

From Hays to Burney: an Approach to Female Difficulties in Early Nineteenth-Century English Fiction

Carmen María FERNÁNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ

Universidade da Coruña
cfernandezr@udc.es

Recibido: 11 de marzo, 2007

Aceptado: 23 de mayo, 2008

ABSTRACT

Eighteenth-century female writers depicted patriarchal constraints and produced texts which constitute an interesting reference for the study the representations of gender discrimination. Through an examination of texts and contexts, this work aims at evaluating Frances Burney's contribution to women's fiction in English at the beginning of the nineteenth-century by considering her caricature of the protagonist of Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) in her last novel, *The Wanderer or Female Difficulties* (1814). Burney portrays an unfeminine woman consumed by unrequited passion, who supports woman's rights and the French Revolution to the extreme. Emma Courtney's intellectual and economic difficulties are affected the hardships endured by Burney's protagonist from the point of view of gender studies. Rather than accomplishing a mere parody, Burney engaged in a powerful critique and offered a realistic vision of woman's position at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Key words: Frances Burney, Mary Hays, estudios de género, principios del siglo diecinueve.

RESUMEN

Las escritoras del siglo dieciocho retrataron los obstáculos patriarcales y produjeron textos que constituyen una referencia interesante para estudiar las representaciones de la discriminación de género. Este trabajo pretende evaluar más adecuadamente la contribución de Frances Burney a la ficción femenina inglesa de principios del siglo diecinueve a través de un examen de textos y contextos, considerando su caricatura de la protagonista de *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) de Mary Hays (1760-1843) en su última novela, *The Wanderer or Female Difficulties* (1814). Burney retrata a una mujer nada femenina consumida por una pasión no correspondida y que defiende incondicionalmente los derechos de la mujer y la Revolución Francesa. Este artículo contrasta las dificultades intelectuales y económicas de Emma Courtney con las penalidades a las que ha de hacer frente la protagonista de Burney desde el punto de vista de los estudios de género. Más que realizar una mera parodia, Burney articula una poderosa crítica y ofrece un vision realista de la opresión femenina a principios del siglo diecinueve.

Palabras clave: Frances Burney, Mary Hays, estudios de género, principios del siglo diecinueve.

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. 2. A doomed intellectual wanting to earn her living. 3. Upon her own exertions: Burney's *The Wanderer*. 4. Conclusion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The vindication of woman was nothing new in eighteenth-century English fiction. Many novels —also from men, such as Daniel Defoe *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana* (1724)— focused on how women earned their living and were forced to submit to necessity. Female authors were deeply concerned with the position of woman, and fiction became a potent tool for revising current prejudices and awakening women to the injustice of their social position. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), Ann Radcliffe's *The Female Advocate* (1799) and Priscilla Wakefield's *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (1798) are examples of how writers attempted to articulate an identity free from patriarchal colonisation and the domestic sphere, contributing to shape a feminist discourse which opposed the dominant one.

This paper deals with the representation of intellectual and economic female difficulties in fiction. For this purpose, we will analyse to what extent Frances Burney's rewriting of Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) in *The Wanderer* (1814) differs from the original and constitutes a radical novel. A detailed comparison of both works has not been so far undertaken, and here I would like to add a new view of Hays's and Burney's protagonists. I would suggest leaving aside the interpretation of *Emma Courtney* as sentimental outpouring in order to consider it as an autobiographical narrative vindicating women's cultural difference. While most studies on Hays —especially those by Helena Bergman (2003), Tilottama Rajan (1993), Claire Grogan (1999) or Anjana Sharma (2001)— center on textuality and narratological issues, the aim here is to stress the protagonists' social bildungs and their practical everyday problems. In my analysis, I take into account the similarities between Emma and Juliet since Elinor has traditionally been considered Juliet's alter ego. For Margaret A. Doody, Juliet and Elinor are “‘Two Ways of looking at the same Thing,’ ‘Two Sides of a Question’” (1988: 350), and Kristina Straub maintains that “the parallel between the two women's experience beyond the boundaries of conventional middle-class female behaviour casts some doubt on whose is the special case —the defeated Elinor's or the rewarded Juliet's” (1987: 189, see Austin 1996: 254).

Before studying the characters' dilemmas, we must pay attention to Hays's and Burney's approaches to fiction and to the reception of their works. The former's stress on desire and particular situations resembles Burney's prefaces to *Evelina* (1778) and *The Wanderer*, defending the novel as the best instrument to transmit lessons of experience and a “picture of supposed, but natural and probable human existence” (Burney, 1991: 7). In fact, the editor of *Emma Courtney* tries to be original, to search for the truth, and highlights that Emma Courtney is neither a sinner nor a saint, but someone “liable to the mistakes and weaknesses of our fragile nature” (Hays, 1987: XVIII). There is also a clear intention to achieve verosimilitude through a minute presentation of events. As for criticism, both Hays and Burney had extremely negative reviews, which was the norm for Hays, but not

for Burney, who had been cherished by the literary establishment since the publication of *Evelina*. Thus, William Hazlitt attacked Burney as unable to go beyond her grasp in *The Wanderer* and insisted that “the whole artifice of her fable [*The Wanderer's* one] consists in coming to no conclusion” (Walter and Glover 1993: 125)¹.

Despite coincidences, a paramount technical difference exists between Hays and Burney and conditions the reader's appreciation of characters: Burney's hetero and extradiegetic narrator, in Gerard Genette's terms (1972: 238, 253) functions as a filter while Hays resorts to a free autodiegetic voice. Quoting Eva Figes, Sharma explains that a woman writer “is at her best when she employs the detached irony of the authorial third person” (2001: 142), and, when Wollstonecraft and Hays used the first person, they lose strength as speakers for women (Sharma 2001: 152). Still, between 1780-1815 female authors changed from the personal to the authorial (Lanser, 1992) at the same time they fought to be recognised as *authors*. In as *Emma Courtney*, Hays simply wants to confer the female voice an authority traditionally denied it, and the special characteristics of a first-person account, a herstory, contributes, as we will see, to build a narrative of incomparable (and defiant) freshness. In fact, the term *memoirs* implies a therapeutic exercise of retrospection, a temporal distance regarding facts and situations, at the same time as guaranteeing detachment and exhibitionism. On the other hand, Burney's narrator is supporting the protagonist's actions all the time and —as we will see— emphasising the cruel treatment that Juliet receives from those around her.

2. A DOOMED INTELLECTUAL WANTING TO EARN HER LIVING

Apart from being a Jacobin and a friend of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, Mary Hays (1760-1843) was admired for her intellectual accomplishments by the liberal London literati. Hays became a novelist (*The Victim of Prejudice* [1799]) and a regular contributor to *Monthly Magazine*, where she published a series of articles on the philosopher Helvetius, but she also wrote feminist essays (*Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous* [1793]) and biographies (*Memoirs of Queens* [1821]). Her novels were generally regarded as mere accounts of a woman's romantic ravings before being recovered by editors and feminists in the 1980s and 1990s. Nowadays Hays remains less canonical and less studied than Burney or Wollstonecraft, but *Emma Courtney* still interests feminist studies. Sharma thinks that *Emma Courtney* “juxtaposes the concern common to women's novels —family coercion and constraint— with ideas derived

¹ See also Doody's Introduction to *The Wanderer* (1991: XXXIII) and Clark's summary (2007). On Hays, see G. J. Barker-Benfield (1992: 368), Binhammer (2003: 6), Sharma (2001: 164, note 5) and Fisk (2006: 133).

from the feminist controversy about women's intellectual confinement and the resultant psychic dissonance" (2001: 140), and, more recently, Patricia Meyer Spacks states in her last book that Hays's novel shows how "personal neurosis reflects societal deformation" (2006: 250).

Inspired by Hays's own relationship with William Fend, *Emma Courtney* deals with an unconventional woman who falls desperately in love with a man and declares her feelings to him. The novel contains a realistic account of Emma's childhood, her efforts to become economically independent and the obstacles she finds. Apart from her romantic longings, Emma's unhappiness derives from her intention to cultivate her intellectual pursuits and to become an independent entity in the economic world, a *mulier oeconomica*. In this last aspect, she is related to Burney's Juliet. Emma aspires to be judged as a rational being, and, though her beloved Harley stimulates her mind and tutors her, she soon experiences the effects of gender difference in the intellectual realm as explained by Chris Weedon, that is, as the way in which relations of knowledge and power permeate all areas of life (1999: 5).

At the end of the eighteenth century, an educated woman was totally useless and foregrounded²², a situation denounced by Wakefield in *Reflections*. Women could educate themselves, though in doing so they risked being considered as freaks, rare exceptions to the general rule, and were ostracised for two reasons. First, scientific and philosophical studies were totally unsuitable for a woman, and, two years after the publication of *Emma Courtney*, Reverend Richard Polwhele coined the term 'unsex'd females' in a mock-heroic poem to refer to those women who had abandoned their feminine interests for a militant philosophy of sexual and social reform when intellectualism was masculine. Second, an education above her status, such as Emma's or Juliet's, was something to avoid in a girl because it lowered her in the marriage market and made her depart from the feminine prototype which promotes reserve and self-effacement. As a result, Emma perceives that she is:

a woman, to whom education has given a sexual character. It is true, I have risen superior to the generality of my oppressed sex; yet, I have neither the talents for a legislator, nor for a reformer, of the world. I have still many female foibles, and shrinking delicacies, that unfit me for rising to arduous heights. Ambition cannot stimulate me, and to accumulate wealth, I am still less fitted (Hays 1987: 120).

Her studies keeps Emma apart from dreaded "*languor and inanity*" (Hays 1987: 120), but survival in a misogynist world is handicapped by men, such as Mr.

²² On the kind of intellectual pursuits achieved by women in the eighteenth-century, see Todd (1989: 211-2) and Rogers (1982: 27-33). On women's general role in the economic and cultural realm, see Davidoff and Hall (1987: 272-315, specially 291 on girls' education as very different from boys' one) and also Armstrong (1987: 59-95). Stone also devotes some space to women's education (1977: 228-33).

Melmoth, who is shocked by the idea that women think and equates them with servants (Hays 1987: 115). The protagonist cannot but retort: “a woman's exercising her discriminating powers, is not wonderful, since it might operate greatly to their disadvantage” (Hays 1987: 115). Echoing Wollstonecraft, Hays laments that sexual difference is fetishised by an education that limits women's attention to their bodies and does not consider their minds. In the world of the novel, some women cannot look beyond their endogamic superficial circle and Emma feels intellectually isolated. No matter how hard she struggles to point out the inconsistencies of patriarchy, a fine lady cannot realise that “to be treated like *ideots* [sic] was no real compliment, and that the men who condescend to flatter our foibles, despised the weak beings they helped to form” (Hays 1987: 116). As for marriageability, in *Memoirs*, Mrs. Morton points out Emma's greatest advantage turned into an evil: “in the education of my family, I desire no interference [...] their expectations are not great, and your *elegant* accomplishments [sic] might unfit them for their future, probable stations” (Hays 1987: 35). Such an environment only promotes unhappiness, and Hays is here questioning the *validity* of woman's erudition in a patriarchal society, its practical use and consideration. Unluckily, she cannot offer an optimistic solution to the problem since women's intellectual *differance* was totally ignored.

Hays resorts to different images to criticise patriarchy, all of them denoting woman's social displacement. She equates women with slaves (Hays 1987: 146-7) and later with soldiers, which is not at all surprising. The eighteenth century was an age of much philanthropic activity aimed at the poor and the slaves, and Hays would later turn to evangelicalism, to the point that Hannah More published Hays's works for the edification of the poor (Todd 1989: 205, 216). Abolitionism and revolution were in the air. Helen Maria Williams (*Letters Written in France* [1790] and *Letters from France* [1792-6]) and Catharine Macaulay (*Letters on Education* [1790]) had already written about the Empire and female enslavement, and later conservatives such as the Anglo-Irish Maria Edgeworth in *Patronage* (1814) will also include this topic in their work. In one important scene, Pemberton, Melmoth and Harley engage in an argument on slave trade in which Emma supports Harley's the defense of education and gradual emancipation of African people (Hays 1987: 115-6). Unfortunately, Hays does not expatiate on Emma's views.

On the other hand, Emma publicly states of soldiers that “their trade is *murder*, and their trappings, in my eyes, appear but as the gaudy pomp of sacrifice” (Hays 1987: 113). Hays even questions the nature of crime. For her, the difference between soldiers and housebreakers is simply conventional and depends on the *value* assigned by society:

the one, rendered desperate by passion, poverty, or injustice, endeavours by wrong means to do himself *right*, and through this terrible and pitiable mistake destroys the life or the property of a fellow being —The others,

wantonly and in cold blood, cut down millions of their species, ravage whole towns and cities, and carry devastations through a country (Hays 1987: 114).

For Sharma, one of Hays's merits lies in the presentation of the real-life situation of women like herself, who, despite their intelligence, are doomed to indigence and humiliation (2001: 144). In this aspect, Hays's achievement must be set apart from Elizabeth Inchbald and Wollstonecraft, who confined themselves to describing the financial distresses of lower-class women: "In stark contrast, and with more conscious social realism, Hays chooses to concentrate on characters whose status as impoverished, educated gentlewomen is their ultimate tragedy" (Sharma 2001: 161). Like Burney, Hays accomplishes a top-down analysis of society and does not forget unprotected women, such as the widows Mrs. Melmoth (Hays 1987: 17) and Mrs. Harley (Hays 1987: 55), who are left a limited income after their husbands' deaths.

Deprived of male protection, Emma thinks of mercantilising her education by working as a governess, and she witnesses how society handicaps females in the labour realm. The same happens when she wants to administer her maternal inheritance, which echoes the situation of the heroine in Burney's *Cecilia* (1782). Hays is exposing the inconsistent patriarchal tenet that women must be economically stable: "Cruel prejudices! —I exclaimed— hapless woman! *Why was I not educated for commerce, for a profession, for labour?*" (Hays 1987: 31, my italics). What is worse, while patriarchal capitalism encourages men to prosper in their professions, women remain as "insulted beings, [who] must be content tamely to look on, without taking any part in the great, though often absurd and tragical, drama of life" (Hays 1987: 86). Teaching and being a governess were contemplated as an extension of childbearing, a serious Christian activity (Davidoff and Hall 1987: 293), but, as Lawrence Stone explains, they had become occupations for educated single females of decent households usually without a name or a dowry (1977: 244). Those women forced to move from home and work becoming thus the companion of an aunt or an uncle were depicted in Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*: "A teacher at school is only a kind of upper servant, who has more work than the menial ones. A governess to young ladies is equally disagreeable" (1787: 70).

The negative view of civilization runs parallel to the condemnation of modern life and to the perception of woman in ecofeminist terms, as more related to nature than to culture. Depressed, since her counsellor and friend, the Godwinian Mr. Francis, is leaving her, Emma is deprived of a real companion and seeks shelter in nature in a scene much resembling Ann Radcliffe's novels:

Every object appeared in unison with my feelings, my heart swelled with devotional affections, it aspired to the Author of nature. After having bewildered ourselves amid systems and theories, religion, in such situations,

returns to the susceptible mind as a *sentiment* rather than as a principle (Hays 1987: 41).

However, the contemplation of natural beauty neither satisfies her nor eases her spirits. Emma also complains on the impersonalisation of the city for the rational woman: “I walked through the crowded city and observed the anxious and busy faces of all around me [...] I beheld no path open to me, but that to which my spirit could not submit— the degradation of servitude” (Hays 1987: 164).

Economic self-negation has consequences on self-image. Emma considers herself a madwoman: “Mine, I believe, is a solitary madness in the eighteenth century: it is not on the altars of love, but of gold that men, now come to pay their offerings” (Hays 1987: 146). She reduces women to the condition of marginal beings, either as “the wretched, degraded victims of brutal instinct”, or as “refined, romantic, factitious, infortunate beings” (Hays 1987: 146-7). The frequent association of woman with a baby unable to grow (Todd 1989: 201) also appears, so Emma defines herself as a “child in the drama of the world” (Hays 1987: 31, 135), somebody who lives a wretched life (Hays 1987: 139); in the middle of the novel, loneliness leads her to feel like “an alien in the world — and alone in the universe” (Hays 1987: 163). As we can see, Emma casts doubt on the female sphere in the same way that Juliet's words and thoughts will dissect society some years later.

3. UPON HER OWN EXERTIONS: BURNEY'S *THE WANDERER*

Fanny Burney, Frances Burney or Mme. D' Arblay (1752-1840) is an important figure in eighteenth-century studies for several reasons. Thanks to her wit and vital experiences, she had material enough to present the complex lives of women at the end of the century, she cultivated several genres excelling in the novel, and she touched on subjects still relevant for women nowadays in works such as *Evelina*, *Cecilia* or *Camilla* (1796). Feminist scholars have already stressed and praised Burney's social dimension, seeking to dismantle her traditional image of a proper lady. In some aspects, Burney's conservatism must be challenged as it is reflected in some articles in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney* (2007). Sara Salih (2007), for example, focuses on unstable society in *Camilla* (1796) and *The Wanderer* and, according to Doody, Burney constantly asks questions about the relation of the individual to community and to society (2007: 96-7). The fact that Burney embraced advanced positions characteristic of radical authors reveals the complexity characterising contemporary female writers traditionally branded as conservative (Hannah More, Lady Mary Montague, Elizabeth Carter, Anna Seward, Hester Thrale and Ann Radcliffe) and radical (Mrs. Barbauld, Mary

“Perdita” Robinson, Charlotte Smith, Helen Maria Williams, Ann Yearsley, Mary Hays, Angellica Kauffmann and Emma Crewe)³³. The new approach to Burney as a subversive writer is sponsored by Julia Epstein (1989) in her ground-breaking book on Burney's anger, where she emphasises that “the chaos, ferocity, and violence of Burney's prose allows us to unravel the constraint cultural situation not just of her own, but of women's writing in general” (1989: 5). Later researchers, such as Audrey Bilger (1998), Catherine Craft-Fairchild (1993) and Brian McCrea (2005), are much indebted to Epstein's analysis.

The Wanderer is an impressive work on female identity, social displacement and cultural bias which presents a new version of Hays's female difficulties. Briefly summarised, the novel portrays a mysterious nameless heroine fleeing France during the Terror. When she arrives in England, she is called Ellis and has to labour in demeaning positions: she teaches the harp to upper class ladies, she does needlework in the company of her beloved friend Gabriella, she aspires to become a governess, etc. Juliet Granville confronts awful womanisers and spiteful termagants, and Burney purposely places her in a déclassé position, which allows the narrator to denounce inequality and articulate a courageous defence of female virtue and self-assertion. Juliet's hardships contrast with her extraordinary accomplishments and a self-sacrificing virtue rewarded with the marriage to a man of feeling and the hero of the novel, Albert Harleigh.

The intertextual relationships between Elinor Joddrel, the most appealing character in *The Wanderer* and a woman unwilling to sacrifice herself for others, and the British radical Mary Wollstonecraft have been well established by scholars, as have their different approaches to woman's rights⁴⁴. For Sara D. Spencer, “Burney expresses the desires of women in undertones in her novels [...] Wollstonecraft, on the other hand, produces ‘unleashed’ aggressive commentaries” (2004: 15). However, positions are divided on whether or not Burney's parody refers to the protagonist in *Emma Courtney* (1796)⁵⁵, who became a popular figure mocked and rewritten by Elizabeth Hamilton in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) and Maria Edgeworth in *Belinda* (1801)⁶⁶. Critics insist on the multiple parallelisms between Emma and Elinor, but there are important differences. Elinor has three functions in *The Wanderer*: she denounces the excesses and injustice towards Juliet, she parodies sentimentalism, and she creates obstacles between Juliet and Harleigh. Elinor is determined to act like a man and even cross-dresses (Burney 1991: 356). Her erotomaniac pursuit of Harleigh in *The Wanderer* is

³ This dichotomy still pervades and is supported by Mellor (1994: 332).

⁴ See Rogers (1990: 163-4), Spence (2004: 18), Cutting-Gray (1992: 106) and Craft-Fairchild, who summarises in a note the opinions of some critics (1993: 129, note 18).

⁵ See Doody (1988: 336-8 and 1991: XXVII), Rogers (1990: 153, 162) and Austin (1996: 257, 264).

⁶ On the differences regarding Hamilton's protagonist, see Ty (1991) and Doody's Introduction to *The Wanderer* (1991: XXIX).

clearly a critique of Emma and an examination of her inflamed rhetoric confirms this fact. Her words after her first attempt to commit suicide are a good example:

Is he not arrived, then? —Impenetrable Harleigh! And can he sleep? O noble heart of marble! Polished, white, exquisite —but unyielding!— Ellis, send to him yourself! Call him to me immediately! It is but for an instant! Tell him it is but for an instant! (Burney 1991: 372).

Moreover, she feigns conversion and repentance, and the narrator evaluates Elinor at the end:

Despair, with its grimmest horror, grasped her heart at this self-detection [Harleigh's marriage]; but pride supported her spirit; and Time, the healer of woe, though the destroyer of life, moderated her passions, in annihilating her expectations; and, when her better qualities found opportunity for exertion, her eccentricities, though always what were the most conspicuous in her characters, ceased to absorb her whole being (Burney 1991: 872-3).

On the other hand, Elinor and Juliet have totally different views of female difficulties, which helps us to see that Juliet resembles Emma in many aspects. For Elinor, female difficulties refer to the limitations to act freely, especially in their emotional realm: “Debility and folly! Put aside your prejudices, and forget that you are a dawdling woman, to remember that you are an active human being and your FEMALE DIFFICULTIES will vanish into the vapour of which they are formed” (Burney 1991: 397). Juliet, however, points at more practical matters:

Deeply hurt and strongly affected, how insufficient, she exclaimed, is a FEMALE to herself! How utterly dependant upon situation —connexions— circumstance! how nameless, how for ever fresh-springing are her DIFFICULTIES, when she would owe her existence to her own exertions! Her conduct is criticised, not scrutinized; her character is censured, not examined; *her labours are unhonoured, and her qualifications are but lures to ill will!* Calumny hovers over her head, and slander follows her footsteps! (Burney 1991: 275, my italics).

Unlike Emma, Juliet lacks the name of the father, a characteristic of many —not all— Burneyan heroines from novels and dramas, which will make Juliet subservient to the will of other people until her identity as an English earl's daughter in disguise is revealed. Instead of on the intellect, Burney will use Juliet to focus more directly on the economic reward of woman's skills and on the superficial world. She may have been influenced by the fact of being a musicologist's daughter: Dr. Burney served the rich and the snobs, which made Frances being more conscious than Hays of her status as a writer-artist, somebody constantly exposed to the public gaze and taking part in the literary market. Juliet will confront a world in which a woman is supposedly a jewel to

be admired, a passive object unable to suffer, while in practice she is exploited both by men and by other women. The protagonist appears as an educated or talented woman able to play the harp (Burney 1991: 73), talk about the theatre with Lord Melbury (Burney 1991: 101) and read English and French authors (Burney 1991: 116). However, she feels as handicapped as Emma, and Juliet reflects on the limitations of female talent:

ornamental to the higher, or educated class!...those which, while preserving her [woman] from pecuniary distress, will not aggravate the hardships or sorrows of her changed condition, either by immediate humiliation, or by what, eventually, her connexions may consider a disgrace! (Burney 1991: 289).

By exposing the personal, Burney's heroine questions society as much as Emma does. Comfortable positions do not exist as such even for the wealthy, who are, as in *Emma Courtney*, too busy to realise the social injustice that surrounds them. No matter how highly Juliet's skills are praised and reveal a good education (Burney 1991: 78), *The Ellis* —as Brighthelmstone people call her— gets no more economic profit than the applause of snobs. Juliet, Miss Arbe's "unconsidered, unaided protégée" (Burney 1991: 319), a question that could perfectly well come from Emma's mouth: "What is woman, —with the most upright designs, the most rigid circumspection, —what is woman unprotected? She is pronounced upon only from outward semblance: —and indeed, what other criterion has the world?" (Burney 1991: 344). A woman is trapped in conventions, and Miss Arbe persuades Juliet not to accept Mr. Tedman's carriage: "If, at the moment people of distinction are shy of you, you know to cultivate amongst mechanics, and people of that sort, it's all over on you. Persons of fashion can't possibly notice you again" (Burney 1991: 265). As in Hays, patriarchal scrutiny, what others might think of women's night erudition or of their relationship with lower-class people, is first and foremost in women's minds.

Structurally, *The Wanderer* is divided into five volumes each one comprising two books. The pervading didacticism is reinforced by the narrator's commentaries and defence of Juliet', which allows the expression of female subjectivity. Juliet's appeals run parallel to the narrator's remarks. The narrative voice summarises the character's impressions, but, on many occasions we have a less mediated access to her feelings, for example, when Juliet dreads being exhibited in public:

Ah! Ye proud, ye rich, ye high! thought she, why will you make your power, your wealth, your state, thus repulsive to all who cannot share them? How small a portion of attention, of time, of condescension, would make your honours, your luxuries, your enjoyments, the consolation, not the oppression, of your inferiours [sic] or dependants? (Burney 1991: 307-8).

In Burney's first published work, *Evelina*, there was a complaint of the scarcity of professional opportunities for women, and, what was worse, about the fact that men were performing tasks considered as feminine in the working world, which can be registered when the naïve Evelina arrives in London in the company of the Mirvans:

we were more frequently served by men than by women; and such men! So sinical [sic], so affected! They seemed to understand every part of a woman's dress better than we do ourselves; and they recommended caps and ribbands with an air of so much importances, that I wished to ask them how long they had left off wearing them (Burney 1994: 30).

Katharine Rogers maintains that, in *The Wanderer*, Burney denounces female incapacity for life and the contradiction in male culture between the virtue requested to women and the freedom granted to men (1990: 141). In fact, Juliet joins delicacy and virtue, two characteristics of the eighteenth-century heroine, and Burney places her in a *déclassé* position which forces Juliet to adopt a variety of jobs, ranging from teaching the harp to upper class ladies, to doing needlework or to becoming a governess. Self-display eroded reputation as Nancy Armstrong points out: "It is a woman's participation in public spectacle that injures her, for as an object of display, she always loses value as a subject" (1987: 77). This was of great importance for Burney, and conduct books condemned working women as economic competitors with men. *The Wanderer* presents a panorama of British society from the highest ranks to the rural poor and destabilizes many preconceived images. Sooner or later, all women realise that marriage means neither an escape nor the acquisition of power over a man as Miss Tedman or Selina think. Women see their fate as sexual commodities, and the following image about milliners is quite revealing: "Customers pressed upon customers; goods were taken down merely to be put up again; cheapened but to be rejected; admired but to be looked at, and left; and only bought when, to all appearance, they were undervalued and despised" (Burney 1991: 426).

According to Burney, female mutual understanding is just impossible, and patriarchy has rendered women weaker and weaker to the point of being perceived as isolated creatures. Juliet is accordingly called a "female Robinson Crusoe" (Burney 1991: 873) and turns to nature. However, instead of a symbol of protection, as in Hays, Burney uses landscape to admire creation:

What lesson can all the eloquence of rhetoric, science, erudition, or philosophy produce, to restore tranquility to the troubled, to preserve it in the wise, to make it cheerful to the innocent, — like the simple view of beautiful nature? So divine in harmony, in its variety so exquisite! Oh great Creator! beneficent! omnipotent! thy works and religion are one! Religion! source and parent of resignation! under thy influence how supportable is every

calamity! how supportable, because how transitory becomes all human woe, where heaven and eternity seem full in view! (Burney 1991: 676).

Burney also resorts to secondary characters, such as Sir Giles Arbe, to express social discomfort. This eccentric gentleman articulates a powerful defence of the artists as people who contribute to the tradesmen and farmers' happiness (Burney 1991: 324-5), equalling them with the rest of the workers and, therefore, offending his audience composed of high-class ladies: "For he does not pipe or skip at his own hours, but at yours; he does not adorn himself for his own warmth, or convenience, but to please your tastes and fancies [...] And all this, to gain himself a hard and fatiguing maintenance, in amusing your dainty idleness, and insufficiency to yourselves" (Burney 1991: 325). Sir Giles Arbe supports Juliet before Mrs. Maple and Loddard ("Nobody is born to be trampled upon", Burney 1991: 522-3) and accuses Juliet's pupils of being "sad little empty heads" (Burney 1991: 297). Where Juliet could never reveal her views, Sir Giles Arbe asserts about Juliet's submission to Mrs. Ireton: "What can rich people be thinking of to lay out their money in buying their fellow creatures' liberty of speech and thought! [...] Tell a human being that she must only move to and fro, like a machine? Only say what she is bid, like a parrot? [...] How can great people be so little?" (Burney 1991: 524-5).

Hays and Burney's radicalism was not new since they employed literature to denounce and criticise social ostracism in their essays. In Burney's little known *Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French Clergy* (1793), the author made a compassionate plea for France, her husband's, and exposed her philanthropic views. She urged British women to help "a distressed herd of fellow creatures from want" (Burney 1990: 20) and condemned the tendency to see things in black and white: "It is an offence to Religion, an injury to Providence, to suppose That vast tract of land wholly seized by evil spirits; though licentiousness, rapacity, ambition, and irreligion have given rulers to it, of late, abhorrent to all humanity" (Burney 1990: 12). In *The Wanderer*, published after Burney's ten-year exile in France, Juliet is French by birth, and France functions as the Other. Furthermore, Gabriella, Juliet's French friend, is vindicated by Sir Jaspar Herrington: "'Offspring of a race the most dignified, she toils manually, not to degrade it mentally; — and I, shall I blush to owe my subsistence to my exertions?'" (Burney 1991: 637). Juliet and Gabriella's economic partnership constitutes, by the way, one of the few images of fruitful female co-operation in *The Wanderer*. As for Hays, two years after *Emma Courtney*, she produced *An Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* (1798) and her negative views about woman heavily recall Burney's famous image of the cypher or Nobody, so important for Burney's criticism and admirably analysed in Catherine Gallagher's book: "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" (1994: 206). Rajan quotes Hays's words on this aspect: "they [women] are not what they ought to be,

that they are not what men would have them to be, and to finish the portrait, that they are not what they appear to be" (1993: 154).

It is important not to skip masculinity in a novel full of misogynists from Mr. Scoope,-- who, like men in Hays, ignores the female role as participant in history and maintains that "inferiority of understanding [is] no defect in a female" (Burney 1991: 93),-- to the despicable Ireton, who thinks that "The horriddest [sic] thing I know is the condition tied to a man's obtaining the hand of a young woman" (Burney 1991: 530-1). They belong to Burney's gallery of female haters as brilliantly depicted in her previous comedies, such as *The Witlings* (1778-80) or *The Woman Hater* (1800-02). The former dealt with female intellect, but, due to its possible interpretation as a satire against Lady Elizabeth Montagu and the Bluestocking circle, it was retired, so that Burney moved to more moderate positions. The same happened with the Fable of the Genius⁷⁷ that Burney intended as the introduction to *Cecilia* and is now available thanks to the modern edition of the novel (Burney 1988: 943-6).

4. CONCLUSION

Hays and Burney denounced women's anonymity and dispossession in the world and radically extended their criticism to all social levels. However, they adopted different strategies. Hays was concerned with female intellectualism, she presented an excessively irresponsible self-centered protagonist and equated woman with alterity and liminality when woman's mobility and self-determination were forbidden. Emma may be subject to much criticism, but the truths she voices cannot be concealed. On the other hand, Burney wrote in *Anti-Jacobin England* and offered a parodic and a serious version of Emma Courtney in the same novel. She also deconstructed her readers' understanding of female difficulties and compromised with the female cause by focusing on practical matters from a sceptical point of view because she had already dealt with this issue in her comedies and fiction. Burney was not a female philosopher—though perhaps she did want to caricature this figure in *The Wanderer*—, and in her last novel she did not analyse female intellect as she did in *Camilla* (1796) with the character of Eugenia. Burney surpassed Hays by producing a polyphonic novel, much richer from the technical and thematic point of view, but neither Hays nor Burney envisioned a solid project of female education: more mature and enlightened proposals to reform society would be exposed by their contemporary Maria Edgeworth in *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1798), for example. Nevertheless, we

⁷ Anna Laetitia Barbauld also wrote a similar fable of "Knowledge and her Daughter" which is analysed by Robertson (2001: XIII-XVIII).

must consider *Emma Courtney* and *The Wanderer* as parallel critiques and documents of significant historical value, revealing the tensions and contradictions of female experience, which must be rescued and not forgotten in any analysis of gender in work dating from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

REFERENCES

- Ajmer, Karin and Britta Olinder, eds., (2003). *Proceedings from the 8th Nordic Conference on English Studies*. Göteborg: Universitatis Gothoburgensis. 187-92.
- Armstrong, Nancy (1987). *Desire and Domestic Fiction: a Political Study of the Novel*. New York: New York UP.
- Austin, Andrea (1996). "Between Women: Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*." *English Studies in Canada* 22.3: 253-66.
- Barker-Benfield, G.J (1992). Wollstonecraft, Hays, and the Conflict over Sensibility. *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 359-68.
- Bergman, Helena (2003). Uncovering "the sacred and mysterious veil" Mary Hays' Use of Monological Epistolarity in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. In Ajmer, Karin and Britta Olinder, eds., 187-92.
- Bilger, Audrey (1998). *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen*. Detroit: Wayne State UP.
- Binhammer, Katherine (2003). The Persistence of Reading: Governing Female Novel Reading in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* *Eighteenth-Century Life* 27.2: 1-22.
- Brown, Martha G. (1986). Fanny Burney's "Feminism". In Schoefield, Mary Anne and Cecilia Macheski, eds., 29-39.
- Burney, Fanny. (1988) [1782]. *Cecilia*. Ed. Peter Sabor and Margaret Anne Doody. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP.
- (1990) [1793]. *Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French Clergy*. Introduced by Claudia L. Johnson. Publication Number 262. The Augustan Reprint Society. William Andrews Clark Memorial Library. Los Angeles: University of California.
- (1991) [1814]. *The Wanderer*. Ed. Margaret Anne Doody. Oxford: OUP.
- (1994) [1778]. *Evelina*. Ed. Margaret Anne Doody. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- Clark, Lorna (2007). The Afterlife and Further Reading. *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*. In Sabor, Peter, ed., 163-79.
- Craft-Fairchild, Catherine (1993). *Masquerade and Gender: Disguise and Female Identity in Eighteenth-Century Fictions*. University Park: Pennsylvania UP.
- Cutting-Gray, Joanne (1992). *Woman as 'Nobody' and the Novels of Fanny Burney*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Dabundo, Laura, ed. (2000). *Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and Their Sisters*. Lanham, New York, Oxford: UP of America.
- Davidoff, Leonore and Catherine Hall (1987). *Family Fortunes: Men And Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*. London: Routledge.

- Doody, Margaret Anne (1988). *Frances Burney: the Life in the Works*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (2007). Burney and Politics. In Sabor, ed., 93-110.
- Epstein, Julia (1989). *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women's Writing*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.
- Fisk, Nicole Plyler (2006). "A Wild, Wick Slip She Was": The Passionate Female in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney*". *Brontë Studies* 31.2: 133-43.
- Gallagher, Catherine (1994). *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace 1670-1820*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Genette, Gerard (1972). *Figures III*. Collection Poétique. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Grogan, Claire (1999). The Politics of Seduction in British Fiction of the 1790s: The Female Reader and *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*. *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 11.4: 459-76.
- Hays, Mary (1987) [1796]. *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. Introduced by Sally Cline. New York and London: Pandora.
- Kennedy, Deborah (2000). Responding to the French Revolution: Williams's Juliet and Burney's *The Wanderer*. In Dabundo, Laura, ed., 5-17.
- Lanser, Susan Sniader (1992). *Fictions of Authority*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992. 61-80.
- McCrea, Brian (2005). Frances Burney's Anger. *The Burney Journal* 8: 34-45.
- Mellor, Anne K. (1994). *A Novel of Their Own: Romantic Women's Fiction, 1790-1830*. In Richetti, John, ed., 327-51.
- Rajan, Tilottama (1993). Autonarration and Genotext in Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. *Studies in Romanticism* 32, 2: 149-76.
- Richetti, John ed., (1994). *The Columbia History of the British Novel*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Robertson, Fiona, ed., (2001). *Women's Writing 1778-1838: An Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. XIII-XVIII.
- Rogers, Katherine (1982). *Fanny Burney: The World of Female Difficulties*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- (1990). *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England*. Brighton: the Harvester Press.
- Sabor, Peter, ed. (2007). *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Salih, Sara (2007). *Camilla and The Wanderer*. In Sabor, ed., 39-54.
- Schoefield, Mary Anne and Cecilia Macheski, eds., (1986). *Fetter'd or Free: British Women Novelist 1670-1815*. Ohio University Press.
- Sharma, Anjana (2001). A Different Voice: Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. *Women's Writing* 8, 1: 139-67.
- Spacks, Patricia Meyer (2006). *Novel Beginnings. Experiments in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Spence, Sarah D. (2004). Frances Burney and Mary Wollstonecraft: Female Difficulties and Feminism. *The Burney Journal* 7: 14-25.
- Stone, Lawrence (1977). *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*. Hardmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Straub, Kristina (1987). *Divided Fictions: Fanny Burney and the Feminine Strategy*. Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky.
- Todd, Janet (1989). *The Sign of Angellica*. London: Virago.

- Ty, Eleanor (1991). Female Philosophy Refunctioned: Elizabeth Hamilton's Parodic novel. *Ariel* 22.4 (1991): 111-29.
- Walter A.R. and Arnold Glover, eds., (1993). *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*. Vol 3. London: Dent.
- Weedon, Chris (1999). *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference*. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishers.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary (1787). *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*. London.