

Professionalism, Performance and Private Theatricals in Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*

(accepted for publication in *Romanticism*, forthcoming during 2012 or early 2013)

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**Keywords:** Frances Burney, professionalism, private theatricals, manners, sympathy, gender

[Music] was a profession so preferable to all others, in her taste, that she bore patiently and cheerfully the minute, mechanical, and ear-wearing toil, of giving lessons to the unapt, the stupid, the idle, and the wilful....

Frances Burney, *The Wanderer*<sup>1</sup>

This heartfelt description of the sheer drudgery her heroine, Juliet, must endure in teaching music brings to mind Frances Burney's own experience of her father's punishing teaching schedule.<sup>2</sup> As Margaret Doody has pointed out, in the section of *The Wanderer* that deals with the heroine's career teaching music, 'Burney was drawing on the lifelong experience of Dr. Burney as a music teacher, as well as on the teaching experiences of her musical brother-in-law, Charles Rousseau Burney, and her sister Hester.'<sup>3</sup> In an era that saw the increasing professionalization of many occupations, that of musician had an uncertain and peripheral position in the developing hierarchy, as Dr Burney's own gradual and hard-won social ascent demonstrated.<sup>4</sup> Yet at least music was one of the professions in which women could participate. As Penelope Corfield writes, 'women played a conspicuously low-ranking role' in the rise of the professions: 'They were not totally excluded from the professions but were clustered in the "nurturing" branches' – such as midwifery, nursing and, overwhelmingly, teaching; beyond these, creative professions such as authorship, acting and music offered small numbers of women a more or less precarious form of support.<sup>5</sup> In this essay, I argue

that Burney uses the private theatrical in *The Wanderer* as a vehicle through which to explore her heroine's brief professional career as a music teacher. The private performance of Vanbrugh and Cibber's *The Provoked Husband*, and in particular Juliet's performance as Lady Townly, allows the novel to forge important connections between manners, sympathy and the status of creative professionals, connections that resonate both within the novel itself and with Burney's own personal and familial aspirations.

Studies of women's relation to professionalization suggest that it can be seen in both pessimistic and more optimistic ways. Corfield's conclusions about the severely limited role of women in the process of professionalization are in keeping with Clifford Siskin's views in *The Work of Writing* (1998). Here he argues that the way in which modern professionalism developed allowed for the exclusion of women from the category and thus enabled the making of a particular literary history inaugurated by what he has called 'the Great Forgetting'.<sup>6</sup> Other critics, however, have seen women's relation to professional activity in a more positive light. Elizabeth Eger, for example, has described the eighteenth century as a time during which 'more and more women participated in the creation and cultivation of polite and professional culture'.<sup>7</sup> Betty Schellenberg, in *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2005), has stressed the professionalism of women writers in the period and the importance of imagining 'the woman writer as agent rather than victim', a point of view endorsed by Jennie Batchelor's recent examination of the careers of women novelists from the mid-eighteenth century to the first decades of the nineteenth.<sup>8</sup> The women writers she discusses shared, Batchelor argues, a striking belief 'in the potential of women's manual, intellectual and affective labour to provoke cultural, economic and social reform', evidence of 'the longevity of a mid-century moment [...] in which women's labour can be imagined as a source of pride and cultural optimism' (Batchelor, 186-7). Thus the mid-to-late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries seem to offer, simultaneously, stories of

erasure and decline on the one hand and stories of participation and endurance on the other; professionalization seems both to exclude women and yet to offer them opportunities. This may be because professionalization needs to be seen, as many critics have pointed out, in the context of a larger shift in the period from economies of value based on birth to those based, as Laura J. Rosenthal puts it, on ‘various forms of activity – including labor, self-presentation, manners, accumulation’.<sup>9</sup> This shift in status indicators increasingly produced throughout the period concomitant anxieties and opportunities: anxieties about how social distinctions in this changing world were to be made and maintained, and opportunities – however circumscribed – for those previously excluded to enter higher social circles. Frances Burney’s family situation encapsulated many of those anxieties and opportunities, as various members sought to establish themselves professionally in literature, music and art.

One of the paradoxes involved in developing a professional life was its combination of independence on the one hand and reliance on the support of influential patrons on the other. Patronage and the marketplace have been described as ‘thoroughly interwoven’ in the later eighteenth century and the nature of this mix has been explored in more detail in recent decades.<sup>10</sup> In *The Wanderer* Burney shows this complex interweaving in action as her heroine’s successful performance of gentility in the private theatrical leads to the enthusiastic notice of two young aristocrats – her half-siblings, in fact, but this is not revealed for some time – and this in turn provides the necessary recommendation that enables her to set up in business as a music teacher. Further, Lady Townly’s central role in exploring *The Provoked Husband*’s thematic concern with debt provides, as I shall show, a proleptic commentary on the status of creative professionals, a commentary that links the novel’s private theatricals with issues of performance and professionalism in such a way as to illuminate the complexity of Burney’s approaches to matters of gender and class. Sara Salih has helpfully suggested the dangers of either condemning Burney ‘as an arch-conservative’ or claiming her ‘as a crypto-

proto-feminist':<sup>11</sup> *The Wanderer*'s treatment of professionalization suggests rather a writer engaged in a struggle with the problem of things as they are, and scrutinizing, from the inside, the nature of a social shift as it takes place.<sup>12</sup>

*The Provoked Husband*, as Margaret Doody has noticed, is a play to which 'Burney seems to have been perpetually attracted'.<sup>13</sup> Referred to in *Cecilia*, it figures also in *Camilla* when the heroine's brother Lionel attempts to set up a theatre in the attic of Mrs Arlbery's house. In an earlier draft of the novel, private theatricals were to have been a more significant element. Mrs Solea directs a private performance of *The Provoked Husband* and casts Ensign Sheldon as the duplicitous Count Basset. The ensign takes offense, exclaiming, "I won't play the part of a scoundrel & a Coward for the prettiest Girl under the Sun!" Mrs Solea reassures him in the following terms: "[...] if I had desired you to perform a Man of Honour you would have had reason to take it ill, for it might seem as if I had not thought it your real character: but when I tell you to perform a Cheat & a Poltroon, I pay you the compliment of supposing you are naturally neither" (W, 903). The ensign and Mrs Solea apparently subscribe to opposite ends of a spectrum of opinion: at one end, performer and role become wholly identified, while at the other, they represent an ironic commentary on one another. Yet while these views appear to be oppositional, they reflect the same basic premise that the dynamic between performer and role cannot be regarded indifferently, as embodying a merely incidental relation to one another. The inclination to regard performers as to some degree identified with the roles they play affected perceptions of actors and actresses in the eighteenth century just as it does now; equally, knowledge of an actor's or an actress's personal life and circumstances could influence how their performances were read. Horace Walpole, for example, seems to have felt that similarity of rank at least between performer and role was an obvious benefit, commenting: 'when people of quality can act, they must act their own parts so much better than others can mimic them'.<sup>14</sup> Walpole's view is

representative of a common conception in the period that genteel manners were, as Laura Rosenthal puts it, ‘ultimately inimitable’; in the case of women, only those ‘of proper virtue and proper extraction could possess them’. As Rosenthal’s comment indicates, gentility in women extended ideally from manners to morals; but, as she goes on to stress, that critics had to argue for the inimitability of true gentility, ‘and that actresses from humbler origins sometimes succeeded, pointed to class identity itself as conditional and performative’ (‘Entertaining Women’, 167).

The extent to which genteel manners are imitable is a key element in Juliet’s performance as Lady Townly. Knowing only that she has escaped from revolutionary France in disguise, the reader has no more idea of the heroine’s life-story and circumstances than do the other characters: referred to at first as ‘the Incognita’, a misapprehension that her initials are ‘L. S.’ leads to her becoming known as Ellis until the beginning of the third volume, when her real first name (Juliet) is revealed. (For simplicity’s sake, I refer to her as Juliet.) Having none of the information by which they are used to interpret character, both readers and fellow characters have only Juliet’s performance – both within the play and beyond it – to go on. Even before she takes to the stage, this performance seems to offer evidence of her origins; when she appears dressed before the play begins, the narrator explains that the astonishment produced by her appearance is

from the ease with which she wore her ornaments, the grace with which she set them off, the elegance of her deportment, and an air of dignified modesty, that spoke her not only accustomed to such attire, but also to the good breeding and refined manners, which announce the habits of life to have been formed in the superiour classes of society. (*W*, 92 [i.11])

The narrator seems momentarily to be suggesting precisely the inimitability that Walpole believed in – to the discerning, Juliet's manner is evidence of her upbringing 'in the superiour classes of society' and betrays her elevated social status. But both the detail of Juliet's origins when revealed to the reader and, importantly, the narrator's attitudes towards the inimitability of manners are more complex than this.

Juliet turns out to be the daughter of a secret marriage between an aristocratic father and a mother who 'came not [...] from an ancient race' and was 'the orphan and destitute daughter of an insolvent man of business' (*W*, 640-1 [iv. 69]). Until the age of seven, Juliet was 'consigned to the care of Mrs. Powel, her maternal grandmother' and 'dwelt [...] upon the banks of the Tyne' (*W*, 642); only then was she sent to France for an education 'suitable to the future expectations and lot in life' of an aristocrat's daughter (*W*, 643). The evidence of her manners, then, may reveal accurately aspects of her upbringing, but it also effectively conceals the humbler details of her biography. Furthermore, the narrator's view of the significance of manners is less slavishly hierarchical than may at first seem to be the case: commenting on Juliet's shock at the behaviour of Mrs. Howel, the narrator cautions as follows:

[...] the experience of Ellis had not yet taught her, how distinct is the politeness of manner, formed by the habits of high life, to that which springs spontaneously from benevolence of mind. The first, the product of studied combinations, is laid aside, like whatever is factitious, where there is no object for acting a part: the second, the child of sympathy, instructs us how to treat others, by suggesting the treatment we desire for ourselves; and this, as its feelings are personal, though its exertions are external, demands no effort, waits no call, and is never failingly at hand. (*W*, 134 [i. 15])

Here the narrator's distinction between 'politeness of manner', which she sees as superficial, however habitual, and 'that which springs spontaneously from benevolence of mind' is fundamental to interpreting the understanding of performance in *The Wanderer*. The novel both exposes 'class identity as conditional and performative', to return to Rosenthal's formulation, *and* puts its faith in the power of sympathy, despite the possibilities for deception this may seem to open up.

As Margaret Doody has pointed out, the reader of the novel, 'not even let in on the heroine's central anxieties, [...] must give allegiance to the character before knowing what she conceals' (*Frances Burney*, 319). This allegiance is produced by the narrative's deployment of sentimental indicators, indicators that allow the reader to know that, despite our profound ignorance of the heroine's past, she is the centre of our sympathies and deserves to be so – a conviction that the unfolding of the plot of course confirms as correct (how different a novel this would be were she revealed to be a scheming insurgent rather than a courageous and loyal young woman!). Suzie Park argues that 'Burney seems rather to bar readers from sharing in the inner life of her heroine than to invite them to exercise any form of privileged knowledge about it.'<sup>15</sup> I would suggest that the reader's allegiance is even secured *because* of our ignorance, our lack of 'privileged knowledge': the heroine at the outset is a distilled essence of distress, its sign without any adequate explanatory gloss. Where many commentators in a variety of genres had cautioned the reader against allowing his or her sensibility to lead them into giving charity to anyone without first making strict enquiry into their circumstances, for fear of encouraging idleness or deception, *The Wanderer* takes the radical step of doing just that, and insists its heroine deserves succour in her distress before the story behind it is told.<sup>16</sup> Instead of asking questions before we recognise another's suffering as valid, we should give relief first and ask questions later.

*The Wanderer* thus draws a sharp distinction between sympathy and manners. Manners in the novel are seen as in a sense *only* imitable: whether performed by a duchess or a washer-woman they are simply superficial, learned behaviour. Of course they can be imitated more or less successfully, and while Burney's view of manners recognises the facile nature of convictions such as Walpole's, she certainly didn't believe that it was easy to imitate the manners of your social superiors. To do so convincingly, you must either have been in training from an early age (as in Juliet's case), or be an exceptionally good actress (as with Elizabeth Barry or Mary Robinson, for example). The dismal failure of the Watts family in Burney's comedy *A Busy Day* to successfully perform gentility is a case in point.<sup>17</sup> If manners are only ever a form of mimicry, however, *The Wanderer* feels differently about sympathy. The novel proposes that this originates, in keeping with Adam Smith's discussion of the quality in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), in the ability to imagine how we would feel in someone else's place: it 'instructs us how to treat others, by suggesting the treatment we desire for ourselves' (W, 134 [i. 15]). For Smith, however, the imagination that is involved in the operation of sympathy (and indeed sympathy itself) is neither good nor bad but simply a basic component of being human – 'by no means confined to the virtuous and humane'.<sup>18</sup> Sympathy in Burney, on the other hand, is precisely equated with moral development: it '*instructs* us' (W, 134 [i. 15], my emphasis).<sup>19</sup> What *The Wanderer* suggests is the way in which 'factitious' manners can stifle the development of sympathy, thus stunting moral growth and rendering society callously indifferent to the pain of others. That Juliet should take the role of Lady Townly is of particular relevance to this aspect of the novel.

Playing the aristocrat Lady Townly, as we have already seen, allows aspects of Juliet's own biography to be hinted at, while Townly's reformation, summed up in the play by the maxim that 'Nature points the way: / Let husbands govern, gentle wives obey',<sup>20</sup> might



seem to help assure the reader of Juliet's essential orthodoxy despite her unconventional situation. The tendency to identify performer and role offers a figure, at the end of the play, of innate breeding, sensibility and virtuous femininity. But as Sara Salih has pointed out, Burney 'might have cast Juliet as the virtuous and long-suffering Lady Brute in Vanbrugh's *The Provok'd Wife* (1697). Instead, the role of Lady Townly allows Juliet to depart from her usual restraint to give a jaunty rendition of the dissipated woman who enjoys thwarting the moral demands of her fretful husband' (Salih, 47). This 'comic performance', along with 'Juliet's assertive behaviour throughout the novel', suggests to Salih 'that the veneer of conduct-book femininity might conceal its opposite' (Salih, 48). Yet this reading doesn't sufficiently take account of the nature of Lady Townly's rejection of male authority, which takes the form of a kind of financial incontinence that Burney's fiction has repeatedly scrutinized for its damaging and frequently disastrous consequences on the lives of both the principal perpetrators and those whom they fail to pay or from whom they borrow. Appealing as Juliet's lively performance in the earlier part of the play is, it is in the last act that she 'appeared to yet greater advantage: the state of her mind accorded with distress' (W, 96 [i. 11]). Lady Townly's dissipation for the majority of the play, it could be argued, is not a clue to a concealed rebel, but rather a preview of those selfish and irresponsible women, such as Lady Arramede, who, a little further on in the narrative, will put off paying Juliet what she is owed as she tries to make her living as a music teacher.

The denouement of *The Provoked Husband* is precipitated by Lord Townly's discovery that money he gave his wife to pay outstanding debts has been gambled away. Mr Lutestring, Lady Townly's old mercer – 'turned off', her maid Mrs Trusty reveals, 'about a year ago because he would trust you no longer' (PW, V. ii. 45-6) – has turned up at the door asking for his money; Mr Poundage the steward is about to pay him, but Lady Townly sends Trusty to intercept: 'The pretty things [coins]—were so near falling into a nasty tradesman's

hands, I protest it made me tremble for them' (*PW*, V. ii. 97-99). Hearing the mercer swearing in fury at Poundage, Lady Townly comments, 'These tradespeople are the troublesomest creatures; no words will satisfy them' (*PW*, V. ii. 117-118). Her attitude is very much that of Mr Harrel in *Cecilia*, responding to the heroine's questions about Mrs Hill, the carpenter's wife: "Yes, yes, I know who the woman is well enough; she has taken care of that, for she has pestered me every day these nine months."<sup>21</sup> Harrel's response to being in debt is to borrow money to fund further expenditure; indeed one of the projects he has in mind is the building of a theatre at his country house, Violet Bank, a proposal that horrifies Cecilia: 'the sight of plans for new edifices when the workmen were yet unpaid for old ones; the cruel wantonness of raising fresh fabrics of expensive luxury, while those so lately built had brought their neglected labourers to ruin, excited an indignation she scarce thought right to repress:...' (*Cecilia*, 77). As the Harrels sink deeper into debt, the only solution Mr Harrel can propose is to attempt to maintain his credit via an ever more emphatic performance of the role of the man of fashion, with all the expenditure of non-existent income this involves. His maintenance of a credible front masks the ever-widening gap between his real financial situation and his ostensible social position until, at the moment when the performance must collapse, he shoots himself, in appropriately theatrical manner, at Vauxhall Gardens.

One of the key characteristics both Lady Townly and Mr Harrel lack is sympathy: the ability to put themselves in the positions of those to whom they owe money and really appreciate the hardship their selfish extravagance causes. The lack of sympathy is caused partly by an abnegation of responsibility for their own actions and partly by their construction of tradespeople as a kind of irritating insect – nasty, troublesome creatures pestering their hapless victims – rather than human beings who make their living by providing goods and services, and who can only continue to survive, and to provide those things, if they are paid for their time and materials. Already present in Burney's earlier writing, the acute sensitivity

to the material reality of work is even more evident in *The Wanderer*, and the choice to make her characters perform *The Provoked Husband* seems to me to be fundamentally related to this sensitivity.<sup>22</sup> Although the narrative ‘provides no real detail from the play’,<sup>23</sup> this does not, I would argue, prevent the content of the play from having significance, since *The Provoked Husband* was ‘very much alive’ on stage and in print not only throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, but also in the early nineteenth century, at the time of *The Wanderer*’s publication.<sup>24</sup> Juliet, as Lady Townly, gives a proleptic performance of a reformation in attitude that the very people watching her performance need themselves to learn, as their careless lack of interest in paying her what they owe later illustrates. Juliet may dazzle as Lady Townly and may seem to share aspects of her birth and breeding, but it is as much the invisible tradesman and ‘troublesome creature’ Mr Lutestring – who never actually appears on the stage – who represents her in the play.

As status became increasingly attached to what one did (one’s trade or occupation) rather than what one was (one’s birth), the status of different kinds of occupation of course became crucial; professionalization was part of the process by which status was conferred on some occupations and denied to others. It was inevitably a gradual process, and a complex one, and the distinction between ‘trades’ and ‘professions’, for example, was by no means completely clear-cut. In 1794 Patrick Boyle’s *General London Guide; or Tradesman’s Directory* listed attornies alongside bakers, and members of the Royal College of Physicians alongside weavers and orange merchants.<sup>25</sup> The complexities of categorisation had been increasing rapidly since the early part of the century, a period that saw, Penelope Corfield suggests,

[...] a multiplication of service specialisms, as established professions were joined by new ones. [...] accountants, surveyors and architects, scientists and engineers, opticians, and dentists – not to mention many on the fringes of professional status,

such as actors, artists, writers, poets, journalists, and ‘the whole Tribe of Singers and Scrapers’ who made a hazardous living as musicians in ‘this Musical Age’. (Corfield, 28)

Campbell’s *London Tradesman* of 1747 is the source of the quotations at the end of this passage; Campbell seems to have been in no doubt that the musician is of less use to society than ‘any other Mechanical Trade’, and only grudgingly allows that ‘If a Parent cannot make his Son a Gentleman, and finds, that he has got an Itch of Music, it is much the best Way to allot him entirely to that Study. The present general Taste of Music in the Gentry may find him better Bread than what perhaps this Art deserves.’<sup>26</sup>

Music is both ‘a profession so preferable to all others, in [Juliet’s] taste’ (*W*, 275 [ii. 28]) and the profession of Burney’s father, sister and brother-in-law; Campbell’s confident separation of musician from ‘Gentleman’ vividly suggests the struggle for status families like the Burneys faced. As a young woman, Burney recounted to her sister Susanna the comments of a Mr Blakeney on Garrick, a close friend of the Burney family. Blakeney complained, she tells her sister, that Garrick was ““another of those fellows that people run mad about – Lord God, Ma’am, ’tis a shame to think of such things! – an Actor Living like a Person of Quality! – scandalous!”” And he went on, ““now the whole kingdom is filled with [bankers], – we have nothing but Bankers, musicians & Dentists in all quarters.”” Burney’s comment on this was, ‘Did you ever hear the like? – *Clubbing* us with *Dentists*. I am surprised he omitted to mention *Barbers*, too!’ (*Early Journals and Letters*, iii. 417-18). It is productive to set Burney’s obvious objection in 1780 to musicians being ‘clubbed’ with dentists (or barbers) alongside her rendition of Juliet’s musical career in *The Wanderer*, a rendition that suggests such associations have more complex ramifications than the earlier reaction of comical outrage allows for.

Juliet's brief career as a music teacher is founded on her playing of Lady Townly in the private performance of *The Provoked Husband*, for it is this that brings her the admiring notice of Lady Aurora Granville and Lord Melbury, and Lady Aurora's friendship in particular that then marks her out as worthy of patronage in the eyes of others. As Miss Arbe wavers in her willingness to help Juliet, it is the knowledge that Lady Aurora has given Juliet twenty pounds that secures her patronage, and Miss Bydel's chatter only underlines how these things work: "Well, if that is the case, we must all try to do something for you, my dear. I did not know of any body's having begun. And I am never for being the first in those sort of subscriptions; for I think them little better than picking people's pockets. Besides that I entirely disapprove bringing persons that are poor into habits of laziness. However, if Lady Aurora has given so handsomely, one does not know how to refuse a trifle" (W, 224 [ii. 23]). The market is crucially defined by patronage, which operates in a similar way to modern celebrity endorsement: where Lady Aurora leads, Miss Bydel will follow, and what Miss Bydel wishes to buy into is not the product (she herself does not want music lessons) but its brand, stamped with the approval of Lady Aurora Granville.

James Thompson has described the heroine's predicament in *The Wanderer* as 'a kind of aristocratic nightmare':

[...] without support, money, status, family, and name, the Wanderer is dependent solely on her accomplishments at music, art, and sewing. Because these explicitly gendered skills are principally designed for courtship, they are difficult to market. Possessing these skills does not make them marketable, precisely because the possession of such skills marks the subject as one who does not need to market her skills.<sup>27</sup>

Yet, as we have already seen, Juliet is a product of a marriage between aristocracy and business, and while ‘accomplishments’ may have been frequently trivialized as ornamental accessories, the skills they involved were of course entirely marketable and formed the basis of professional careers and more or less profitable trades, as Burney’s own family demonstrated. Juliet worries not that her skills are not marketable but that her training in them has been insufficiently thorough, acquired ‘as a *diletante* [sic], not studied as an artist’ (*W*, 288 [ii. 29]). In a fascinating paragraph, the narrator simultaneously questions the solidity of Juliet’s expertise as a qualification for teaching and yet affirms her ‘powers of instruction’:

Where [...] only what is practised is performed; where one favourite piece, however laboriously acquired [...] gains a character of excellence, that [...] disputes the prize of fame, even with the solid rights of professional candidates; the young and nearly ignorant disciple, may seem on a par with the experienced and learned master. But to disseminate knowledge, by clearing that which is obscure, and explaining that which is difficult; to make what is hard appear easy [...] these were labours that demanded not alone brilliant talents, which she amply possessed, but a fund of scientific knowledge, to which she formed no pretensions. Her modesty, however, aided her good sense [...]; and rare indeed must have been her ill fortune, had a pupil fallen to her lot, sufficiently advanced to have surpassed her powers of instruction. (*W*, 288 [ii. 29]).

In this passage, the narrator seems torn between asserting ‘the solid rights of professional candidates’ on the one hand and the credibility of Juliet’s efforts at teaching on the other. She wishes to ensure that her reader appreciates the degree of expertise and knowledge teaching music requires, while at the same time not ruling it out for her ‘accomplished’ heroine. Partly this endeavour involves a recognition of the labour involved in those skills labelled ‘accomplishments’, and the narrator is determined to underline the laborious nature of the

acquisition of such skills. What this also does, however, is allow a space in which skills acquired for one purpose (ornament) can be credibly used for another (gainful employment). If the ‘new kind of property’ in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was ‘the possession of professional skills’ (Siskin, 142), women’s exclusion from it depended on seeing any skills they did happen to acquire as dilettante rather than professional: Juliet’s success in teaching music (however brief) suggests that the divide between the two was not necessarily as complete as might have been thought. Skills acquired privately for domestic amusement could become the basis for professional activity – as the careers of many writers, including Burney herself, attested.

Juliet’s successful career is, of course, both riddled with problems and short-lived. The problems are never related to the question of skill that Juliet herself worries about, but instead turn upon her lack of social definition: when her employers discover that she entered the country in disguise and that her origins are unknown to Mrs Maple, she is abruptly dismissed by most of them. Miss Arbe’s solution to the crisis is that Juliet must perform in public. By doing so, she would change her status from that of a woman who ‘had only been seen or noticed in private families’ whose ‘connexions and conduct’ must thus be scrutinised ‘because, in that case, she must, of course, be received upon a more friendly footing’ (W, 286 [ii. 29]). As a ‘public artist’, on the other hand, whose ‘performance is applauded’, Miss Arbe tells her, ‘you’ll have as many scholars as you like; and you may be as impertinent as you will. Your humility, now, won’t make you half so many friends, as a set of airs and graces, then, will make you partizans’ (W, 287 [ii. 29]). The shift from ‘friends’ to ‘partizans’ signals the loss of caste involved in public performance; as a woman, Juliet will ‘transgress against gentility and female delicacy in choosing public performance over living on handouts’ (*Frances Burney*, 352). Harleigh’s appeal to Juliet not to perform publicly brilliantly encapsulates the fluid state of affairs in the period. Rejecting the charge that he is ‘narrow

minded', he asserts that he feels 'as much respect for the character, where it is worthy, as admiration for the abilities, of those artists whose profession it is to give delight to the public', and he goes on: 'I have hinted that this plan might cloud my dearest hopes; imagine not, thence, that my prejudices upon this subject are invincible: no! but I have Relations who have never deserved to forfeit my consideration;- and these – not won, like me, by the previous knowledge of your virtues.—' (W, 338-9 [ii. 35]). Pleading to be seen as in some sense broad-minded and unprejudiced, Harleigh is nevertheless hamstrung by his determination to abide by the prejudices of his family and rank. As Mr Blakeney's outburst about Garrick's 'Living like a Person of Quality' on page 12 above demonstrates, however, celebrity actors (male and female) were in practice bridging the gap between professional performance and gentility (and indeed female delicacy, as Mrs Siddons showed).

*The Wanderer's* interest in issues of professionalization is partly an interest founded in the novel's investigation of peculiarly 'female difficulties', but it is by no means restricted to them. Even the sense that feminine accomplishments are ornamental and thus essentially luxury items only available to a certain privileged segment of society has a knock-on effect on the perception of those who teach those accomplishments, whether male or female. When Giles Arbe calls publicly on Juliet's debtors to pay her, Miss Bydel exclaims, "Why you are calling all the ladies to account for not paying this young music-mistress, just as if she were a butcher, or a baker; or some useful tradesman' (W, 323 [ii. 33]), and she adds, "one should not pay folks who follow such light callings, as one pays people that are useful'" (W, 324 [ii. 33]), gaining the agreement of the majority of her listeners, who identify the creative professional as 'an artist of luxury' (W, 323 [ii. 33]). Thus the producers of luxury services become tainted with the perceptions of idleness and indulgence that affected those who consumed such services: the frivolity of the majority of Juliet's ill-qualified pupils is reflected back on those who attempt to teach them. Mr Giles is stung by such an attitude into



a long harangue in which he reprimands the consumers of such ‘luxury’ items as theatre performances, music lessons and portrait painting for attributing their pleasure and indulgence to the producers of those services:

‘Because you are in extacies to behold yourselves grow younger and more blooming every moment, do you conclude that he who mixes your colours, and covers your defects, shares your transports? No, he is sick to death of you; and longing to set his pencil at liberty [...] all he does is pain and toil to himself; learnt with labour, and exhibited with difficulty. The better he performs, the harder he has worked. All the ease, and all the luxury are yours, Mrs Maple, and yours, Miss Bydel, and yours, ladies all...’ (W, 325 [ii. 33]).

What Mr Giles points out is, in essence, another example of a failure of sympathy – an inability to imagine oneself in someone else’s place and appreciate the nature of their situation with any accuracy. The chapter ends abruptly, however, as he finishes speaking; his attempt, we’re told, ‘produced no effect, save that of occasioning his own exclusion from all succeeding meetings’ (W, 326 [ii. 33]).

Mr Giles’s attempt, despite (and because) of its inefficacy, has a multiple effect in *The Wanderer*. There is a darkly humorous element, in that Mr Giles is himself both deeply sympathetic with the plight of others and hopelessly inept in gauging social situations or considering the appropriateness of the times and places at which he chooses to speak, often if not invariably thus actually worsening Juliet’s situation despite his intentions to help her. There is also an even bleaker effect, however, in its confirmation of a sense that the world of the novel is in general impervious to calls for greater sympathy (and corresponding changes in behaviour). Just as Mr Giles’s hearers respond to his appeal by banning him rather than taking his admonitions to heart, so the aristocratic consumers of Juliet’s services see no

parallel between their own delayed payments and the culpable indebtedness of Lady Townly. Such resistance to influence denotes a world of entrenched attitudes, disinclined to change and brutally unresponsive to those who propose it.

Finally, however, Mr Giles's harangue provokes a consideration of the status of the creative professional that aligns him or her with the providers of more-or-less basic commodities – meat, bread, clothing – rather than with emergent professionals and their specialised knowledge and skill. In this exchange, Mr Giles sees musicians, actors and artists in the same light as butchers, bakers and weavers in an effort to make his audience recognise them as artisans and providers of commodities rather than epicures. His gesture reaffirms the affinity between Juliet, as an unpaid music teacher, and Mr Lutestring, the unpaid mercer of *The Provoked Wife*, and is also intended to elicit the sympathy of his hearers: “‘He sings, perhaps, when he may be ready to cry; he plays upon those harps and fiddles, when he is half dying with hunger; and he skips those gavots, and fandangos, when he would rather go to bed! And all this, to gain himself a hard and fatiguing maintenance, in amusing your dainty idleness, and insufficiency to yourselves’ (W, 325 [ii. 33]). The newly-professional author who expressed indignation at the ‘clubbing’ of musicians with dentists now suggests in her maturity the ‘clubbing’ of musicians with butchers and bakers as a strategic move that emphasises performance as labour. I do not wish to argue that this provides proof of some kind of simple linear progress in Burney's thinking, although a conception of *The Wanderer* as more socially critical than *Evelina* is not necessarily unreasonable. Rather, the contrasting responses to perceptions of the social status of creative professionals can be seen as indicative of Burney's own contradictory instincts. *The Wanderer's* private theatrical embodies these contradictions in the figure of Juliet performing Lady Townly. Partly in keeping with Juliet's hidden aristocratic status and revelatory of her sentimental credentials, yet partly at odds with the humbler aspects of her origins, her performance of Lady Townly is also an implicit

reflection on the unsympathetic self-satisfaction of those who share that status and refuse the responsibilities that should accompany it. Further yet, this performance contributes to an exploration of the ambiguous position of creative professionals, poised anywhere on a scale from, on the one hand, the few such as Garrick, ‘Living like a Person of Quality’, and on the other, the rather more numerous ‘Tribe of Singers and Scrapers’, in Campbell’s words, who gained by their labours ‘a hard and fatiguing maintenance’ (W, 325 [ii. 33]).

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<sup>1</sup> Frances Burney, *The Wanderer; Or, Female Difficulties* (Oxford, 1991), 275 (ii. 28).

<sup>2</sup> In *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* (ed. Lars E. Troide, Montreal and Kingston, 1988-), Troide notes that in 1768, Charles Burney ‘was giving as many as 55 lessons a week, besides teaching in Mrs Sheeles’s boarding-school in Queen Square’ (i. 57, n.22).

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Anne Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1988), 351.

<sup>4</sup> In *Dr. Charles Burney: A Literary Biography* (Oxford, 1965), Roger Lonsdale points out that as he rose in status himself, Charles Burney ‘adopted an attitude towards [the music profession] which was almost identical with that of fashionable society’ (281) – hence his disapproval of Mrs Thrale’s second marriage to the singer and teacher Piozzi.

<sup>5</sup> Penelope Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (London, 1995), 33, and see 34-6.

<sup>6</sup> Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain 1700-1830* (Baltimore and London, 1998). See especially 222.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Eger, ‘Representing Culture: “The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain” (1779)’ in *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, ed. Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona O Gallchoir and Penny Warburton (Cambridge, 2001), 109.

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<sup>8</sup> Betty A. Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2005), 15; Jennie Batchelor, *Women's Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750-1830* (Manchester, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Laura J. Rosenthal, *Infamous Commerce: Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture* (Ithaca, 2006), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Oxford, 1994), 230. And see for example Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Sara Salih, 'Camilla and *The Wanderer*' in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, ed. Peter Sabor (Cambridge, 2007), 40.

<sup>12</sup> As Betty Rizzo has commented in *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens, GA, 1994), 'how could [Burney] remedy [social ills] when they existed, when she so clearly understood them, when she was trying to solve the problem of how to cope with the situation as it existed?' (109).

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Anne Doody, 'Appendix VI', *The Wanderer* (Oxford, 1991), 901.

<sup>14</sup> Cited in Laura J. Rosenthal, 'Entertaining Women: the Actress in Eighteenth-Century Theatre and Culture' in *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730-1830*, ed. Jane Moody and Daniel O'Quinn (Cambridge, 2007), 166.

<sup>15</sup> Suzie Park, 'Resisting Demands for Depth in *The Wanderer*', *European Romantic Review*, 15.2 (2005), 307-315, 307-8.

<sup>16</sup> See for example the Bilsons in Sarah Fielding's *The Countess of Dellwyn* (London, 1759), who ensure that the objects of their charity are deserving, 'either by their own Inspection, or by careful Enquiries' (I, 206), and the discussion in my *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel, 1740-1800* (Basingstoke, 1999), 33-6.

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<sup>17</sup> For further discussion of this point, see my ‘Class, Gender and Inheritance in Burney’s *A Busy Day* and *The Woman-Hater*’ in *Teaching British Women Playwrights of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, ed. Bonnie Nelson and Catherine Burroughs (New York, 2010), 237-46, 241.

<sup>18</sup> *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (6 vols, Oxford, 1976-83), i. 9, and see 10, n.1 and Introduction, section 2 (b) for discussion of ‘Smith’s unusually wide definition of “sympathy”’.

<sup>19</sup> Burney’s Christian faith would also have suggested this, of course (see Matthew 7: 12 and Luke 6: 31).

<sup>20</sup> Sir John Vanbrugh and Colley Cibber, *The Provoked Husband* (London, 1975), V. ii. 388-9.

<sup>21</sup> Frances Burney, *Cecilia* (Oxford, 1988), 75.

<sup>22</sup> As Jennie Batchelor points out, this sensitivity should not be figured as unusual: ‘work [...] is a central preoccupation of the eighteenth-century novel, and not simply as a threat to be avoided or a hurdle to be overcome’ (11).

<sup>23</sup> Janice Farrar Thaddeus, *Frances Burney: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke, 2000), 168.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Dixon, ‘Introduction’ to Vanbrugh and Cibber, xxvii. In *The Rise of the English Actress* (New York, 1993), Sandra Richards comments, ‘[...] that Peg Woffington and Elizabeth Farren came near rivalling Mrs. Oldfield, and even Sarah Siddons gave solo readings of the play’s most famous scenes, testifies to the enduring appeal of this demanding female role for actresses’ (26).

<sup>25</sup> Patrick Boyle, *The General London Guide; Or, Tradesman’s Directory for the Year 1794* (London, [1793?]).

<sup>26</sup> R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747), 93.

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<sup>27</sup> James Thompson, *Models of Value: Eighteenth-Century Political Economy and the Novel* (Durham, NC, 1996), 169.