

Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net

“As an Englishwoman, As a Writer”: The *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* Reviews, Early Nineteenth-Century Authorship, and the Reception of Frances Burney’s *The Wanderer*

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Number 65, 2014–2015

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1069869ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1069869ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Université de Montréal

ISSN

1916-1441 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Article abstract

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Cite this article

Cove, P. (2014). “As an Englishwoman, As a Writer”: The *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* Reviews, Early Nineteenth-Century Authorship, and the Reception of Frances Burney’s *The Wanderer*. *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, (65). <https://doi.org/10.7202/1069869ar>

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“As an Englishwoman, As a Writer”: The *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* Reviews, Early Nineteenth-Century Authorship, and the Reception of Frances Burney’s *The Wanderer*

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Abstract

The reception of Frances Burney’s final novel, *The Wanderer*, demonstrates the periodical press’s ability to shape British concepts of authorship and audience expectations in the Romantic era. William Hazlitt’s and John Wilson Croker’s reviews of this novel illustrate that, despite their apparent ideological differences, the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* reviews could combine to redefine the British literary tradition and reading public in national and masculinist terms. Such reviews attempt to police the borders of the British canon, to the exclusion of writers like Burney who seem not to meet the new demands of Romantic-era review culture.

Biographical Note

Patricia Cove conducted this research while working on her PhD Dissertation discussing nineteenth-century British novels about the French Revolution, with support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. She recently completed a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship focused on British responses to the Italian Risorgimento and is currently a Writing Advisor at the Dalhousie University Agricultural Campus. Her research appears in *Journal of Victorian Culture*, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, *Gothic Studies*, and *European Romantic Review*.

1. With the emergence of the influential *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* reviews in the early nineteenth century, British concepts of authorship were revolutionised. Although the two periodicals operated at opposite sides of the political spectrum, reviewers for the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* were frequently aligned in their efforts to redefine British public taste according to a new masculinised, nationalist standard. Nowhere is this more apparent than in William Hazlitt's and John Wilson Croker's reviews of Frances Burney's final novel, *The Wanderer*, which illustrate the periodical press's role in forging the perceived identities of authors and audiences across the Romantic period.
2. Early reactions against *The Wanderer* in the press effectively marginalised Burney and her novel from the British reading public, as she fell victim to what Angela Keane designates the "masculinist myth of the Romantic nation-state" (16), perpetuated by Croker and Hazlitt, her early reviewers. Far from being "damned" in itself as a belated intervention in the Revolution Debate of the 1790s, as Claudia L. Johnson suggests (xv), *The Wanderer* was keenly anticipated by the British reading public. According to Robert L. Mack, the three thousand copies of the novel's first edition sold out before its publication, urging Burney's publishers to order eight hundred additional copies for an immediate second edition (18-19). The literary world's excitement for a new Burney novel is also anecdotally evident: in December 1813, for example, Lord Byron wrote to his publisher John Murray to request an advance copy of "Me. D'Arblay's ... new work" (203-204) for an ill friend, continuing, "I would almost fall sick myself to get at Me. D'Arblay's writings" (204). However, negative reviews from across the political spectrum "killed" (Perkins 69) *The Wanderer* for the Regency readership and subsequent generations. More than half of the advance orders for the second edition were quickly cancelled when the reviews began to appear, and in 1824 the remaining unsold copies were destroyed (Mack 19). Nor did the novel enjoy any revival in popularity in later years: as Pam Perkins writes, "its second edition was its last until 1988" (69).
3. *The Wanderer*'s fate reveals much about the periodical press's efforts to shape perceptions of British authorship and audiences according to specific criteria, even with respect to an established and popular novelist such as Burney. Publications like the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly*, where the most hostile reviews of Burney's novel appeared, actively work to construct a national audience with set values and tastes, as well as clearly defined limits: according to the reviewers, Burney could be excluded from writing a political, historical novel on account of her gender and her complicated national allegiances. Moreover, these criteria for rejecting Burney

and her last novel occur across party lines, and therefore do not simply reflect ideological opposition to her work: *The Wanderer*, after all, was condemned both by the Tory MP and First Secretary to the Admiralty John Wilson Croker, the reviewer for the government-sponsored *Quarterly*, and by liberal dissenter and Napoleon supporter William Hazlitt, writing for the Whig *Edinburgh Review*.

4. Instead, Burney's reviews speak to the extent to which literary reception could be an unintentionally collaborative effort, as, despite their ideological differences, these critics work to the same ends of marking the limits of the British literary establishment and the interests of the reading public, and define these limits in similarly gendered and national terms. These reviewers' responses to *The Wanderer* are thus part of a broader trend within literary reception across the Romantic period; Croker and Hazlitt participate in what Keane calls the "remasculinis[ation] [of] the nation-state and the literary domain" (15) initiated by 1790s discourses of "xenophobic, masculine patriotism" (7) and consolidated by a literary culture that began to see the male Romantic poet as "representative," "the bearer of national culture" (14). This occurred at the expense of the feminised domestic fiction of the eighteenth century, the tradition to which Burney belonged. Subject to this process of masculinisation and nationalisation within British Romanticism, Burney, her last novel, and her heroine Ellis were judged alien by the critics.
5. Burney and her manuscript faced discrimination even before the novel's publication. Burney moved to France to join her husband Alexandre d'Arblay in 1802 and remained there for ten years when war resumed. As Burney recounts in her *Journals and Letters*, her unpublished manuscript, "of which nearly 3 Volumes— were finished" (6:716), crossed from Dunkirk in 1812 with the permission of a M de Saulnier, a secretary to the Minister of the Police (6:724) whom d'Arblay had assured "that the Work had nothing in it political, nor even National, nor possibly offensive to the Government" (6:716). In her dedication to *The Wanderer*, Burney congratulates England and France for allowing her manuscript to cross the Channel without examination, "to the honour and liberality of both nations" (4), but this version of events glosses over the very real war-time hostility directed at her work that her *Journals and Letters* describe. When the manuscript was discovered at the Dunkirk Custom House,
the police officer who opened it, began a rant of indignation & amazement, at a sight so unexpected & prohibited, that made him incapable to enquire, or to hear the meaning of such a freight. He sputtered at the Mouth, & stamped with his feet, so

forcibly & vociferously, that no endeavours I could use could palliate the supposed offence sufficiently to induce him to stop his accusations of traitorous designs [T]his Fourth Child of my Brain had undoubtedly been destroyed ere it was Born, had I not had recourse to an English Merchant, Mr. Gregory [H]e undertook the responsibility of my identity; & the Letter of M. d'Arblay containing the Licence of M. de Saulnier was then all sufficient for my manuscripts & their embarkation. (6:716-717)

Despite these difficulties, the permission Burney eventually received to carry her manuscript out of France seemed to her to be “singular, during a period of such unexampled strictness of Police Discipline with respect to Letters or Papers, between the two Nations,” due, she speculates, to Napoleon’s absence from Paris during his Russian campaign (*Journals* 6:717).

6. The reception Burney met with from the British authorities was no less determined by the nationalist paranoia dividing the warring states. Burney’s vessel, ostensibly sailing to America but actually “clandestine[ly]” bound for Dover (*Journals* 6:714), was seized as “American booty, War having been declared against America the preceding Week” (*Journals* 6:726). Although Burney’s literary reputation assured her a flattering reception from a Lieutenant Harford, who “most courteously addressed me, with congratulations upon my safe arrival in England” (*Journals* 6:726), her son Alexander, as a “French person,” was prohibited from disembarking until Burney, assuming Harford’s “commanding air” exclaimed, “He was Born, Sir, in England!” The lieutenant’s reply, “O! ... that’s quite another matter! Come along, Sir! we’ll all go to-gether” (*Journals* 6:727), further illustrates the patriotic atmosphere of the war years during which the novel was written. The timing of *The Wanderer*’s publication, on March 28, 1814, however, further complicated the novel’s status as a transnational, political work critical of both revolutionary France and unreformed England: just three days after its publication, on March 31, Paris fell and Napoleon was exiled to Elba, theoretically ending hostilities, but in reality reinforcing much of the patriotic sentiment that shaped the reviewers’ opinions of Burney’s last novel. The “post-Napoleonic paranoid style” that Kim Wheatley associates with the tone of the periodical press after Waterloo (“Paranoid Politics” 323) characterises the aggressive reviews that appeared on the novel’s publication.
7. Burney’s new work depended on such reviews to determine its reception by British reading audiences. Publications such as the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* helped construct the Romantic-era reading public’s practices and tastes, even “coloniz[ing]” audiences with the opinions they

promoted (Schoenfield, *British Periodicals* 4), by exploring the period's central ideological and representational contests. As William St Clair finds in *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, periodical publications in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries began to construct a nation-wide British reading public by connecting the local reading circles that already existed through the national reach of their circulation: "By their reading of the *Monthly Magazine* and the *Critical*, and later the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review*, the members of the reading societies could feel themselves part of a national as well as of a local reading community" (254). The audience shaped by these reviews was thus a national audience that could potentially exclude an author from the British literary establishment through its reading practices. Recent studies of Romanticism that focus, as St Clair's does, on readership rather than authors, can, as Bonnie Gunzenhauser argues, help "develop a new and less traditional narrative for the history of reading, one that decentralizes the figure of the Romantic author and positions readers as a constitutive cultural and political force in the 1810s and 1820s" (67). Such an approach allows us to recognise the plurality and diversity of voices that constitute the Romantic period; however, it also provides a means of recovering the stakes involved in literary reception for authors and readers alike, as well as the figures of power whose voices could, as in the case of Burney's last novel, attempt to destroy a work and marginalise its author. As Gunzenhauser notes, "Hazlitt positions readers as key players (and texts as just one variable) in the ongoing discursive negotiations on which British culture depends" (72). More importantly, however, in doing so Hazlitt also positions reviewers in the periodical press who purport to represent reading audiences, including himself, as the arbiters of British literary taste.

8. This process of constructing a national reading public, however, was the site of numerous literary and ideological contests. Reviewers like Hazlitt and Croker worked to promote their own views of the period's literature while clashing with other writers and readers invested in literary reception. Numerous studies have explored the contests between these reviewers and the authors they critiqued, including Hazlitt's confrontation with Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Lapp), his views on Edmund Burke (Whale) or on the debates of the revolutionary decade (Mulvihill, Root), and Croker's prolonged attacks on Sydney Owenson (Connolly, Stewart). Such conflicts reveal the overlap between the formation of a reading public, the economics of competition between different publishers and periodicals, and the ideological undercurrents that shaped the political climate of the time and the reception of literary works. This kind of complexity appears, for example, in the conflict between Hazlitt and Coleridge, which, as

Robert Keith Lapp argues in *Contest for Cultural Authority*, highlights “the political struggle between reaction and reform, marketplace competition over new reading audiences, and the friction between competing genres and modes of discursive performance in the public sphere” (12). Politics, economics, and literature could not be disentangled, as writers and reviewers with diverse political and literary opinions, like Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, and Robert Southey were, as David Stewart asserts, “all competing for space not simply in a political arena, but in a literary marketplace” (24).

9. One of the most important focuses of this overlapping political, literary, and economic contest for Francis Jeffrey’s Whig *Edinburgh* and the Tory-sponsored, Canningite *Quarterly* appeared in the competition between the two publications themselves. Hazlitt notoriously describes the *Quarterly* in his *Letter to William Gifford* as “the invisible link, that connects literature with the police” (*Works* 13), while the *Quarterly*’s founders, including Gifford, John Murray, and Walter Scott, launched their review as an opponent for the *Edinburgh*. Recent work on the Romantic-era periodical press, however, has complicated readings of the relationship between the two publications as purely oppositional: critics such as Kim Wheatley and Jonathan Cutmore, for example, argue that the *Quarterly*’s voice is more dialogic and collaborative than is often recognised, and note that the two reviews are indebted to each other for the tone of their articles and even share several contributors. Although Cutmore does acknowledge that Croker was known for the inflammatory style of his “infamous reviews” (*Contributors* 76), he argues that under Gifford’s editorship in its early years, the *Quarterly*’s “ideological coherence” was “distorted ... by the agendas of the groups that came together to form the periodical’s body of contributors” (“A Plurality of Voices” 73). Likewise, Wheatley finds that a reading of the *Quarterly* as simply the mouthpiece of the Tory government fails to recognise not only the ideological and aesthetic contests that occurred within the *Quarterly*’s circle of contributors, but also the extent to which the periodical press as a whole influenced the operations of individual publications. Wheatley concludes that “the ongoing shaping of taste transcends any collaborative effort by the writers of the *Quarterly*: in a sense, they collaborate with all their fellow-authors and reviewers, including the writers for the *Edinburgh*” (“Plotting the Success” 39). Paradoxically, voices of negotiation and even conflict existed within the broader, supposedly representative, anonymous, “corporate” (Klancher 69) voice of the periodical press. As Mark Schoenfield argues extensively in *British Periodicals and Romantic Identity*, “Through repetition and self-allusion, periodicals became the repository of ‘public opinion’ (a term popularized during the Romantic period) by marshaling clashing and allied voices across

different discourses” (1). In other words, the apparently hostile voices belonging to the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* participated alongside each other, and often with much agreement, in constructing the early nineteenth-century national reading public.

10. The relationship between the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*, therefore, is more complicated than their position as political opponents and marketplace competitors might suggest. They often addressed the same readership and used the same set of strategies in their literary reviews. Stewart finds that writers and critics as politically diverse as Hazlitt, Hunt, and Southey “might be considered ... as addressing a composite audience that read across political divisions” (24). More importantly, the *Quarterly* was established to oppose the *Edinburgh*, but also imitated its style in efforts to gain the kind of success achieved by its competitor; as Stewart writes, “The success of the *Edinburgh Review* seemed clearly attributable to its cultivation of a lively literary style. The *Quarterly* was launched with the *Edinburgh Review* in its sights as a commercial competitor, political opponent, and stylistic model” (27). The two publications also shared several contributors, not least among them Walter Scott, one of the *Quarterly*’s founders, who ended his role as “occasional contributor” to the *Edinburgh* in 1808 (Ragaz 108, 109), but began contributing to journals other than the *Quarterly*, and including the *Edinburgh*, again in the following decade (Ragaz 124). Moreover, the two journals sometimes agreed in their literary assessments, including in their reviews of Burney’s *The Wanderer* and Maria Edgeworth’s *Patronage*: their concurrence on these two works, Schoenfield argues, “suggests the periodical industry’s investment in controlling the form [of the novel]” (“Novel Marriage” 65). The harsh reviews of Burney’s last novel, therefore, indicate how extensively such apparently hostile publications could work together to forge public opinion, shape literary taste, and define both the national reading audience and the British literary establishment, despite their vastly different political visions.
11. Burney had always been conscious of the periodical press’s power to embrace or reject an author struggling to speak to the emerging national reading public. After the *Quarterly*’s attack appeared, she wrote to her brother, Dr Charles Burney, minimising the impact of her novel’s harsh reception on herself:

I do not fret myself, I thank Heaven, about the Reviews. I shall not read any of them, to keep myself from useless vexation— till my spirits & my time are in harmony for preparing a corrected Edition. I shall then read all— &, I expect, coolly & impartially. I think the public has its full right to criticise— & never have had the

folly & vanity to set my heart upon escaping its late severity, while reminiscence keeps alive its early indulgence. But if, when all the effect of false expectation is over, in about 5 years, the work has *ONLY* criticism, — then, indeed, I shall be lessened in my own fallen fallen fallen hopes— fed, now, not by any general conceit, but an opinion That— if the others were worthy of good opinion, THIS, when read fresh, & free from local circumstances of a mischievous tendency, will by no means be found lowest in the scale. (*Journals* 7:484)

Although Burney begins here by suggesting that she could read her hostile reviews “coolly & impartially,” her description of the “fallen fallen fallen hopes” that could ensue should the novel never meet with the favourable reception of which she believes it to be “worthy” indicates the value she attributes to public opinion of her works. Hazlitt’s later review was, in fact, taken personally, if not by Burney herself: Burney’s brother, Captain James Burney, wrote to Hazlitt in May, 1815, to “terminat[e]” their friendship after the publication of the review, which Captain Burney felt “shewed a total absence of regard towards me” (qtd. in Wu 176).

12. While Burney’s 1814 reviewers recall the debut writer of *Evelina* with pleasure, their reactions to *The Wanderer* are marked with personal vitriol directed against the aging, transnational Madame d’Arblay. In her dedication to *The Wanderer*, dated March 14, 1814 (10), Burney preemptively addresses the gendered and national stakes of her belated intervention in the Revolution Debate at the height of anti-French reaction in England, asserting her right to write publicly about the conflict between revolutionary France and unreformed Britain as a transnational, literary woman. Burney calls upon her dual national allegiance while reminding readers of her legacy as a writer, noting that she is “united ... to a member of a foreign nation, yet adhering, with primeval enthusiasm, to the country of my birth” (5), and offering, as proof of her multifaceted identity, the signature “F. B. D’Arblay” (10). This act of self-naming identifies her as a d’Arblay, but also draws on her reputation as Frances Burney, especially as the dedication is addressed “To Doctor Burney,” her father (3). Burney extends this tone of transnational conciliation to her novel’s politics, claiming that *The Wanderer* is absent of “political controversy” and “national animosity” (4). She cites the favour with which her earlier work had been received by political opponents Samuel Johnson and Edmund Burke as evidence of her writing’s cross-political appeal (4-5), but by identifying the author of *Reflections on the Revolution in France* as a political liberal, she unintentionally aligns herself with outdated eighteenth-century political divisions, signalling her novel’s belatedness and perhaps giving her

reviewers an opening for dismissing her work as obsolete. Nonetheless, Burney's conciliatory intention in offering a gesture of goodwill to readers across the political spectrum is clear.

13. Yet, Burney also asserts her right as a female novelist to participate in the post-revolutionary political debate in her dedication. She argues that politics must necessarily be a part of any realistic novel attempting to create a "picture of actual human life" (6) for the period, suggesting that politics and women's writing cannot be disentangled, as her reviewers might wish. Although Burney recognises that by 1814 the Revolution is "completely past," she argues that it has still "left traces" on the individuals who lived through the period, including the fictional characters whose lives novels of all varieties record (6). Asking, "Is a Novel the vehicle for such considerations? such discussions?" (6), Burney emphatically states that it is. Her dedication stakes a claim for the novel's equality to other forms of writing, positioning novels as a whole as victims, "branded" (7), like *The Wanderer's* heroine Ellis, by a false system of judgment based on naming alone: "Divest, for a moment, the title of Novel from its stationary standard of insignificance, and say! What is the species of writing that offers fairer opportunities for conveying useful precepts?" (7). It is as a "useful" and realistic representation of life, then, that Burney frames *The Wanderer* for the reading public and her first critics. By focusing on her own national and political allegiances and defending the right of the female novelist to address politically and socially important issues, Burney uses her dedication to preemptively undermine any potential criticism aimed at her nationality and her gender, the two fields which finally did become grounds for condemning *The Wanderer* in the reviews.
14. Despite Burney's conciliatory efforts to position her novel as an appropriate intervention in a lingering political debate, to remind readers of her literary reputation, and to convince them of the "primeval enthusiasm" (*The Wanderer* 5) of her English patriotism, the initial reviewers reacted to *The Wanderer* with violent dislike, destroying the novel's momentum with the public. Burney's most influential critics, the conservative Croker and liberal Hazlitt, framed Burney as an outsider both to the British nation and to the masculine literary and political establishments. Croker's piece, printed the April 1814 *Quarterly Review*, just after the novel's publication, marks Burney immediately as a national exile and splits her into two separate individuals reflecting her conflicting French and English allegiances; he writes, "None of our female novelists (not even Miss Edgeworth) ever attained so early and so high a reputation as Miss Burney, or, as we must now call her, Madame D'Arblay" (123). This statement effectively distinguishes between the former "Miss Burney" and the current "Madame D'Arblay," severing

Burney's new novel from the "reputation" established by her earlier works, a strategy Croker employs for the remainder of the review. He continues to state, for example, that "If we had not been assured in the title-page that this work had been produced by the same pen as Cecilia, we should have pronounced Madame D'Arblay to be a feeble imitator of the style and manner of Miss Burney— we should have admitted the flat fidelity of her copy, but we should have lamented the total want of vigour, vivacity, and originality" (124). Croker thus uses this strategy of double-naming to construct a distinction in quality between the work produced by "Miss Burney" and the later writing of her "feeble imitator," "Madame D'Arblay," as well as to mark her national difference and possible subjection through marriage to what Schoenfield describes as "another, foreign power" ("Novel Marriages" 75).

15. Much of Croker's animosity toward *The Wanderer*, as this imaginative division of "Madame D'Arblay" from the reputation of "Miss Burney" indicates, arises from his hostility toward her supposed Frenchness: he suggests, for example, that Burney fails to use her novel as a platform for condemning Napoleon because she desires to flatter the French dictator by repeatedly noting that her historical novel applies specifically to "the dire reign of the terrific Robespierre" (Burney, *The Wanderer* 11) and not to the period of Napoleonic rule. Croker states aggressively, "We cannot bear these base condescensions— Madame D'Arblay might have been silent; but she ought not, as an Englishwoman, as a writer, to have debased herself to the little annotatory flatteries of the scourge of the human race" (130). Croker continues to claim that Burney's refusal to depict Napoleon is opportunistic rather than an avoidance of anachronism: he argues that after Napoleon's fall Burney would alter her position, as "Madame D'Arblay is not likely to continue to flatter, when her flattery can no longer conduce to her personal convenience," suggesting that in later editions of the novel she would flatter Louis XVIII instead (130). Croker's comments on Napoleon's absence from *The Wanderer* also indicate the two major terms on which Burney's early reviewers construct her outsider status by identifying her novel as a betrayal of the duties of "an Englishwoman" and "a writer;" in continually referring to Burney as "Madame D'Arblay," Croker suggests that she is no longer either.
16. Croker extends this same national hostility to the protagonist, Ellis, whom he sees as another outsider attempting to insinuate herself into British society; he describes her as an "intrusive ... stranger" who is "picked up on the beach of a foreign sea-port" (126), locating Ellis as geographically and socially alien, and he violently dehumanises her, as her English company on

the Channel crossing with which the novel opens does, by calling her “this nuisance” (127). He clearly sides with the insular English snobs Ellis meets with in her wanderings, questioning why, after the landing at Dover, “they still continue to endure an intrusion so violent?” (127). By describing Ellis’s emigration as a “violent” “intrusion,” Croker constructs her as an invasive threat to national integrity, and he extends this image to the novel itself, asserting that *The Wanderer* threatens to intrude upon Britain’s national literary culture through his repetition of like phrases. Croker refers, for example, to the “violent improbability” of such a company appearing together on the crossing (126), the “Violent ... incongruities” of the main plot concerning Ellis’s wanderings and the discovery of her family, and the “monstrous absurdities” of the subplot focused on Elinor Joddrel’s radical political and romantic experimentation (129). In addition to framing *The Wanderer*, Ellis, and Burney herself as perpetrators of violent or monstrous narrative outrage against the reading public, Croker firmly locates the source of that violence in Burney’s French allegiances, stating that readers “will conclude that her long residence in France has given Madame D’Arblay a very novel and surprising view of the state of religion, manners, and society in England” (128). “Madame D’Arblay,” a foreign writer of an alien novel, such comments indicate, is an unwelcome intruder in a national literary establishment from which she must at all costs be excluded.

17. Despite his political differences from Croker, Hazlitt also imagines a national literary and political culture that marginalises Burney’s work in his lengthy 1815 review of *The Wanderer* in the *Edinburgh Review*. Hazlitt’s article occupies its first fourteen pages in vindicating the English novel by praising the realism and originality of its renowned eighteenth-century male practitioners, “our four best novel-writers” (334), whom he identifies as Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, and Sterne (320-334). Hazlitt’s survey of the history of the English novel applies what Keane sees as the Romantic period’s “remasculinis[ation] [of] the nation-state and the literary domain” (15) backward into the eighteenth century, to the exclusion of early women novelists like Burney. Hazlitt is eager to establish a national tradition of novel-writing corresponding to a supposed golden age of British parliamentary democracy that he associates with his own liberal politics; the great English novelists he surveys coincide with the reign of George II, the “establishment of the Protestant ascendancy, and the succession of the House of Hanover” (334).
18. The rise of the English novel, Hazlitt asserts, occurred alongside the growth of an English democratic tradition. He argues,

It was found high time that the people should be represented in books as well as in parliament In despotic countries, human nature is not of sufficient importance to be studied or described. The *canaille* are objects rather of disgust than curiosity; and there are no middle classes But in the period of our history in question, a security of person and property, and a freedom of opinion had been established, which made every man feel of some consequence to himself, and appear an object of some curiosity to his neighbours; our manners became more domesticated; there was a general spirit of sturdiness and independence, which made the English character more truly English than perhaps at any other period (334-335)

Hazlitt's review of *The Wanderer* thus explicitly participates in a political project of defending supposedly complementary literary and parliamentary traditions that combine to construct "the English character," while condemning the more conservative, royalist nationalism of the recent war years, as the review goes on to attack George III's reign and the prosecution of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (335). "It is not to be wondered," Hazlitt continues, "if, amidst the tumult of events crowded into this period, our literature has partaken of the disorder of the time; if our prose has run mad, and our poetry grown childish" (335). While Hazlitt rejects the kind of xenophobic patriotism Croker's review exhibits, then, he still uses his article to construct an image of an English literary establishment absolutely reflecting and inextricably linked to the nation's political condition and his own version of national character.

19. For Hazlitt, Burney's gender excludes her from the greatness he attributes to eighteenth-century male novelists. Both reviewers attack Burney in gendered terms, participating in the process of re-masculinisation in British literature that occurred across this period. In "Sexual Politics and Literary History," Sonia Hofkosh argues that the events of Hazlitt's own life and the ways those events were depicted by male writers including Hazlitt, his friends, and his opponents, work to exclude women's voices from the history of Romanticism: "the very absence of the woman's voice and body in narratives of Hazlitt's Keswick escapade and of his affair with Sarah Walker provides the pattern for the displacement of sexual politics from the discourse of literary history generally" (132). This systematic silencing of women's voices becomes part of Hazlitt's strategy in dismissing *The Wanderer* in his review. Although Burney "holds a distinguished place" in the "mad" literary market of 1815 (335), the four pages of the review in which Hazlitt discusses *The Wanderer*, as opposed to the fourteen he spends praising male writers, speaks to Burney's marginalisation in his newly masculinised survey of eighteenth-century fiction. As a writer, Hazlitt asserts, Burney is "quite of the old school, a mere common observer of manners,

— and also a very woman. It is this last circumstance which forms the peculiarity of her writings, and distinguishes them from those masterpieces which we have before mentioned” (336).

20. Although Hazlitt’s claim that Burney belongs to “the old school” would seem to align her with the male greats that predate the “mad” prose of a disordered time (335), because she is “a very woman” she necessarily produces work inferior to the eighteenth century’s “masterpieces.” As “a very woman,” Burney exhibits what Hazlitt sees as a set of biological determinants, or, in Schoenfield’s words, a “literary physiognomy” (“Novel Marriages” 65), that fits her for writing novels of manners, but degrades her work as excessively sentimental and superficial. He writes of women, “The surface of their minds, like that of their bodies, seems of a finer texture than ours; more soft, and susceptible of immediate impression. They have less muscular power, — less power of continued voluntary attention, — of reason — passion and imagination” (337). Such a lack of “muscular power” is what excludes Burney from the tradition of male greatness of “the old school” (336), as well as the collective male reading public that Hazlitt invokes in distinguishing women’s minds and bodies from “ours.” Hazlitt concludes that “There is little other power in Miss Burney’s novels, than that of immediate observation” (337); for this reason he states that “Evelina is ... her best novel, because it is shortest; that is, it has all the liveliness in the sketches of character, and exquisiteness of comic dialogue and repartee, without the tediousness of the story, and endless affectation of the sentiments” (336). Hazlitt extends this gendered critique of Burney to the many complications of *The Wanderer*’s plot, arguing that “The difficulties in which she involves her heroines are indeed ‘Female Difficulties;’— they are difficulties created out of nothing” (337). He furthermore suggests that Ellis’s fastidious conduct and excessive sensibility make her responsible for her own sexual victimisation, arguing that she “exposes herself to every species of insult and outrage” from her intended rapist Sir Lyell Sycamore and puts herself in “the power of a ruffian and an assassin” whom she has been forced to marry under threat of the guillotine (338). Like Croker, he condemns Burney, *The Wanderer*, and Ellis equally.

21. While Hazlitt clearly and systematically locates Burney outside of an illustrious English masculine literary establishment and degrades the tradition of female writing to which she belongs, Croker argues for *The Wanderer*’s literary inadequacy in even more extreme and deliberate antifeminist language. Croker’s reviews of Burney’s work, from *The Wanderer* to her posthumous *Diary and Letters*, helped build his reputation for “lack of chivalry towards

women” (Morgan 67), but he had already established himself as a harsh critic of women writers through his attacks on Sydney Owenson beginning in 1806 (Connolly 98-99). Croker’s reviewing was generally ruthless: according to Claire Connolly, his criticism “supposedly brought about the death of one Irish actor (just as his later harsh review of *Endymion* in the *Quarterly* was said to have killed John Keats)” (99). However, his relationship with Owenson’s work was particularly aggressive, “helping to forge its [the *Quarterly*’s] reputation for slashing reviews” (Connolly 99) and continuing in the *Quarterly* “for well over a decade” (Stewart 27). His treatment of Burney, then, is one part of a larger trend of critical ruthlessness, frequently directed against women writers, that occurs across Croker’s work.

22. Croker’s antifeminist invective in the *Wanderer* review focuses primarily on Burney’s age. Such a combined assault on Burney’s national allegiance and her age is not wholly original: according to Margaret Anne Doody, jokes about Burney’s romantic marriage to a French exile at the age of forty-one had circulated from the time of her marriage in 1793 (201-202). Croker, however, deliberately confuses Burney’s age at the time of the novel’s publication with the quality of her writing. In his praise of *Evelina*, he erroneously notes that Burney’s debut novel was published when she was just seventeen (124), conflating Burney and her young heroine Evelina Anville. He moreover argues that her writing has since experienced a decline which he equates with her advancing age, writing of Burney’s “descen[t] from the elevation which the vigour of her youth had attained” (124). His own attention to her latest work, Croker states, arises from his sense of “duty ... to attend the lifeless remains of our old and dear friends Evelina and Cecilia to their last abode” (129).

23. Croker is also explicit in his desire to connect Burney’s age with her femininity, as he compares *The Wanderer* to an aging beauty:

The *Wanderer* has the identical features of *Evelina*— but of *Evelina* grown old; the vivacity, the bloom, the elegance, ‘the purple light of love’ are vanished; the eyes are there, but they are dim; the cheek, but it is furrowed; the lips, but they are withered. And when to this description we add that Madame D’Arblay endeavours to make up for the want of originality in her characters by the most absurd mysteries, the most extravagant incidents, and the most violent events, we have completed the portrait of an old coquette who endeavours, by the wild tawdriness and laborious gaiety of her attire, to compensate for the loss of the natural charms of freshness, novelty, and youth. (125-126)

Croker's construction of Burney and her novel as "old coquette[s]" completes Burney's exclusion from the literary establishment: she is not only a woman, but a woman now lacking the "vivacity," "bloom," "elegance," "freshness, novelty, and youth" that Croker demands of feminine writing. The implication of deceit that accompanies this image of an "old coquette" passing herself off as an Evelina Anville reappears in Croker's much later review for the *Quarterly* of the first three volumes of Burney's posthumously published *Diary and Letters*, in which Croker angrily alleges that Burney had practiced "an elaborate *deception*" by representing herself, and not simply her heroine Evelina, as "*a girl of seventeen*" (253) when her first novel was published (253-255). The difference between Croker's position and Hazlitt's appears in Hazlitt's claim that "we perceive no decay of talent, but a perversion of it" (338): if, for Hazlitt, Burney and all early women novelists can simply be erased from literary history, made into outsiders due to their innate inferiority, or their "perversion" (338) of the masculine mind's "muscular power" (337), for Croker, Burney's belonging to the eighteenth-century literary tradition ages her and her writing, depriving it of its earlier attractive femininity. For both reviewers, Burney's novel cannot possibly achieve the standards her male-gendered audience demands.

24. The example of *The Wanderer* illustrates the periodical press's ability to shape the Romantic-era British literary canon. Despite their differences in ideology, Croker and Hazlitt combine to restrict Burney's access to a literary tradition and reading public increasingly defined as masculine and national. As the case of *The Wanderer*'s reception demonstrates, reviews such as the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* were less diverse in the gendered, nationalist literary standards they participated in constructing than their political polarisation might suggest. Croker's and Hazlitt's attacks on Burney and *The Wanderer* not only deprive the novelist and her work of a voice in British literary culture, but establish the reviewers' own privileged places in that culture as creators of the reading public and arbiters of the voices addressing that public.

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Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net #65 (2014-2015)

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