴ The book eventually did make a profit; indeed, it went into a second edition in two years. Whenever Frances mentions it in her journal, though, she refers to the "honour" it brought her father; she pays detailed attention to the ways in which it extended Burney's acquaintance:

We hear Daily of new Readers & approvers. Mr. Mason has wrote him a very polite Letter upon it desiring to introduce him to Sir James Gray, one of the most accomplished men of the Age, who was so much pleased with my Father's Book, as to beg of Mr. Mason to make them Acquainted.

Dr. Brookes—Husband to the Mrs. Brookes who wrote Lady Julia Manderly, & many other Books—has also wrote to praise it. (*Early Journals*, 1:153)

Contacts like these were Dr. Burney's lifeblood: Sir James Gray, a diplomatist and antiquary, gave Burney letters of introduction for his travels through Germany in 1772; Mrs. Brooke (Burney misspelled the name) and her husband became managers of the opera and were therefore important contacts for a composer.

In short, Dr. Burney's writings were directed at the powerful and accomplished people who conferred prestige and preferment, whereas his daughter claimed that her first novel was aimed at an anonymous, undiscriminating crowd.⁴⁵ At the beginning of Frances

44. Roger Lonsdale, *Dr. Charles Burney: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. viii. For a positive assessment of both Burney's ambitions and his achievements, see Lawrence Lipking, *The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), chapter 10.

45. The difference between Frances Burney's intended readership and Dr. Burney's was perhaps like that between the commercial circulating libraries and the proprietary libraries. A typical proprietary library of the late eighteenth century, the Bristol Library (whose borrowing records for the years 1773-84 have been pub-

Burney's career, then, the father and daughter seem to have had almost opposite orientations toward the literary marketplace: Dr. Burney imagined himself to be entertaining and informing a readership of socially and culturally prominent people, whom he aspired to know; Frances Burney, in contrast, described herself as a "popular" entertainer, superior to her unknowable readers. The two Burneys, we might say, at first glance represent two different profiles of the cultural producer: one seeking alliances with people in higher ranks and insisting on his own respectability even when he assumed a subservient posture toward the powerful; the other catering, condescendingly, to a growing middle- and lower-middle-class audience.

These two profiles, though, are attached to the same being: together they make up the Janus-faced figure of authorship at the end of the eighteenth century. In his orientation toward what Bourdieu would call the "dominating classes," Dr. Burney rightly recognized the necessity for an alliance with them that entailed an acknowledgment of his own dependence. Frances Burney's orientation toward the anonymous marketplace, in contrast, was becoming the more normal mode through which cultural producers became, again in Bourdieu's words, "the dominated sector of the dominating classes." Evelina's actual reception, however, as opposed to the reception the author had fantasized, shows the pro-

lished) admitted members at the price of a guinea and then charged another guinea for a yearly subscription. Members, who tended to be upper-middle-class and overwhelmingly male, actively helped choose the library's books. Of 198 members in 1798, only five were women. The library offered very little prose fiction, and among those novelists represented, Fielding and Sterne were vastly more popular than Richardson, whose *Pamela* was borrowed less frequently than Hannah More's *Two Legendary Tales*. The Bristol Library owned none of Frances Burney's novels, but three of Charles Burney's works are listed under "Belles Lettres" and were frequently borrowed. Of course, members of the proprietary library might also have subscribed to one of the six commercial circulating libraries in Bristol, and, as Paul Kantaman points out, "the low scores of Richardson and a few other works of fiction and the absence of . . . other novelists, as well as some 18th-century drama and lighter literature can be explained by the borrowing of all these from the circulating libraries" (*Borrowings from the Bristol Library, 1773-1784: A Unique Record of Reading Volumes* [Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the Univ. of Virginia, 1960], pp. 132-33). Some of the same readers, then, might have borrowed from both libraries, but the circulating libraries had a much higher percentage of female and lower-income subscribers, and novels were considered the natural fare of such readers. Proprietary libraries in the new industrial towns seem to have carried more novels, including Frances Burney's. See M. Kay Flavell, "A Study of the Liverpool Library, 1758-1790," *British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies* 8 (1985): 17-35.

imity of what at first looked like widely different forms of authorship. The novel had its own Cinderella-style success story, a story very much like that of the novel's heroine. A work of "obscure birth," which started out among "boarding-school damsels," its conspicuous merit won it the distinguished admirers the author claimed she had never expected. Six months after its publication, according to a letter from Thomas Lowndes, who published it, "the Great World was sending for *Evelina*," and ladies feared being "unfashionable for not having read it."⁴⁶ Frances Burney's diaries began to fill up with the names of the accomplished and powerful people who were reading her novel, just as they had earlier filled up with the lists of her father's admirers. There was, indeed, considerable overlap between the two lists, and when her identity became known, her father's important acquaintances lionized her.

If Burney had once vaguely feared that her address to Nobody might expose the family's obscure origins and insubstantial foundations, she must have been doubly delighted to find herself sought after by the very people her father had courted. Indeed, because she had never sought them, she had an aura of "proud independence that her father never cultivated. In her recent biography of Burney, Margaret Doody discusses Hester Thrale's apparent surprise when the newly discovered author rebuffed her attempts to patronize her, to make her gifts of money, and to "employ" the daughter in the ways she had been used to "employ" Dr. Burney, receiving entertainment and encomia in return. Dr. Burney apparently expected to be patronized and acknowledged his dependence openly; to a Christmas gift from Mrs. Thrale in the very year of *Evelina*'s publication, he responded:

Insolvent, yet I ne'er repine
At Favour heap'd on me & mine,
And though both numerous & great
They no remorse or shame create
For, by the Manner you bestow
The Hearts acquire so warm a glow
Of all who benefits receive
As makes them feel like those who give.⁴⁷

46. Quoted in Hemlow, p. 101.

47. Charles Burney to Hester Thrale, March 8, 1771[?], Rylands MS 545, no. 4. Quoted in Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works*, pp. 67–68, where the date is

But his daughter, who was read by everybody and whose next book was expected to make a killing, behaved with more reserve and was soon accepted as an intimate friend by Hester Thrale. In other words, precisely because she was read by all those Nobodies, she could assume an assured place among the Somebodies. As her career progressed, the literary circles she inhabited and her contacts in the fashionable world increasingly determined what and how she published, but her status as a "popular" author, her orientation toward Nobody, actually made her contacts with the powerful seem merely social, obscuring their economic significance and her actual relations of dependency. Burney's adherence to Nobody, therefore, paradoxically augmented the family's apparent substance and gave it a more secure social position.

But what was Frances Burney's position? *Evelina*, "unpatronized, unaided, unowned, past through Four Editions in one year,"⁴⁸ but this profuse dissemination did little to stabilize the author's position. It was widely known that she had parted with the copyright to the bookseller Thomas Lowndes for twenty guineas ("O, ma'am, what a Book thrown away was that!—all the Trade cry shame on Lowndes"⁴⁹). The book was "unowned" by its author in more than

given as March 1778. For numerous instances of Dr. Burney's unembarrassed acceptance of the patronage of the great and his assiduous efforts to please them, see Lonsdale, *Dr. Charles Burney*, esp. chapters 1, 6, and 7.

48. Preface to *Cecilia*; or, *the Memoirs of an Heiress*, introd. Judy Simons (New York: Penguin Books/Virago Press, 1986). Subsequent quotations from this edition are cited parenthetically in the text.

49. Reportedly said to Hester Thrale by Mr. Bowen, the bookseller at Brighton. The passage continues: "[N]ot, ma'am, that I expected he could have known its worth, because that's out of the question,—but when its profits told him what it was, it's quite scandalous that he should have done nothing!—quite ungentleman like indeed!" (quoted by Hemlow, p. 101). *The Booksellers*, a 1766 poem by Henry Dell, characterizes Lowndes primarily as a publisher of drama and a polemicist in the copyright controversy, although which side he was on is unclear.

Subservient to his interest Lowndes has made
The better part of th' dramatic trade,

'Bout property he made a much ado,
But now the point is settled firm and true
'Twas his, 'tis mine, and may belong to you.

Quoted in Terry Belanger, "A Directory of the London Book Trade, 1766," *Publishing History* 1 (1977): 31.

one sense, so her capital was entirely symbolic. She was now perhaps the most famous Burney, but that might only have impressed her with the bubble quality of the family's resources and the difficulty of living by one's wits. If she were to maintain an illusion of dignified independence among her new acquaintances, she had to learn how to collect on the circulation of her fame. Otherwise, as a character in *Cecilia* intimates, her nobodiness could become all too literal: "as to a lady, let her be worth never so much, she's a mere *nobody* . . . , being she knows nothing of business" (p. 857, emphasis mine). That Burney might succeed as a popular writer and yet fail to get anywhere or gain anything of substance was facetiously, but also rather pathetically, indicated by Johnson in 1780:

[H]e offered to take me with him to Grub Street, to see the ruins of the house[s?], demolished there in the late riots, by a mob that, as he observed, could be no friend to the Muses! . . . "[Y]ou and I, Burney will go together; we have a very good right to go, so we'll visit the mansions of our progenitors, and take up our own freedom together."⁵⁰

As Pat Rogers comments, this ruin was "the only bit of London literary men could call their own."⁵¹ To have arrived at the august heights of being a companion to Samuel Johnson was to share the freedom of a "place" that was being demolished into a metaphor. It was rather emphatically to be no place in particular. Frances Burney found herself, then, like her novel, circulating—"traversing all London amongst the literary and fashionable alike"⁵²—while she tried to determine how she might gain a more secure situation. All of Burney's advisers—Mrs. Thrale, Samuel Johnson, David Garrick, Edmund Burke, her father, and her adopted "Daddy" Crisp—at first agreed that she should capitalize on her initial success with a play. At the end of the eighteenth century, as at the end of the seventeenth, plays were still the most potentially lucrative literary investments, and *Evelina* had amply demonstrated its

author's talent as a satirist of manners and conversation. Ultimately, though, Dr. Burney and "Daddy" Crisp refused to allow the production of Frances's comedy, *The Wiltings* (1779); their reasons merit our attention because they articulate the dilemma faced by the author as she embarked on her second novel.

The trouble with *The Wiltings* was that it seemed to be about Somebody, Elizabeth Montagu, in fact, the queen of the bluestockings. As Joyce Hemlow explains, "The butt of the criticisms was not here the jostling vulgarity of the lower middle classes and follies of fops, rakes, and affected young ladies . . . but a surprisingly sharp satire on the affectations of the wiltings [minor wits] themselves and especially the *bas bleus*."⁵³ In short, Burney was lampooning a portion of the very set she had so recently been allowed to join. This scandalous play could be seen as a declaration of her independence, a statement that, unlike her father, she would not be eager to please.⁵⁴ Johnson, indeed, seems to have admired it for just this quality, imagining that Frances Burney and Elizabeth Montagu, despite the enormous social and economic gap that divided them, were simply competitors in a battle of wits:

Down with her, Burney!—down with her!—spare her not!—attack her, fight her, and down with her at once! You are a rising wit, and she is at the top; when I was beginning the world, and was nothing and nobody, the joy of my life was to fire at all the established wits! and then everybody loved to halloo me on.⁵⁵

But, as the nostalgic tone of this passage hints, Johnson mistook the times and their etiquette. The rude, combative days of the 1730s and 1740s (when Johnson was "nobody") had given way to the genteel civility he had himself, as we saw in the last chapter, done so much to promote by attacking the patronage mentality that had encouraged scandal. Perhaps one could still make a living writing scandal and personal satire, but powerful people would no longer pay much for it, and it was certainly not a respectable occupation. Dr. Burney shrewdly assessed the damaging effect such a play might have on the family's credit and suppressed it, insisting that

50. *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, ed. Charlotte Barrett (London: Macmillan, 1904), vol. 1, p. 438 (cited hereafter as *D and L*).

51. Pat Rogers, *Hacks and Dunces: Pope, Swift and Grub Street* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 118.

52. Quoted in Hemlow, p. 101.

53. Hemlow, p. 133.

54. Margaret Doody interprets the episode as rebellion against Dr. Burney. See *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works*, pp. 66–98.

55. *D and L*, vol. 1, p. 115.

his daughter return to fiction: "In the Novel Way, there is no danger."⁵⁶

The incident might be said to replicate the dynamic traced in the last two chapters. Frances Burney had to relearn for herself the lesson of the century, that the writer's surest resource was becoming nobody's story. But the incident also brings to light a new phase in the overall process. The world of patronage, of "belonging" to the socially, politically, and economically powerful, had once required scandalous texts from writers. Indeed, we cannot entirely rule out the possibility that Burney, on first entering the world of the wits, anachronistically associated it with personal satire,⁵⁷ and, on observing that there was a rivalry between her particular promoter, Hester Thrale, and the more powerful bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu, took her patroness's part. If so, she, like Johnson, mistook the nature of the milieu she had penetrated. What we might call the late eighteenth century's "soft" forms of patronage were inimical to such aggressive partisanship. Writers no longer depended on individuals or even on small groups but on large and relatively diffuse networks of influence. Hence, as Dr. Burney instinctively knew, it was important not to antagonize anyone who had any patronage and the marketplace might be imagined as opposites, late in the century they were thoroughly interwoven. The only way Frances Burney could keep up and benefit from her acquaintance with Somebody was to continue to write for and about Nobody.

By the time *Cecilia* was begun, therefore, the social orientations of the two Burneys had shifted somewhat: Dr. Burney continued to address himself to Somebody, but his daughter could no longer imagine that she was writing to Nobody alone. Although her father called her "little Burney" in an anonymous piece of puffery in 1782,⁵⁸ hers had become the larger and more diverse audience. She had inherited the name, and, despite her father's belittling design-mind; thus she was probably more conscious than ever of her

56. Unpublished letter from Dr. Burney to Frances Burney, August 29, 1779, quoted in Doody, p. 96.
57. Note all the talk in Burney's crowd about being afraid of her, about assuming she was going to engage in personal satire, as if that was expected.
58. See Doody's discussion of this incident, pp. 99-100.

family's relations of dependence, the limitations imposed by their actual social and economic connections. However, this knowledge did not teach her, to paraphrase Evelina, "to whom she most belonged",⁵⁹ instead it taught her that her relationships must be to Everybody simultaneously. Since her acceptance among the dominating classes relied on her successful address to Nobody, her lack of defined "place" became the very condition of her social relations.

This placelessness, this belonging everywhere and therefore nowhere, could also be thought of as a universal obligation. In the period between her first two novels, Frances Burney was living on the credit of her name, a credit she had done much to increase, but a mere credit nevertheless. And credit, of course, implied debt.⁶⁰ Burney was obliged to write another novel for the "public" for her father, for the wits and hostesses who had encouraged and patronized her—in short, for Everybody. The daughterly debt she acknowledged in the dedicatory poem to *Evelina* had not been repaid by that novel's success; it had rather been multiplied and dispersed into the world at large. Now that she was "Burney," a stern, impersonal injunction to write emanated from everywhere, but there was no longer even the fleeting illusion that writing would discharge rather than augment it.

As numerous critics have noticed, the change in Burney's status is rather obviously encoded in *Cecilia*; or, *Memoirs of an Heiress*. Instead of being nameless like Evelina, Cecilia Beverley is overburdened by her name; her uncle's will, which as a condition of her inheriting his estate enjoins that any man she marries take the surname Beverley, welds patronym and property together. In *Evelina*, the sought-after name Belmont, whose use implied her father's

59. "I hardly know, my Lord, I hardly know myself to whom I most belong," Evelina tells Lord Orville when he asks if she is free to dispose herself in marriage (p. 353).
60. That a writer's creditors might own even his unwritten works is advanced by one pamphleteer in 1762 as an absurd consequence of the concept of literary property: "If these works were to become a Property, they would be taken in Execution for Debt. . . . If literary Property consists in the Ideas, the Creditors would have an Interest in all the Ideas of their Debtors. Ideas are in their Nature equally susceptible of Property, whether they exist only in the Brain of the Author, or are by him transmitted to Paper" (*An Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Literary Property* [London: William Flexney, 1762], p. 35). Literary property thus makes one's mind vulnerable to seizure for debt, according to this writer, and his warning might indicate the state of trepidation and self-estrangement Burney experienced in the long incarceration during which she wrote *Cecilia*.

Everybody would be coming after

Madame?

do but secure this one point, while it is in your Power, & all Things else shall be added unto thee.⁶²

Cecilia, however, is far more than an allegory of Burney's personal anxieties. Indeed, to read it simply as a fictionalization of any particular situation is to ignore its exploration of placelessness and its attempt to generate a universal subjectivity out of that nonsituation. *Cecilia* focuses on one of the major paradoxes of this study with extraordinary intensity: when one tries to explain a text by embedding it in the material particulars of its production, one discovers that those particulars are themselves matters of disembodiment, abstraction, dissemination, and displacement. *Cecilia* becomes an allegory of this paradox by specifying the particulars of the heroine's universalist ethical consciousness, but the particulars are themselves deficiencies or surpluses that are construed as debts. The specific social, economic, and psychological conditions surrounding both *Cecilia* and *Cecilia*—placelessness, endless circulation, and a sense of general indebtedness—are the circumstances of a universalist subjectivity. Burney's novel is personal only in a paradoxical way: it records the moment when certain conditions of displacement conspire to create a generalized ethical subject.

As many critics have noticed, the character of *Cecilia* differs from that of *Evelina* by being more than merely innocent.⁶³ If we can distinguish between *Evelina* the character and *Evelina* the narrator, we can say that the character concentrated on maintaining her virginity, safeguarding her reputation, and avoiding "prepossession." Her virtues were almost entirely negative, like the minimal virtue of fiction itself: *Evelina* and the novel were both good because they were not scandalous. Of course, the narrator *Evelina* and the novel *Evelina* also provided satirical comedy and conduct-book morality, but the whole did not aspire to be an integrated ethical discourse. *Cecilia*, in contrast, is the first of Burney's moral

62. See *D and L*, vol. 2, pp. 98–99, where the quotation is somewhat different; this is from the letter of July 1782, quoted by Doody, p. 199.

63. Julia Epstein, for example, puts *Cecilia* in a line of philanthropic heroines that includes Clarissa, the heroines of Sarah Scott's *Millennium Hall*, and Dorothea Brooke (*The Iron Pen*, p. 159); Margaret Doody proposes a similar genealogy (p. 127). Kay Rogers characterizes *Cecilia* as "a young woman who, unlike *Evelina*, has the internal and external resources to control her own life" ("Deflation of Male Pretensions in Fanny Burney's *Cecilia*," pp. 87–88).

Handwritten initials at top right.

acknowledgment of her legitimacy, was actually employed by the heroine only once, just after her father's recognition and just before her marriage: "Now then, therefore, for the first—and probably the last time I shall ever own the name, permit me to sign myself, . . . EVELINA BELMONT" (p. 404). The plot culminates in owning the name, but there is no anxiety about keeping it; it is something not only to be traded on but also to be traded in. The plot of *Cecilia*, on the contrary, focuses on whether the heiress can keep her name and her fortune. A name is not something to be achieved and then changed but something to be maintained, perhaps at great expense. For the heiress, moreover, as for the author, the demanding patronym is inextricably entwined with her estate, so much so that the two cannot be told apart.⁶¹

This seems a relatively simple allegory registering the anxiety and resentment of a writer undertaking her second novel in a dutiful mood, conscious that she had become the chief representative of the family name and was expected both to promote and to cash in on it. The diaries and letters from the period of the novel's writing resonate with these demands. Dr. Burney, for example, wanted the novel produced as quickly as possible so that its publication would coincide with the appearance of the second volume of his own *History of Music* in 1781, and his daughter repeatedly chastised herself for failing to meet the deadline that was calculated to boost the family's fame. The financial issue also permeates the correspondence; in a playful conflation of the author and the heroine, for example, "Daddy" Crisp delivered his admonitions concerning money in the very idiom of *Cecilia*'s miserly guardian, Mr. Briggs: "Touch the yellow Boys—'grow Warm'—make the Booksellers come down handsomely—Count the ready—the Chink—

61. For a discussion of the contrast between the two heroines, see Doody, p. 101; for discussion of the names in *Cecilia*, see Doody, pp. 135–40, and Epstein, *The Masquerade and Criticism: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 255–89; Cutting-Gray, *Woman as "Nobody" in the Novels of Fanny Burney*, pp. 32–52; Edward Copeland, "Money in the Novels of Fanny Burney," *Studies in the Novel* 8 (1976): 24–37; Jan Ferguson, *Jane and Prejudice* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1983), pp. 62–72; Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, pp. 155–73; Figses, *Sex and Subterfuge*, pp. 41–45; Kay Rogers, "Deflation of Male Pretensions in Fanny Burney's *Cecilia*," *Women's Studies* 15 (1988): 87–96; and Straub, *Divided Fictions*, pp. 109–51.

Handwritten notes at bottom: "innocent say - good family - and to be good" and "37607 14 say -"

"works."⁶⁴ The heroine obviously strives to go beyond Evelina's mere passive goodness, just as the novel as a whole claims ethical significance for fiction.

Granted, then, that Cecilia seems more serious, more intellectually and morally ambitious, than Evelina as a character. That very ambition, however, creates its own blankness. If Evelina — was nobody looking for a name (Belmont) and an inheritance, Cecilia Beverley is a name and an inheritance trying to achieve the consciousness of nobody in particular. As soon as she enters the fashionable world of London, where her name and fortune completely define her, she envisions escaping from its petty and insipid routines through impersonal acts of charity:

Many and various . . . were the scenes which her fancy delineated; now she supported an orphan, now softened the sorrows of a widow, now snatched from iniquity the feeble trembler at poverty, and now rescued from shame the proud struggler with disgrace . . . [S]he regarded herself as an agent of Charity, and already in idea anticipated the rewards of a good and faithful delegate: so animating are the designs of disinterested benevolence! so pure is the bliss of intellectual philanthropy! (p. 52)

The mild irony of the narrator's tone in this passage gently mocks, even as it holds up for admiration, Cecilia's dream of leaving her own story behind and becoming a *deus ex machina* in myriad other stories. She will no longer be simply another human being, but the "agent" or "delegate" of "Charity." Her ambition is to escape from the particulars of novelistic "character" into the abstraction of allegorical impersonation. But, as the passage wryly hints, such "disinterested benevolence" is always purest when it is imaginary, disembodied, "intellectual philanthropy." The very moral ambition that makes Cecilia more substantial than Evelina, therefore, impels her toward an ideal form of Nobodiness.

Cecilia's dreams of being nobody in particular and occupying

64. Burney began insistently referring to her writings as "works" instead of "novels" during the composition of *Camilia*. See Edward A. Bloom and Lillian L. Bloom, introduction to *Camilia: or, a Picture of Youth* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), p. x; and *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, vol. 3, ed. Joyce Hemlow with Patricia Boutlier and Althea Douglas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), letter 171, pp. 117–18. We might, however, use the distinction to describe the difference between her first two fictions.

nowhere in particular so that she can dispense charity and justice are almost always, as in the passage above, subjected to some form of Johnsonian deflation. Margaret Doody points out that the following passage, for example, counterposes the dream of allegorical disembodiment against the reality of personal connectedness and mortality:⁶⁵

In her sleep she bestowed riches, and poured plenty upon the land; she humbled the oppressor, she exalted the oppressed; slaves were raised to dignities, captives restored to liberty; beggars saw smiling abundance, and wretchedness was banished the world. From a cloud in which she was supported by angels, Cecilia beheld these wonders; and while enjoying the glorious illusion, she was awakened by her maid, with news that Mrs. Charlton [Cecilia's old friend and companion] was dying!

She started up, and undressed, was running to her apartment, — when the maid, calling to stop her, confessed she was already dead! (pp. 696–97)

Certainly the passage is Johnsonian in the way it chastens Cecilia's vainglorious dream of omniscient and omnipotent benevolence: as she imagines seeing and relieving all suffering, she is actually ignorant of and powerless to prevent the "paralytic stroke" (p. 712) simultaneously being suffered by her friend.

The passage, though, has some features that cannot be explained wholly as an ironic commentary on Cecilia's naive enthusiasm or even her egoism. The dream itself, for instance, has an odd structure. Cecilia sees herself not only righting all wrongs, but also seeing herself righting all wrongs. There are two Cecílias in the dream: one who acts, and one who floats above and enjoys watching the acts. This configuration resembles Adam Smith's description of the self-division inherent in moral self-scrutiny:

When I endeavour to examine my own conduct, when I endeavour to pass sentence upon it, and either to approve or condemn it, it is evident that, in all such cases, I divide myself, as it were, into two persons; and that I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of. The first is the spectator, whose sentiments with

65. Doody, pp. 117–18. See also Doody, "Deserts, Ruins and Troubled Waters: Female Dreams in Fiction and the Development of the Gothic Novel," *Genre* 10 (1977): 546–48.

circles
of scenes
she can't
see
she's not

regard to my own conduct I endeavour to enter into, by placing myself in his situation, and by considering how it would appear to me, when seen from that particular point of view. The second is the agent, the person whom I properly call myself.⁶⁶

In the dream Cecilia is both the "agent" practicing virtue and the "spectator," who appears in the dream as a deified figure of virtue itself, complete with supporting angels and surrounding clouds. The passage, then, stresses the link between Cecilia's moral ambition and her desire to achieve a vantage point so comprehensive that it would include even herself, a site outside time and space. What Smith calls the impartial spectator's "particular point of view" is revealed in the dream to have no particularity in the spatio-temporal world.

The passage then goes on not only to mock such an ambition as vain, in both senses of the word, but also to reveal its association with death. The Cecilia who floats in the sky is not so much an ironic contrast to the dead Mrs. Charlton as she is the latter's apotheosis. The doubled report of Mrs. Charlton's death, making it seem at once in progress and already accomplished, furthermore, repeats the doubling of Cecilia in the dream, actor and spectator. The suffering/dead Mrs. Charlton resembles the acting/watching Cecilia, aligning the second terms of each pair: death and omniscient beholding. The proximity of death to what the narrator earlier called "intellectual philanthropy" is additionally implied by the pronominal confusion of the quotation's last sentence: "[Cecilia] started up . . . to her [Mrs. Charlton's] apartment . . . when the maid, calling to stop her [Cecilia], confessed she [Mrs. Charlton] was already dead!" The rapid alternation of pronoun referents unsteadies that of the final "she" who is "already dead." Repeatedly, then, the novel enforces an awareness that Cecilia's ideal self—the ethical transcendental subject—is hard to distinguish from Nobody. Like *Clarissa* before it and numerous novels to follow, *Cecilia* uses the characterization of the heroine-heiress to transform the paradox of the novelistic imperative—to be Nobody in particular—into a moral dilemma. How can one be a moral paragon whose perceptions and actions are altogether disinterested

if one also has a moral obligation to be in the world where one is blinded and impeded by a mass of particular entanglements? *Cecilia* also converts the paradox of reading novels into a corresponding moral problem. Insofar as one identifies with novel heroes and heroines precisely because one knows they are Nobodies, one indulges in a fantasy of one's own potential transcendence of the world. The very moral elevation one experiences in reading a properly uplifting fiction, therefore, is caused by one's imaginary removal from any context of moral action. The heavenly Cecilia who watches herself in the dream sequence is an obvious allegory for the reader's vicarious pleasure as she indulges in the "glorious illusion" that the ideal Nobody (precisely because she is Nobody) called "Cecilia" is a version of herself doing splendid things. Burney's language suggests that the moral imagination by its very nature perpetually defers the possibility of moral engagement outside the "dream." Even inside the dream, the actions are "beheld" simultaneously, suspending temporality. The narrator also tells us that the Cecilia who watches from the clouds, like the reader, experiences a "promissory enjoyment" (p. 696), which further complicates the temporal sequence and stresses the connection between the pleasures of moral imagining and the deferral/suspension of moral life. Cecilia, therefore, is a moral heroine, not because she serves as a paragon or pattern of what virtuous females should be, but because she turns the paradox of being a fictional heroine into a moral problem. The novel, moreover, rearticulates what had been the comic predicament of *The Female Quixote* (how can one both read and be?) as a moral dilemma. To imagine "disinterested" benevolence, to identify with the character who strains against particularity, is to receive "promissory enjoyment," a phrase that implies some sort of obligation. *Cecilia*, we will see, persistently suggests that the moral reader does not simply "borrow" fictional personae; she borrows with a promise to repay with interest. Disinterested benevolence actually exacts a usuriously high level of interest. The novel thus becomes a moral work, not by providing some detachable lesson, but by first eliciting the reader's identification with a Nobody, whose very morality is defined by her sense of universal indebtedness, and then further suggesting that the reader's identification is itself a form of borrowing for which he or she should be held accountable.

66. Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 3.1.6.

The inseparability of debt, morality, and identification with Nobody is evident from the outset of *Cecilia*. The heroine's first indulgence in "intellectual philanthropy," for example, is prefaced with this explanation: "A strong sense of DUTY, a fervent desire to ACT RIGHT, were the ruling characteristics of her mind: her affluence she *therefore* considered as a debt contracted with the poor: and her independence, as a tie upon her liberality to pay it with interest" (p. 52, emphasis mine). It is precisely this construction of herself as the universal debtor that stimulates Cecilia's imagination: "Many and various, *then* . . . were the scenes which her fancy delineated" (p. 52). The passage begins with a consciousness of debt and ends with indulgence in promissory enjoyments.

Debt, therefore, is both the condition and the result of morality in the novel. Cecilia begins with the understanding that she owes whatever she owns, and the telos of the novel is to make that proposition literally true. Thus at its climax the heroine actually becomes an item in a pawnshop. Improbable as this climax sounds, it is the logical outcome of a transcendent morality (at once promoted and criticized by its superimposition on the structure of fictional experience) that destroys the distinction between discharging and incurring debts. To be sure, Cecilia is not allowed to run headlong into deficit spending to prove her moral superiority. On the contrary, almost every step of the nearly nine-hundred-page journey to the pawnshop is taken reluctantly. Perhaps no book in the annals of the English novel succeeds as thoroughly as this one in focusing our apprehensive attention on a character's property. We do not often fear for Cecilia, but we are kept in a state of perpetual anxiety about the fate of her money. The heroine very gradually loses her fortune through a series of painful extortions. Nevertheless, each expropriation displays Cecilia's moral consciousness, that is, the consciousness that she is already in debt.⁶⁷ *Cecilia* is neatly divided into two parts, corresponding to the two components of the Beverley family fortune that Cecilia, as sole survivor, has inherited. The opening of the novel is extraordinarily

precise about these matters: her parents, we immediately learn, have left her £10,000, and through her uncle and former guardian, "in whom, by various contingencies, the accumulated possessions of a rising and prosperous family were centered," she has been bequeathed an estate of £3,000 per annum. The only restriction on her ownership of the estate is "that of annexing her name, if she is married, to the disposal of her hand and her riches" (pp. 1-2). One part of her fortune, then, is a direct money legacy from her parents; the first half of the novel tells of the loss of that wealth. The other part, which she loses in the second half of the book, is the landed estate that represents the wealth of all the rest of the Beverley family. These two bequests are quite distinct in the heroine's moral economy. Although the whole is a "debt contracted with the poor," the second is not really imagined to be at her disposal at all. She holds it "sacred" (p. 174) and thinks of herself, in Burke's terms, as its trustee. "But the £10,000 bequeathed me by my father," she announces, "I regard as more peculiarly my own property" (p. 174). It is this property, which is not entirely (but "more peculiarly") her own, that she loses first.

Because the money is more her own, it is in principle easier than the estate to detach from her. As in so many other books surveyed in this study, ownership in *Cecilia* is realized by the disposal of property. Because Cecilia thinks of the £10,000 as "more" hers, she thinks herself "at liberty to dispose of it as I please" (p. 174). But the cunning of the plot is to force Cecilia to part with her money in a way that does *not* please her or anyone else. The plot sternly enforces the idea of a universal debt when the heroine herself would qualify and compromise it. Things are so arranged that Cecilia cannot spend her money as she chooses. First, it is entrusted to a guardian for most of the period covered by the novel's action; and, second, Cecilia prides herself on living frugally so that she can pay her debt to the poor by patronizing worthy objects of charity. Worthy objects, of course, seldom need much, since they are frugal themselves. The deep reason Cecilia cannot spend her money as she pleases, though, is simply that to do so would please her. Whenever Cecilia does manage to give something to worthy poor people, she receives egotistical gratification, a self-satisfying emotional return that is difficult to account for in her own logic of debt. When, for example, she establishes the Hills, a widow's

67. Other interpretations of the role of money in *Cecilia* include Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, relating the novel's "shift in emphasis from the erotic to the fiscal" to its "decriminalization of the masquerade" (p. 161); and Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, which focuses on "money as a medium of exchange for . . . plot and . . . materialist social critique" in *Cecilia* (p. 159).

family, in a little shop of their own, she gets in return augmented self-importance:

Never had the heart of Cecilia felt so light, so gay, so glowing, as after the transaction of this affair: her life had never appeared to her so important, nor her wealth so valuable. . . . [T]o view such sights, and have power to say "*These deeds are mine!*" what, to a disposition fraught with tenderness and benevolence, could give purer self-applause, or more exquisite satisfaction? (p. 197)

By localizing her general "debt to the poor" in deserving objects and actually trying to pay it off, Cecilia allows herself to feel pride in the mere discharge of her duty.

The plot, however, imposes a more rigorous regime of obligation, separating ethical action from such gratifications. Cecilia must learn to give her money away with no expectation of any emotional return. The demand comes from no legitimate, indeed from no identifiable, source, and the payment results in no "exquisite satisfaction." The achievement of the first half of the novel is to separate Cecilia from her money, before she legally has it, in a way that seems both ethically imperative and utterly wasteful.

As if impelled by these exigencies, Mr. Harrel, one of Cecilia's three guardians, manages to put Cecilia in debt to usurers for the entire amount of her paternal legacy. In the first of these transactions, she steps in to save Mr. Arnott, Harrel's brother-in-law and the brother of Cecilia's childhood friend, from a severe financial loss. When Cecilia sees Harrel, an incorrigible gambler and spendthrift, imposing upon Arnott's generosity, she immediately interposes and substitutes herself for the victim. At first the plan seems rational because Mr. Arnott would have to "take up money" at a loss to pay Mr. Harrel's debt, whereas Cecilia believes she can simply ask for an advance on her inheritance. It turns out, though, that Mr. Briggs, the guardian who controls her fortune, refuses to advance her money ("Keep it for your husband; get you one soon"), and Cecilia finally feels obliged to go into debt herself. "The heart of Cecilia recoiled at the very mention of a *levy*, and taking up money upon interest, but impelled strongly by her own generosity to emulculate that of Mr. Arnott, she agreed, after some hesitation, to have recourse to this method" (p. 183). Cecilia's imitative action, her "emulation" of Mr. Arnott, is just one link in a chain of debt. To

substitute herself for Arnott, who was generously trying to substitute his money for Harrel's, Cecilia must substitute "honest old Aaron's" money for her own, thereby taking Harrel's place as the debtor. Both the ultimate source and the destination of the money are unknown. Harrel claims he must pay his tailor, but we are led to doubt him; and the usurer's money, because it is a usurer's, cannot be said to belong to anybody. The actual scene of Cecilia's generosity, therefore, is precisely the opposite of the spectacle of transcendent goodness she fantasizes: instead of floating above the world and watching the spectacle of her heroic and invulnerable self, she "recoils" from the dimly understood interchange; instead of seeing herself exalted, she is forced to sully herself by "contracting a voluntary debt" (p. 182) and thus changing places with the villain of the piece.

The next two extortions follow the same pattern. Harrel threatens suicide to force her to borrow another £7,500 and then holds his wife hostage until Cecilia signs for yet another £1,000. The Jews become more anonymous and rapacious, and Cecilia's sense of the unworthiness of both the Harrels constantly increases. After dissuading Harrel from suicide by swearing to pay his debts, for example, she found that "every moment she obtained for reflection, augmented her reluctance to parting with so large a sum of money for so worthless an object, and added strength to her resentment for the unjustifiable menaces which had extorted from her such a promise" (p. 262). And after the final signing, Cecilia's sense of desolation is so strong that she doubts she has performed an ethical act at all: "The soothing recompense of succouring benevolence, followed not this gift, nor made amends for this loss: perplexity and uneasiness, regret and resentment, accompanied the donation, and rested upon her mind; she feared she had done wrong" (p. 383.) In the austere ethical world Cecilia comes to inhabit, there is no "recompense" of any kind for right action, nor is there a simple set of definitive markers that distinguish right from wrong. Mrs. Harrel benefits from Cecilia's generosity because she just happens to be there pressing a claim of childhood friendship that is also purely accidental: "When [Cecilia's] enlightened mind discerned [her] deficiencies, [Mrs. Harrel] had already an interest in her affections" (p. 698).

The recognition of this "interest," this prior condition of debt

arising merely from the fortuitous particulars of one's life regardless of the merit of the object, makes Cecilia a moral paragon and complicates her dreams of "disinterested," transcendent morality. This debt, entailed in one's mere being in the world, is literalized by Cecilia's bonds. Simultaneously, however, the demand is presented as bizarrely impersonal and abstract: the heroine has not chosen Mrs. Harrel as a friend, nor is she tied to her by family connections. Indeed, she explicitly cites her duty to her dead family as a reason against borrowing money for the Harrels:

I have not, it is true, any relations to call me to account, but respect for their memory supplies the place of their authority; and I cannot, in the distribution of the fortune which has devolved to me, forbear sometimes considering how they would have wished it spent, and always remembering that what was acquired by industry and labour, should never be dissipated in idleness and vanity. (p. 373)

But despite this competing sense of duty, Cecilia must give in to the immediate demand for protection presented by her childhood friend, a demand that seems absolute because of its emergency and contingency. The accidental quality of these expropriations, in others words, displaces Cecilia, removes her from such relatively stable particulars as her family identity, and forces her to change places with, to borrow the identity of, the most proximate sufferer. Cecilia is thus left "holding the bag" for Harrel when he blows his brains out in Vauxhall at the climax of the novel's first half after presenting her with a packet containing "a roll of enormous bills, and a collection of letters from various creditors, threatening the utmost severity of the law, if their demands were longer unanswered" (p. 419). "On a slip of paper which held these together," we are told, "was written, in Mr. Harrel's hand, *To be all paid to-night with a Bullet* (p. 419). Once again Cecilia occupies the vantage point of the dead, from which, "to her no small amazement," she sees reams of detached demands. The dream of being Nobody in particular has become a nightmare.

The substitution of the packet of papers for Harrel's life returns us to the topic of reading. Harrel includes a short account of himself with the bills, as well as one final supplication to Cecilia and Mr. Arnott: "Pray for me." The addressees respond with the appropriate sentiment:

Wretch as Mr. Harrel appeared, without religion, principle, or honour, this incoherent letter, evidently written in the desperate moment of determined suicide, very much affected both Cecilia and Mr. Arnott; and in spite either of abhorrence or resentment, they mutually shed tears over the address to themselves. (p. 421)

Once the body is out of the way, identification is all the more imperative and disconnected from worth. Of course, identification at this point is seemingly risk free, just as it is normally considered risk free when one sympathizes with fictional nobodies. But the passage nevertheless locates the roots of Cecilia's indebtedness in this ready readerly response. Arnott and Cecilia cannot disavow what the narrator had earlier called "the obligations" of "a general humanity" (p. 406), and precisely because Harrel had individually "forfeited all right to [Cecilia's] esteem" (p. 406), he becomes, especially in his death, an emblem of the minimally human, the very nobody that can never deserve or repay our sympathetic interest. Harrel becomes a figure for fiction's necessary default.

There is, moreover, one further link between debt and reading in this part of the book. When Cecilia first decides to stand in for Mr. Arnott by paying Harrel's debt, she tries to get £600 from her guardian Briggs, £400 of which she intends for Harrel, £50 for the impoverished Mrs. Hill and her family, and £150 to clear her account with a bookseller. Cecilia's only legal debt in the beginning is the one she has contracted as a reader. Furthermore, paying this debt is the only purpose she mentions when she asks for an advance on her inheritance, so her discussions with her guardians Mr. Briggs and Mr. Delville make a firm connection between reading and going into debt. It is the nature of the outstanding bill that confirms Mr. Briggs's opposition to paying it: "Books," he cried, "what do you want with books? do no good; all lost time; words get no cash'" (p. 174). Next she applies to Mr. Delville, her aristocratic guardian, to override the decision of the miserly Briggs, but again the nature of the debt is remarked as singularly inappropriate:

"But what bill at all," cried he, with much surprise, "can a young lady have with a bookseller? The Spectator, Tatter, and Guardian, would make library sufficient for any female in the kingdom, nor do I think it like a gentlewoman to have more. . . . And let me counsel you to remember, that a lady, whether so called from birth or only

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from fortune, should never degrade herself by being put on a level with writers, and such sort of people." (p. 179)

Briggs's and Delville's condemnations are meant to contrast their valuations of intellectual life with those of Cecilia and the narrator, who consider "reading" to be the "richest, highest, and noblest source of intellectual enjoyment" (p. 27). Nevertheless, Briggs and Delville are partly right: reading is intimately connected, especially in the novel's first half, with Cecilia's loss of both fortune and status. As a reminder of the connection between reading and owing, the account with the bookseller remains unsettled until Cecilia reaches her majority; it is a sign of debt in general that carries over from episode to episode.

Cecilia's inability to clear this debt, like the necessity of resorting to usurers, is obviously and insistently linked to her femaleness. That single women, like readers, are just naturally in debt is one of the novel's most fundamental assumptions. Cecilia's three guardians agree on only one matter: that her fortune is property she holds in trust for her future husband. Cecilia may be eccentric in believing that she owes what she owns to the poor, but she concurs with her patriarchal custodians in imagining that she owes it to someone. In keeping with the pattern set in the first half of the novel, the second half deprives her of her estate by literalizing the idea that a woman must pay for marriage. As in the first half of the novel, moreover, she must pay without receiving any emotional return, without feeling satisfied that her estate has been well disposed of according to her own will. Cecilia's dream of bestowing it on a worthy husband (young Delville), like her dream of giving her money to deserving objects of charity, is thwarted. The ultimate disposition of the estate, like that of the £10,000, seems almost anonymous. Upon her marriage, she finds herself in debt to a total stranger, one Mr. Eggleston.

Although the entire second half of the book revolves around the clause in her uncle's will that deprives her of the Beverley estate if her husband does not take her name, she returns to that estate after her secret wedding as if she were still its proprietor. Mr. Eggleston's lawyer then rudely reminds her that each hour of her married life puts her deeper in debt to this distant relative:

[W]hen this business comes to be settled, it will be very essential to be exact as to the time [of your wedding], even to the very hour; for a large income per annum divides into a small one per diem; and if your husband keeps his own name, you must not only give up your uncle's inheritance from the time of relinquishing yours, but refund from the very day of your marriage. . . . You will please, then, to recollect, madam, that this sum is every hour increasing. (p. 836)

Moreover, this unconsciously contracted debt, this hourly charge on her married life, is owed to a stranger who himself does not bear the Beverley name and who apparently plans to exploit the estate to pay his sons' debts. It is as if Cecilia suddenly finds herself in debt to a brood of Harrels, who are themselves in debt to God-knows-who. Her estate, like her personal fortune, becomes an abstract debit, a link in a chain of debt with an unspecified origin and destination.

This happens, moreover, at precisely the moment she loses her name, for the plot is so arranged as to require either Cecilia or Mortimer Delville to be disinherited at the moment of their marriage. The provisions of Cecilia's uncle's will had reversed normal patriarchal practices by compelling the husband to adopt the wife's surname, to be folded in to the female line. Of course, Cecilia's property would still become her husband's, but he would, like a woman, change his family identity on marrying. Young Delville's aristocratic family, though, refuses to endure this humiliation: "How will the blood of your wronged ancestors," Mrs. Delville assures her son, "rise into your guilty cheeks, and how will your heart throb with secret shame and reproach, when wished joy upon your marriage by the name of Mr. *Beverley!*" (p. 662). The severance of "blood" from name here promises a humiliating lack of control over one's body, a lack of control triggered by the name Beverley.

It is this humiliating feminization of her son that gives Mrs. Delville an excuse to take over Harrel's role as extortionist in the second half of the book.⁶⁸ Mortimer Delville himself accuses his mother of extortion when she attempts to convince Cecilia to renounce him: "I see your intention, I see your dreadful purpose;

68. Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works*, p. 137.

you will work upon the feelings of Miss Beverley, you will extort from her a promise to see me no more!" (p. 664); and Mrs. Delville reenacts Harrel's suicidal threats and actions when she thinks the young couple will rebel:

Grief and horror, next to frenzy . . . rose in the face of Mrs. Delville, who, striking her hand upon her forehead, cried, "My brain is on fire!" and rushed out of the room.

. . . Delville . . . hastened eagerly to pursue her: she had only flown into the next parlour; but, upon following her thither, what was his dread and his alarm, when he saw her extended upon the floor, her face, hands, and neck all covered with blood. "Great Heaven!" he exclaimed, prostrating himself by her side, "what is it you have done!—where are you wounded?" (p. 665)

Mrs. Delville has not actually attempted self-slaughter; she has only burst a blood vessel, as if to illustrate that the Delville "blood" will not tolerate her son's insubordination (for Mrs. Delville not only married a Delville, but was also born one). Nevertheless, the parallel to Harrel's behavior is unmistakable. Mrs. Delville's bloody face, moreover, is a highly effective threat, and Cecilia eventually resigns her name and property to save the older woman's life, just as she had signed away her paternal fortune under the threat of Harrel's suicide.

Once again, moreover, the individual life she tries to save is a placeholder for a more abstract, indeed unknowable, set of extortionists. Just as Harrel's body eventually dissolved into a bag of bills, Mrs. Delville's is threatened by inundation with the blood of her ancestors. It is not Mrs. Delville personally but rather the ancestors who seem to demand Cecilia's sacrifice, and these ancestors are characterized throughout the book by nothing so much as their deadness. "Why all them old grandfathers and aunts you brag of," Briggs rails at Delville, "mere clay and dirt! fine things to be proud of! a parcel of old mouldy rubbish quite departed this life! raking up bones and dust, nobody knows for what! ought to be ashamed; who cares for dead carcases? nothing but carrion" (p. 443). Hence, despite Cecilia's admiration for Mrs. Delville, her attempt to save that lady by giving up her property is merely a response to the echo of a demand that originates, finally, in nobody. Cecilia, then, must pay the debt of her sex, a debt that no avuncular will could cancel, and she must not pay it to her husband,

from whom she might expect some return. The dream of being nobody in particular recurs as a nightmare. Unowned by her father-in-law; separated from her husband, who is tending his mother (in whom the blood of their ancestors continually threatens to "rise up") abroad; and driven from her former estate by the fear of incurring further debts to Eggleston, Cecilia is entirely displaced: "[S]he was now in one moment to appear to the world, an outcast from her own house, yet received into no other! a bride, unclaimed by a husband! an heiress, dispossessed of all wealth! Indeed, she is not even capable of claiming her new name: 'To be first acknowledged as Mrs. Delville in a state so degrading, she could not endure'" (p. 848). Such a complete dispossession, one would imagine, would at least bring the relief of canceling all debts, but liability clings to the heroine. A series of accidents in London deprives her of her purse, the contents of her pockets, all indications of her identity, her memory, and her reason. In this state, she runs into an open shop, which just happens to be the establishment of pawnbrokers, and sits down on the floor, literally putting herself in hock. The pawnbrokers duly lock her up and advertise for "Whoever she belongs to" (p. 879) to come and redeem her.

As an item in a pawnshop, Cecilia attains a bizarre fulfillment of the fantasy of freedom from all particulars. Although she is locked up, she exists, like everything else in the shop, in a state that postpones normal property relations, for a pawnshop is where people temporarily suspend their rights to ownership. Things in a pawnshop are peculiarly unowned, inhabiting a transitional state between proprietors. Forfeited, they become the pawnbroker's commodities; redeemed, they return to their original owners; but while they are in hock, they seem to belong to nobody in particular. In this location of estrangement, Cecilia does not even own herself; she experiences what the narrator calls a "temporary . . . alienation of reason" (p. 878). Finally, when she was truly beside herself, "her fancy roved" (p. 879) from one incident of her history to another, just as it had roved during her dream of disembodiment from one scene of charity to another. She no longer has "promissory enjoyment," but while she dreams, the pawnbroker's bill grows longer. This state of suspended identity, this escape from all particulars, achieved through (and constantly augmenting) debt, marks the climax of Cecilia's adventures. Once she is reclaimed by the Del-

viles, she gives up her longings for universal benevolence, her belief that owning and owing are the same, so that the novel can finally end. The possibility of closure is provided, moreover, by giving Cecilia a new and highly particular obligation. Mortimer's aunt, "in a fit of sudden enthusiasm" for the heroine, "altered her will, to leave her, and to her sole disposal, the fortune which, almost from his infancy, she had destined for her nephew" (p. 917). The Delville ancestors give something back to Cecilia, but not as much as they had exacted; she once again has a fortune. And since this fortune has been gained at Mortimer's expense, it once again reverses the sexual norm. However, the fact that the money was originally destined for her husband finally solves the problem of universal debt, for it relieves Cecilia from having to accede to everybody's importunate demands: "She had learnt the error of profusion, even in charity and beneficence; and she had a motive for economy, in her animated affection for Mortimer" (p. 917). Mortimer becomes her saving principle of particularity; if she cannot ever really own her money, she can now at least know to whom it is owed. With this "motive for economy" the book can finally end because it has found a restrictive principle with which to stop the hemorrhage of expense that began with Cecilia's longings for a transcendent ethical position. The generalized being she had aspired to, which was repeatedly linked to death, to Nobody's perspective, is replaced by an "animated" partiality.

Some contemporary readers, however, who expected to find the heroine's moral aspirations rewarded rather than restricted at the end of a novel, complained that *Cecilia* failed to repay their interest by adequately compensating the heroine. They wanted, like Cecilia in her aerial dream, to see justice done, to watch evil characters punished and virtuous ones exalted; but instead the author largely ignores the villains in the end and rewards virtue by diminishing its means and chastening its ambition. Critics complained about the paucity of pleasure in such an ending:

[H]ad the Eggleston family been represented as more worthy of their good fortune, or had a flaw in the Dean's will enabled Miss Beverley to enter again into possession of her estate, perhaps the conclusion would have left a more pleasing impression on the mind.⁶⁹

69. *The English Review*, quoted in Doody, p. 144.

They also implied that the work's moral was obscured by the failure to give each character his due:

Cecilia's conduct, in sacrificing so large a fortune to gratify the pride of the Delville family, is an example which we would by no means wish to propose as an object of imitation for the fair sex, nor do we entirely approve of the conclusion, as we are of the opinion that the pride and ostentation of old Delville, ought, in justice, to have been punished.⁷⁰

The waste of the heroine's resources was thus seen as a seepage of meaning out of the novel, as well as a dissipation of the reader's investment of time and sympathy. Frances Burney, these critics suggest, had reneged on an implicit contract to provide the reader with an unequivocal emotional payoff. Edmund Burke even "wished the conclusion either more happy or more miserable" for in a work of imagination, he said, there is no medium.⁷¹ The refusal to be profuse "even in beneficence," comes just at the time when the demands of the reader are at their most clamorous: the end.

Burney had actually considered and expressly rejected these demands when they were earlier voiced by Samuel Crisp and Charles Burney on reading the manuscript. According to Margaret Doody, Frances Burney's two Daddies "tried hard to think of expedients that would preserve Cecilia's estate for her and Mortimer—they were quite tender-hearted at seeing the fictional girl robbed of her treasure."⁷² But the author was adamant, and her reply to a letter from Crisp on this subject reveals the connection between her chastening conclusion and the desire to differentiate herself in the literary marketplace:

I must frankly confess I shall think I have rather written a farce than a serious history, if the whole is to end, like the *hack Italian operas*, with a jolly chorus that makes all parties good and all parties happy!

You find, my dear daddy, I am prepared to fight a good battle here; but I have thought the matter much over, and if I am made to

70. *Critical Review*, quoted in Doody, p. 144.

71. Quoted in Doody, p. 145.

72. Doody, p. 145.

give up this point, my whole plan is rendered abortive, and the last page of any novel in Mr. Noble's circulating library may serve for the last page of mine, since a marriage, a reconciliation, and some sudden expedient for great riches, concludes them all alike.⁷³

To reward Cecilia for her sacrifice, to reward the reader for his, both would be to abort "the whole plan" by rescinding the novel's severe rule: identifying with Nobody must end in default. But paradoxically, by enforcing this rule the writer herself escapes from the importunate demands of an anonymous public. The reader must learn to cut his losses so that they will not become the writer's. By herself defaulting on "promissory enjoyment" she avoids being a "hack" (the linking of this word with "Italian operas" might have been particularly effective against Dr. Burney) and establishes a principle of particularity that distinguished her novel from all the fungible capitulations to Nobody that circulate through Mr. Noble's library. Unlike Cecilia, the author shows her peculiar worth by not putting herself in Nobody's place.

Despite complaints about the ending, Cecilia was a huge popular success. A first edition of two thousand copies sold rapidly. Book-sellers had difficulty keeping it in stock, and "the circulating library people . . . had it bespoken by old customers for months to come."⁷⁴ It did not, however, make Frances Burney financially independent. Apparently she was not specifically consulted about the sale of the copyright, which her father contracted to Payne and Cadell for £250 while she was away at Chessington. Thomas Payne was closely associated with the family, and Dr. Burney had obviously not driven a hard bargain with him, although there was apparently an informal agreement that Payne might pay an additional £50 "if the work answer'd." Dr. Johnson calculated that "honest Tom Payne," as the Burneys called him, must have made a profit of £500 in the first four months of sales, July to October 1782.⁷⁵ Frances Burney's letters record her growing realization that she had not

been able to cash in on her enormous authorial credit: "Miss Cholmondeley told me she understood I have behaved like a poor simple thing again, & had a Father no wiser than myself⁷⁶ Burney's "pretty spill" from Cecilia was invested in the three-per-cents, that is, appropriately, in the national debt; it paid her a mere pittance annually.

Dr. Burney casually, indeed unconsciously, sacrificed his daughter's individual financial interest to what he probably saw as the family's corporate good. Payne had been his own publisher, and his son James was courting Payne's daughter Sally; "Old Payne's" friendship was a valuable family asset, and sending him a profitable book would only improve and solidify their connection. The incident reveals, once again, the discrepancy between Dr. Burney's orientation toward networks of influence and patronage and his daughter's orientation toward an anonymous marketplace. As we have seen, there was a paradoxical complementarity to these orientations early in Frances Burney's career, but after Cecilia their incompatibility became increasingly apparent.

Dr. Burney was relatively indifferent to the cash value of his daughter's copyright because he was not ambitious for her financial independence. His ambition, rather, was to extend the family's honor and social reach through her authorship, and this ambition was completely fulfilled when Frances was offered a place at court as Second Keeper of the Queen's Robes. She would have a maid and footman and be paid a salary of £200 a year; her duty would be to assist at the queen's toilette. Her father was delighted at this proposal of "a place solicited by thousands and thousands of the women of Fashion and Rank"⁷⁷ and even more excited by the prospect, as Joyce Hemlow remarks, "of organ-posts for himself, ships for James, schools, degrees, and dioceses for Charles."⁷⁸ The daughter dreaded to disappoint such high hopes: "I see him so much delighted at the prospect of an establishment he looks upon as so honourable . . . [B]ut what can make me amends for all I shall forfeit?"

The sad story of all Frances "forfeited" to the Burney family

73. Quoted in Doody, p. 145.

74. Quoted in Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney*, p. 151.

75. The information on these transactions is all drawn from Hemlow, pp. 149-51.

76. Quoted in Hemlow, p. 151.

77. Quoted in Hemlow, p. 196.

78. Hemlow, p. 197.

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interest during her five years in court has been frequently retold. She never was able to command much patronage; she had little time to herself; she was separated from her friends and kin alike and subjected to the stultifying routine of a royal domesticity that was at once deadeningly conventional and, as George III's insanity deepened, pathological. Her career as a novelist was suspended during these years, although she did write several tragic plays while attached to the royal household. Even the £200 salary, which should have made her some amends, seems to have been a source of oppression:

If you will not laugh at me too much, I will also acknowledge that I liked Mr. Mathias all the more for observing him as awkward and embarrassed how to present me my salary as I felt myself in receiving it.

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 degradation: money in its effects, and its produce, creates far different and more pleasant sensations. But here it made me feel so like—what I am, in short—a servant! We are all servants, to be sure, in the red book, but still—⁷⁹

The source of degradation here is mysterious; the phrase "money, by itself money" directs our attention to the physical stuff, with its odd lack of substance, which is immediately opposed to "money in its effects, and its produce." In that moment of receiving bank notes, before their anonymous potency has been traded for particular things, the author seems to feel her own substance disappear; she becomes just another servant. "Money, by itself money" at once specifies too little and too much. To Burney's mind, it simultaneously denies her individuality and recalls the family history by conjuring the "place" where her father's career began, that of a servant.

When Burney, after exhausting the possibilities of patronage for her family, resigned her place in the royal household, she was given a pension of £100 per year, an adequate income for a single gentlewoman. But in 1793 she married an impoverished French émigré, M. d'Arblay, who had been adjutant general to Lafayette, had been imprisoned in Nivelles, and had escaped with nothing

but his life: "Et me voilà, madame, réduit à rien, hormis un peu d'argent comptant, et encore très peu."⁸⁰ At first they lived on Burney's income—£100 from the pension, and £20 per annum from the invested revenue from *Cecilia*—but inflation, the failure in production of one of the tragedies she had written while serving as Second Keeper of the Queen's Robes, and the birth of a son sent her back to her surest resource, the novel.⁸¹

This time she was determined to ensure the highest income possible by subscription publication. Like *Cecilia*, she now had "a motive for economy" in her husband and son. Echoing and reinforcing her own sentiments, her brother Charles composed a slogan to guide his negotiations with the booksellers: "What Evelina . . . does now for the Son of Lowndes, & what *Cecilia* does for the Son of Payne, let your third work do for the Son of its Authour."⁸² At the beginning of the saga of the publication of *Camilla*, we might say, Frances Burney was in the position *Cecilia* attained at the end of her story: she was liberated from a sense of obligation to Everybody and Nobody. She was finally free to pursue her self-interest in the form of cash. As if to mark the discontinuity represented by this policy, she associates herself with the usurious instrument of *Cecilia*'s indebtedness, asking Charles to use "Jewish callousness"⁸³ in his dealings with the booksellers. Charles, in fact, proved a trustworthy agent, but she once again found herself at variance with the Burney family's collective needs. She wanted to publish by subscription, retaining the copyright and employing the bookseller who bid the highest amount for the project. Her family and friends all approved and enthusiastically joined in the subscription plan, for it demonstrated the extraordinary effectiveness of their extensive network of influence. But her father thought it was rude to deal so impersonally with the booksellers; moreover, her brother

80. Quoted in Hemlow, p. 229.

81. "For my own part I can only say, & urge to my Fanny to print, print, print!—Here is a resource [sic]—a certainty of removing present difficulties" (quoted in Bloom and Bloom, introduction to *Camilla*, p. xii; and in *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, vol. 2, ed. Joyce Hemlow and Althea Douglas [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972], letter 101, June 9, 1793, p. 148).

82. Quoted in Bloom and Bloom, introduction to *Camilla*, p. xviii; and in *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, vol. 3, letter 179, July 15, 1795, p. 140.

83. Quoted in Bloom and Bloom, introduction to *Camilla*, p. xvii; and in *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, vol. 3, letter 174, July 5, 1795, p. 126.

79. *D and L*, vol. 3, pp. 142–43.

James pushed the claims of his father-in-law, Payne. But Frances steadfastly pleaded the needs of her new family, especially her "bambino," over the interests of her original family. Marriage and motherhood had, ironically, given her a new sense of ownership in her works at the very moment when, legally, she had lost them. *Camilla* was her "Brain work as much fair & individual property, as any other possession in either art or nature,"⁸⁴ she wrote to her brother Charles when defending her decision to sell the job to the highest bidding bookseller no matter who he was. The author finally had a family of her own to defend her against the patronage network of the family that had previously owned her.

She could, moreover, keep this new family particular; her sense of responsibility to them did not perpetually ramify out into "Everybody" or dissolve into "Nobody." M. d'Arblay's status as a French exile ensured the separation of the two families (the Burneys could make nothing of d'Arblay) and sustained Frances's illusion that she was the "individual" to whom her "Brain work" belonged. The letters between Frances and her "agent," Charles, make no mention of d'Arblay or his wishes; the general is referred to simply, in his own word, as the book's "copiste." Even the siblings' debate about maintaining or selling the copyright after the subscriptions had been collected is oddly silent on the topic of the legal owner. Indeed, an 1812 letter from d'Arblay indicates that he did not know the copyright to *Camilla* ever had been sold.⁸⁵ In arguing whether or not to sell it, an argument sparked by her marriage, all parties seem to have forgotten that because of her marriage, all parties to sell. In becoming Madame d'Arblay, then, Frances Burney acquired both an alibi for asserting her individual economic interests in opposition to the Burneys' collective wishes and a docile, foreign husband who, "réduit à rien," apparently pressed no claims of his own.

Temporarily this arrangement gave her a location. With part of the approximately £2,000 she earned from *Camilla*, she and d'Arblay built *Camilla Cottage*, which was to have been both their home and their son's legacy. The name of the cottage stressed that one could turn cultural capital into a material structure, that through

the magic of the marketplace, properly exploited, one could write oneself into one's own stable and heritable place. But the stability proved short-lived. For a variety of complicated reasons, the d'Arblays spent most of the Napoleonic period in France, and eventually they lost *Camilla Cottage* when the land under it was sold.

Hence the transition from Burney to d'Arblay, which seemed at first to offer a stabilizing particularity, actually inaugurated a new set of displacements. Moreover, the marriage to d'Arblay recapitulated the author's association with *Nobody*. Like Dr. Burney, d'Arblay combined *Nobody* and *Somebody*, since he was a *déclassé* French nobleman "réduit à rien." Dr. Burney had started out as the *Nobody* that d'Arblay was on the brink of becoming. It was as if Frances Burney had been attracted to d'Arblay because he provided the heritage that her own father lacked, but a heritage that had been reduced simply to a name. This "rien," furthermore, put the author more at *Nobody's* disposal than she had ever been before. She was now completely intent on writing a novel that would sell, and the result was a marked decline in the quality of her work. *Camilla* was a great financial success, but it did not succeed with critics because it was hastily written and designed to please every taste. It tried, for example, to capitalize on the new craze for Gothic,⁸⁶ was excessive in its melodrama and trite in its conduct-book moralizing, and concluded with precisely the sort of payoffs Frances Burney had denounced as bribes when she defaulted at the end of *Cecilia*. In short, this capitulation to what the author apparently believed were the demands of her anonymous public actually produced a book that the public found disappointing. It sold on the basis of her reputation, but that reputation was also diminished by it. She had finally cashed in her credit with her readers, but only by devaluing her own paper.

In a sense, Burney continued to live off the credit of her first two novels for the rest of her life. Even the place that Napoleon gave d'Arblay when the couple lived in France was, the general thought, really just a tribute to "le mari de Cecilia," *Cecilia* being one of the emperor's favorite novels. She never wrote another truly popular work, although both *Camilla* and *The Wanderer* made money. However, because the criticisms of these later works belied their sales,

84. *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, vol. 3, letter 176, July 7, 1795, p. 130.

85. Quoted in Bloom and Bloom, p. xxiv.

86. See Bloom and Bloom on this point, p. xx.

because readers complained of having been disappointed in their expectations, the author continued to owe what she owned. The more she wrote, the more she sold, the deeper in debt she was to a public who continually complained that she was not making good on her earlier promise. The Nobodies who had taken such pleasure in her fictions gradually declined, it seemed, into nobody at all.

The Changeling's Debt

Maria Edgeworth's Productive Fictions

One might expect Maria Edgeworth not to have had the same feelings of indebtedness that plagued Frances Burney. Unlike the Burneys, the Edgeworths were gentry. Far from belonging nowhere, they lived in a town in Ireland called "Edgeworthstown," where the family had been installed since the time of Elizabeth. Maria Edgeworth, moreover, composed her first works for publication with her father's full approval, and she thought of their literary relationship as a "partnership." She had, furthermore, a far more fully developed rationale than Frances Burney's for explaining the role of fiction in the general economy of literature. And to top off all these advantages, she had been taught to believe in the "productivist" economic theories of the political economists, who stressed that human labor created value, and she applied their ideas to her own work as an author.

We might expect these various factors to combine into an optimism about staying out of debt, and many of Edgeworth's explicit statements fulfill that expectation. In an 1836 letter, for example, she declared, "I have always thought it disgracefully mean in literary manufacturers to trade upon their name and to put off unfinished works upon credit. That is what I never will do." In the same letter she explained that she relied on market forces themselves (as embodied in the booksellers) to keep her from living off her authorial credit: "The Booksellers, the publisher are the only advisers to be depended upon because both their interest and their

1. Letter to Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, April 15, 1836, in *The Education of the Heart: The Correspondence of Rachel Mordecai Lazarus and Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Edgar E. MacDonald (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1977), p. 276.

