

Models of the Gaze and the Development of Subjectivity in France Burney's *Evelina*

Emily Poor

American University

College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Literature

University Honors in Literature

Advisor: Professor Anita Sherman

Spring 2011

## Models of the Gaze and the Development of Subjectivity in Frances Burney's

### *Evelina*

The “self” is one of the most discussed topics within the Humanities. Try as we may to abstract the concept of identity into theoretical terms, I contend that the self cannot exist without some interaction with the physical world and with other “selves.” This interaction requires that we subject ourselves to becoming part of the sensory experience of others, and we often incorporate our own observations of how they experience us into our sense of self. In her essay “Site/Sight and Sensibility: The Socializing Function of the Gaze in Sarah Fielding's *The History of Ophelia*,” Susan McNeill-Bindon observes,

Ophelia's pain at being observed as ‘different’ reinforces the importance of the body as a publicly visible site of social identification. Since, according to Barbara Duden, ‘the body is a mirror of reality as well as the source of the mirror,’ a body not reflecting the social ‘reality’ is denied a subject position by those failing to see themselves reflected in the object of their gaze (64).<sup>1</sup>

The gaze, as McNeill-Bindon demonstrates, can serve as both a source of information and experience for the gazer as well as a method of self-identification and judgment for the person gazed upon. Both gazing upon others and being gazed upon are paramount to the formation of identity. The function of the gaze has been explored in visual media, such as cinema, but has been comparatively neglected in the study of other, non-visual

---

<sup>1</sup> *The History of Ophelia* was published in 1761, seventeen years before Fanny Burney's publication of *Evelina*, the primary text to be studied in this paper.

and pre-photographic media, such as literature. A thorough study of the various ways in which the gaze functions in the creation and destruction of identity in written literature can be useful in both providing new insights into the primary texts studied, as well as in providing a broader understanding of the gaze. A study of the gaze in Frances Burney's 1778 *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* will reveal that while recent conceptions of the gaze as an oppressive, defining social force are valid and applicable as a model of the gaze in literature and society, alternative models of the gaze are both appropriate and necessary in gaining an understanding of the ways in which the gaze may function. Gazing and being gazed upon are important factors in the development of subjectivity and in interactions between subjects who have been formed through social interaction. The prominence of the role of the individual in society in the eighteenth century English novel provides an appropriate setting for this study.

Since the publication of Michel Foucault's highly influential *Discipline and Punish* in 1975 and its translation to English in 1977, theories of the gaze have focused on its disciplinary and socially defining nature. This aspect or function of the gaze is apparent in the social structures and specific interactions throughout *Evelina*. The character of Evelina develops through an awareness of being watched and watching others and an understanding of her classification under various social roles. However, this analysis does not provide a complete model of the function of the gaze and eliminates the possibility of genuine interaction between individuals. I will explore both a conventional Foucauldian analysis of the function of the gaze as well as offering an alternative model based on reciprocity and intimacy between multiple subjects, supported by cultural

phenomena and structures of eighteenth century England as well as more modern philosophy.

## **I. Subjectivity and the Early English Novel**

The literary form of the English novel was first developed in the early and mid-eighteenth century by authors such as Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and Daniel Defoe. This new genre centered around individual characters with unique lives and perspectives, set apart from previous forms of characterization through their noticeable particularity, as Ian Watt argues in his defining study *The Rise of the Novel*:

Characters in previous forms of literature, of course, were usually given proper names; but the kind of names actually used showed that the author was not trying to establish his characters as completely individualized entities. [...] the names set the characters in the context of a large body of expectations primarily formed from past literature, rather than from the context of contemporary life. [...] The early novelists, however, made an extremely significant break with tradition, and named their characters in such a way as to suggest that they were to be regarded as particular individuals in the contemporary social environment (18-19).<sup>2 3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Watt discusses the particularity of the characters of early novels in comparison to those of earlier literary forms at greater length, but uses the naming of characters as a concrete example for comparison: “But the great attention paid in the novel to the particularization of character is itself such a large question that we will consider only one of its more manageable aspects: the way that the novelist typically indicates his intention of presenting a character as a particular individual by naming him in exactly the same way as particular individuals are named in ordinary life” (18).

<sup>3</sup> Watt also makes a point that in earlier prose fiction, “The primary literary and conventional orientation of these proper names was further attested by the fact that there was usually only one of them – Mr. Badman or Euphues; unlike people in ordinary life, the characters of fiction did not have both given name and surname” (19). This will later

Of course, one can think of several exceptions to the generalization that characters in previous literary forms did not have contemporary, particular names, but it was not until the eighteenth century that this became what seems to be one of the few formal conventions of the novel.<sup>4</sup> These early novels present distinctive subjective protagonists, usually female, and are often written in epistolary form. The titular character of Fanny Burney's 1778 novel, *Evelina* leaves the shelter of her country home and guardian and ventures into London, where she experiences her first encounters with society. It is these encounters and engagements in the public sphere of eighteenth century London that establish Evelina as a subjective character rather than an object for other characters and give her letters the power to convey that subjectivity back to her home. I will argue that Evelina's subjectivity is shaped both through gazing upon others and through being gazed upon herself, sometimes in a solely transitive action and sometimes reciprocally.<sup>5</sup>

In discussing the issue of subjectivity, it is important to ask what exactly subjectivity is. The concept of agency has been used in many different ways in literary scholarship, ranging from a general depth of individual distinguishing characteristics to agency. For the purpose of this argument, I will use a definition of subjectivity which refers to the role of an agent or subject, a person who may act upon his or her environment, as opposed to the role of a person as an object, or one who is acted upon.

---

become important in discussing *Evelina*; as *Evelina* was written several decades after the novel form had been established, we may see Burney as breaking convention in giving Evelina just one proper name and drawing attention to the fact that she is missing a surname.

<sup>4</sup> This can be seen in the titles of the most frequently read and studied early novels, such as *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, *Cecilia*, *Evelina*, *Moll Flanders*, etc.

<sup>5</sup> I will primarily focus on Volume I of *Evelina* because it is in this volume that the titular character first encounters society and in which she changes and develops most rapidly.

However, we will see that the roles of subject and object are not constant and may be occupied simultaneously in some instances. In the introduction to *The Autobiographical Subject*, Felicity Nussbaum claims to use the term “subject” in two ways:

[...] to describe the way an individual being is, first, subject to someone else’s control and, with limited freedom, positioned within authority relations; and, second, to represent the way this entity becomes subject to its own identity, held within a given self-knowledge – believing that it is free, responsible, and the agent of its own actions (xi).<sup>6</sup>

This definition of a subject regards the genre of autobiography, but I believe that early novels such as *Evelina* may be treated as belonging to this category, as they essentially serve the purpose of fictional autobiographies in the form of letters. Nussbaum observes “The split subject, then, allows for the recognition that the ‘I’ who is writing is distinct from the ‘I’ who is written about” (32). The various roles that a character plays in interactions with other people and in internal action are constantly changing, but aggregately are considered to form a cohesive identity. Through studying interactions of gazes between various characters in *Evelina*, we can locate and examine the fluctuating definition of the self and its relation to other selves.

## II. Gaze Theory and Film

---

<sup>6</sup> Nussbaum’s first usage of the term “subject” fits into the generally natural or social scientific usage of the term, such as the subject of a study. For current purposes, I will refer to her first “subject” role henceforth as the role of “object.” However, it is important to note that “subjectivity,” when used in terms of the defining, (usually) constant qualities of a character, can contain both of these roles.

Much attention has been given in recent scholarship to the function of the gaze in film studies, and with good reason. The importance of seeing and being seen is readily apparent in a genre almost entirely dependent upon visual representation and the physical presence of an audience. Film scholars such as Laura Mulvey have appropriated the psychoanalytical theories of Lacan and Freud in discussing the possibility of the gaze as destructive due to male castration anxiety induced by the gaze of the female. In her seminal essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, Mulvey writes,

Ultimately, the meaning of woman is sexual difference, the visually ascertainable absence of the penis, the material evidence on which is based the castration complex essential for the organization of entrance to the symbolic order and the law of the father. Thus the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controller of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified (21).

For Mulvey, the intended audience of almost all films is male, and any female character in these films exists for the purpose of the gazing pleasure of the spectator. She identifies two aspects of pleasurable looking in cinema: "The first, scopophilic, arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The second, developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, comes from identification with the image seen" (18). According to Mulvey, scopophilic pleasure is engaged by images of women<sup>7</sup> while narcissistic pleasure is engaged by images of men.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> "Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium" (19).

Scopophilia, according to Mulvey's definition, is almost equivalent to voyeurism, but maintains one important difference: scopophilia is meant to serve as a substitute for action, in this case of a sexual nature. By gazing upon the female body but not performing a sexual act with it (which would require at least a minimal amount of agency on the part of the female), the male may transform the female from an agent capable of destroying his masculinity to an object affirming it. Put more simply, the demystification of the female body achieved through the filmic gaze (of both spectators and characters) transforms the person from subject to object, something easily appropriated and comprehensible.

Film scholars since Mulvey have occasionally questioned whether the female character may exhibit the agency that Mulvey seems to claim is only available to male characters and spectators in conventional cinema. In his analysis of Catherine Breillat's film *Romance*, John Phillips writes of a scene in which a man performs cunnilingus upon the female protagonist and then rapes her,

The act of cunnilingus promises to satisfy Marie's rather than the man's sexual cravings, asserting her sexual subjectivity over his. Her moans of pleasure, signifiers here of a female sexual agency unwished for by the male street predator, symbolically (though not literally) return his own gaze. At the same time, he is visually confronted with the wound of castration. His violent act of rape might therefore be read on the one hand as an aggressive response to Marie's self-

---

<sup>8</sup> "A male movie star's glamorous characteristics are thus not those of the erotic object of the gaze, but those of the more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the mirror" (20).



assertive sexuality, and on the other, as expression of an unconscious desire to punish the castrated woman and in so doing, assuage his castration anxiety (66).<sup>9</sup>

Phillips raises some complex issues regarding both the gaze and subjectivity here. First, in equating sexual agency with the return of the gaze, he emphasizes the theoretical importance of looking, apart from the actual physical act. In declaring that Marie returns the gaze of the predator through her assertion of agency, he defines the gaze as self-assertion of agency rather than simply a means of information gathering. He presents this encounter and the return of the gaze as if it is a battle of wills. The predator seems to rape Marie out of a need to suppress her agency by asserting his own over it. The implication of this situation is that it is threatening for one party to assert subjectivity over the person who first assumes subjectivity. This conflict calls to memory Susan McNeill-Bindon's analysis of the gaze in *The History of Ophelia* quoted above. McNeill-Bindon argues that a person may refuse to grant subjectivity to the object of his or her gaze if that gaze calls into question the subjectivity of the gazer. In a similar manner, Phillips seems to ask, but does not answer whether it is possible for a person to be both subject and object simultaneously, or whether contrary roles in personal interactions must be defined. This is a question to which I will return in discussing the gaze in *Evelina*.

### **III. Foucault's "Panopticism" and the Categorizing Gaze in *Evelina***

While theories of the gaze have been amply explored in film studies, they have been somewhat neglected in other textual forms, perhaps because their applicability is not quite apparent in a non-visual medium. I believe that a study of the function of the gaze

---

<sup>9</sup> It is important to distinguish that *Romance* can be considered an art house or erotic film, and may not conform to Mulvey's definition of "conventional narrative cinema."

in the early English novel can lead to useful insights regarding the development of the subjective character in the genre of the novel in the English language, and particularly in Burney's *Evelina*. The gaze was clearly of interest in fashionable society in late eighteenth century England, and representations of the gaze in *Evelina* deserve to be studied with the same scrutiny as the more literal gazes of visual mediums such as fine art and cinema.

The character of Evelina is constantly being watched by both the reader of the novel, the fictional recipient of her letters, and the people of London society at the various public events that she attends during her time in the city, such as public balls at fashionable venues such as Ranelagh and plays or operas at the theatre. In turn, she is watching other people who are watching her; there is a constant play between the return or avoidance of the gaze amongst members of the public. Evelina's private life, as expressed through her letters to her guardian, is only made possible through her life in the public. Her letters consist mainly of narrative about the public events that she attends and her feelings regarding these events; her private life is essentially translation of her public life for a particular audience. She essentially creates her subjectivity through "writing her self" in her letters and becoming a subject through conducting her personal, private life before an audience. We may here appropriate and question the theories of film scholars; is it possible for the objectification imposed upon a person through the gaze to be simultaneously a destructive and creative force in the development of individual subjectivity? Is it possible that the person of Evelina is being both created and destroyed as she is being gazed upon? The answer to this question may depend upon the ability of the person being gazed upon to return the gaze.

One of Evelina's most unwelcome experiences of being gazed upon occurs while she is lost at Marybone-gardens<sup>10</sup>, a fashionable, yet also potentially disreputable public pleasure-garden where men were able to solicit prostitutes, as described in Letter XXI. Lost and frightened as she is approached by men believing her to be a prostitute, Evelina seeks refuge with two women she only later recognizes as prostitutes and is mortified to come across the charming and sensible Lord Orville (from his introduction set up as Evelina's potential love interest), who does not at first recognize her amidst her companions. She writes, "to my infinite joy, he passed us without distinguishing me, though I saw that, in a careless manner, his eyes surveyed the party" (235). The self of "Evelina" that has been created through her interactions in London society seems almost literally to cease to exist when she is not recognized by Lord Orville due to the fact that she is located outside of the physical and interpersonal bounds that define that society in which she exists and in which they have previously encountered one another. This is a relief to Evelina, who does not wish her carefully constructed persona to be associated with her present company. If Evelina were to be recognized and "seen" by Lord Orville, her action and company in the scene would become a part of the person being created by the cumulative gazes of the latter along with the other members of the society in which the person of Evelina exists.

---

<sup>10</sup> Marybone-gardens (as Evelina writes) was also known as Marylebone and was one of the commercialized social spaces representative of the changing nature of public and private spaces in mid to late eighteenth century London, such as Ranelagh and Vauxhall. Marylebone was a fashionable venue that hosted concerts, operas, and fireworks in the mid-century period. However, by the time *Evelina* was written, it had declined in status and closed in 1776 (Burney 443). In this scene, it demonstrates the outdated style and activities of Evelina's family.

The fear Evelina feels of being seen by Lord Orville parallels Susan McNeill-Bindon's analysis of the gaze in a contemporary novel, Sarah Fielding's *The History of Ophelia*:

The action in volume one [...] highlights the personal dangers of life in the city by exposing both the public and ostensibly private spaces of British polite society as sites of surveillance where bodies and feelings are made docile through the simultaneous processes of watching and being watched. Through the experiences of the young ingénue Ophelia, Fielding creates a panoptic model of socialization where people's appearance and behaviours are rigidly evaluated and their roles in society defined through this evaluation (59).

These novels share the defining characteristic of being about a young girl coming from country "retirement" to the city where she encounters a society constantly engaged in observation, simply through the sheer number of people and amount of public space. Like Fielding's Ophelia, Evelina is constantly being watched and defined through watching. We might here substitute the word "subjectivity" for McNeill-Bindon's "role in society"; one's "role in society" is essentially one's ability to act upon the environment in particular ways, which is equivalent to the definition of subjectivity I have assumed in this argument. If one's role in society is defined through the evaluation of others, as performed by the gaze, then in the circumstances of being seen in a public place, the gaze is creative in the sense of forming an identity and enabling the agency of individuals, but it is limiting in its assignment of that identity.

In the passage quoted above, McNeill-Bindon refers to Fielding's mode of socialization as "panoptic," bringing to the forefront of the discussion Michel Foucault's

analysis of Jeremy Bentham's eighteenth-century prison design, the Panopticon.<sup>11</sup>

Foucault claims that the Panopticon represents a new dynamic of power and discipline, wherein people are controlled not through conformity to one standard exemplified and mandated by a monarch or other system of totalitarian government, but rather through the categorization and definition of people as individuals:

The body of the king, with its strange material and physical presence, with the force that he himself deploys or transmits to some few others, is at the opposite extreme of this new physics of power represented by panopticism; the domain of panopticism is, on the contrary, that whole lower region, that region of irregular bodies, with their details, their multiple movements, their heterogeneous forces, their spatial relations; what are required are mechanisms that analyse distributions, gaps, series, combinations, and which use instruments that render visible, record, differentiate and compare: a physics of a relational and multiple power, which has its maximum intensity not in the person of the king, but in the bodies that can be individualized by these relations (208).

According to Foucault, the panoptic mode of discipline, which McNeill-Bindon refers to in her "panoptic mode of socialization," regulates people and their behaviors not through

---

<sup>11</sup> Jeremy Bentham designed the Panopticon in 1785. The Panopticon is a facility in which one observer may see all of the several separated and individualized prisoners/patients/students housed in the facility at the same time without being seen by them: "at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery" (200).

the enforcement of established social norms to which everyone must adhere, but rather through the careful and detailed categorization of people and the assignment of social roles and behaviors based upon this categorization. Any departure from these assigned roles becomes a shocking behavior. In the scene at Marybone-gardens, Evelina's situation is so shocking and mortifying to her as well as to her companions because it is so far outside of the individual persona that has been created for her by society. She is defined by her company and her surroundings, as her definition of self is so closely tied to the perceptions of others, so it is terrifying to her that her current circumstances could be incorporated into the persona of "Evelina." However, she is spared this change (at least partially) because the circumstances are in fact quite opposite her assumed identity. Lord Orville does not recognize her precisely because he does not associate the symbolic person of Evelina with the circumstances in which the physical person of Evelina is currently engaged.

Evelina is aware of the impact of others on her identity and her role in society compared to that of others from very early on in the novel. At the first private ball she attends (at which she meets Lord Orville for the first time), her emotions are dominated by shame and embarrassment, which are for the most part derived from a sense of acting in a manner unsuited to her character. After an awkward and taciturn exchange with Lord Orville, she thinks to herself, "I was quite ashamed of being so troublesome, and so much *above* myself as these seeming airs made me appear; but indeed I was too much confused to think or act with any consistency" (33). In this sentiment and through the rest of this scene, Evelina shows an acute awareness of the observations of others toward her and is concerned with how her behavior matches her supposed character. In this particular

quotation, she is concerned with the consistency of her character, a quality which is in keeping with the individualization of people created through a system of panoptic surveillance as described by Foucault and applied to *The History of Ophelia* by McNeill-Bindon.

Other instances of embarrassment or shame in this scene link consistency of character directly to being seen by others. For instance, as Evelina is observing Lord Orville's interactions with others, she dwells upon her previous behavior toward him: "but indeed I was too well convinced of the ridiculous part I had myself played before so nice an observer, to be able to enjoy his pleasantry: so self-compassion gave me feeling for others" (34).<sup>12</sup> Here, she seems to assert that she believes her behavior to be so different from her actual character (or at least what she believes it to be) that it has convinced Lord Orville that her character and identity match that behavior. Likewise, after Sir Clement Willoughby comments that Evelina seems to show a preference for Lord Orville as a dance partner and Orville offers to find Mrs. Mirvan, Evelina writes, "I bowed and sat down again, not daring to meet his eyes; for what must he think of me, between my blunder and the supposed preference?" (35). This comment is a clear indication that Evelina is concerned with the observations formed by others seeing her from the very start of her public life in London. Her identity is being formed, and she is

---

<sup>12</sup> Significantly, this encounter occurs at one of Evelina's first forays into public life in London. She writes of Lord Orville, "When he found this [her embarrassment], he changed the subject and talked of public places, and public performers; but he soon discovered that I was totally ignorant of them" (34). In an interesting contrast, much of the language in the scene actually describes Evelina in terms that establish her as a sort of public performer herself: "how childish a part I had acted," "the ridiculous part I had myself played," etc., bringing to the foreground the fact that she is currently actually participating in a public performance herself, although she has little to no knowledge of such performances, which is likely why she feels such embarrassment and discomfort in the situation.

terrified that it will be formed in a manner that she does not wish. She has only a small amount of control in regards to how others perceive her, and she is aware of every time she loses what little control she may have.

A counterpart to Evelina's experience of having her identity defined through the gazes and observation of others can be seen in Terry Castle's analysis of the eighteenth-century masquerade ball.<sup>13</sup> She writes in *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*,

If, psychologically speaking, the masquerade was a meditation on self and other, in the larger social sense it was a meditation on cultural classification and the organizing dialectical schema of eighteenth-century life. It served as a kind of exemplary disorder. Its hallucinatory reversals were both a voluptuous release from ordinary cultural prescriptions and a stylized comment upon them (6).

In contrast to Evelina's fear of being believed to be a prostitute, according to Castle, "Any woman at a masquerade might be viewed as a 'prostitute in disguise' – at once hypersexualized, hypocritical, and an exploiter of innocent men" (33). Some women at masquerades were actually prostitutes, of course, soliciting clients or simply enjoying a night in which they might shed their social role and act as if they were members of high society. However, as this possibility was known, any woman might literally be believed to be a prostitute in disguise or more figuratively, to take on the role of a more sexualized woman through the loss of a particular individual identity. As Castle claims, the casting off of identifiable characteristics may have served as a sort of rebellion against the

---

<sup>13</sup> According to Castle, "The popularity of these gatherings [masquerades] fluctuated from time to time during the century, often in response to civil or religious censure, but did not wane until the 1780' and 1790's" (3). According to this timeline, masquerades were still in vogue at the time both *Evelina* and *The History of Ophelia* were published.



“panoptic mode of socialization” present in most other circles of society. Castle writes of this experience:

One became the other in an act of ecstatic impersonation. The true self remained elusive and inaccessible – illegible – within its fantastical encasements. The result was a material devaluation of unitary notions of the self, as radical in its own way as the more abstract demystifications in the writings of Hume and the eighteenth-century ontologists. The pleasure of the masquerade attended on the experience of doubleness, the alienation of inner from outer, a fantasy of two bodies simultaneously and thrillingly present, self and other together, the two-in-one. (4-5).

The embarrassment felt by Evelina due to the displacement of the self within other behaviors is lost in the prospect of the anonymity of the masquerade. The eighteenth-century emphasis on the inner self being reflected on the body, as in blushing, is abandoned at the masquerade, leaving the participants free to behave in a manner different from the identity assigned to them by their own actions and the panoptic surveillance of others at all other public events, and even some events that were ostensibly private. While at her first private ball early in the novel, Evelina is frightened by the prospect of dancing in front of strangers, precisely because it is her first ball and she has not met the attendants before,<sup>14</sup> at a masquerade, the intention is that the attendants will all be strangers. The difference lies in that (at least theoretically) the participants of a masquerade will never see each other as themselves again, and thus,

---

<sup>14</sup> “I am sure I coloured; for indeed I was frightened at the thoughts of dancing before so many people, all strangers, and which was worse, *with* a stranger; however, that was unavoidable, for though I looked round the room several times, I could not see one person that I knew” (Burney 31).

their actions at the masquerade are not incorporated into the “unity of self” to which Terry Castle refers.

#### **IV. Social Structures of Watching and Being Watched in Eighteenth Century**

##### **London**

*Evelina* is very much a novel about learning one’s place in society and changing to fit into that place, as Burney’s subtitle to the novel suggest. Terry Castle writes, “*Evelina*, we recall, is structured by the heroine’s progress through a series of popular London entertainments, each of which becomes an anagram for civilization itself. Confrontation with fashionable metropolitan life is Burney’s primary metaphor for learning one’s place in the symbolic order” (260). The changes that transpire due to the various “confrontations with fashionable metropolitan life” occur quite quickly in Volume I of *Evelina*. We can find evidence of these changes in Evelina’s awareness of herself in the presence of others at various public events. As I have already examined, at Evelina’s first ball, she is very unsure of herself and aware of social blunders that she is making.<sup>15</sup> At these early public occasions, she tends to think that she is reaching above herself and that her character is not high enough to match her surroundings. She is embarrassed that she is not acting in a manner befitting the setting, her social status, and her companions. However, as the novel progresses and Madame Duval arrives, Evelina’s perspective turns almost completely. In Volume I, Letter XVI, Madame Duval, Captain Mirvan, and Sir Clement all accompany Evelina’s party to Ranelagh. On this occasion,

---

<sup>15</sup> Recall Evelina’s thoughts at the private ball with Lord Orville and Sir Clement Willoughby: “I was quite ashamed of being so troublesome, and so much *above* myself as these seeming airs made me appear; but indeed I was too much confused to think or act with any consistency;” “how childish a part I had acted,” etc.

rather than being embarrassed by her own provincialism or lack of knowledge regarding the proper behavior for the occasion, Evelina is mortified instead by her companions and their behavior. She is surprised to see Lord Orville, and thinks:

I felt a confusion unspeakable at again seeing him, from the recollection of the ridotto adventure<sup>16</sup>: nor did my situation lessen it, for I was seated between Madame Duval and Sir Clement, who seemed as little as myself to desire Lord Orville's presence. Indeed, the continual wrangling and ill-breeding of Captain Mirvan and Madame Duval, made me blush that I belonged to them. And poor Mrs. Mirvan and her amiable daughter had still less reason to be satisfied. (60)

It is clear here that the source of Evelina's anguish has shifted from her behavior to that of others. The key similarity between her two sources of embarrassment is a lack of correlation between the behavior of people and the situation in which they are in. Within fashionable eighteenth century London society, behavior must match both the social atmosphere and the identity that has been previously formed through social encounters and the categorization occurring therein. Evelina is aware that the manner in which people observe and categorize her companions affects the manner in which they observe and categorize her as well. In this setting, her company becomes a part of her environment, and may be considered to be experienced by her. Even her sympathy for Mrs. Mirvan and her daughter can be taken as concern regarding her social position. Mrs.

---

<sup>16</sup> Shortly before this outing to Ranelagh, Evelina attends a ridotto (an Italian inspired ball popular in eighteenth century England) at which she tells Mr. Lovel, a man pursuing her, that she is engaged to dance with Lord Orville to avoid dancing with him, although this is not actually true. The truth is uncovered, leading to a mortifying situation for Evelina. This personal embarrassment is written only two days before Evelina writes the letter in which she is mortified by the behavior of Madame Duval and Captain Mirvan rather than herself.

Mirvan and her daughter have more established social roles and are also more affected by the Captain's behavior as he is their father and husband. If their roles were to be compromised, Evelina's role would likewise be compromised because she would be in the company of people of a lower reputation. Evelina speaks of Lord Orville as "honouring us with his company" (60), and combined with her sentiment of feeling internal embarrassment at "belonging" to Captain Mirvan and Madame Duval, we can see that she is concerned with where she fits in her group of companions. As we have seen from the scene in Marybone-gardens (which occurs after this incident), the company that Evelina keeps matters a great deal in categorizing her and in creating her individual identity.

Again, these reactions from Evelina would seem to reinforce the Foucauldian notion of panoptic gaze in eighteenth-century English culture. However, in a closer examination of Foucault's text, we come across some important differences. Foucault writes of the Panopticon and the model of social relations and power structures that it represents in his theory, "This Panopticon, subtly arranged so that an observer may observe, at a glance, so many different individuals, also enables everyone to come and observe any of the observers. The seeing machine was once a sort of dark room into which individuals spied; it has become a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole" (207). This statement may be usefully applied to the structures and exercise of power and surveillance as they have been illustrated in *Evelina*. In the architectural structure of the Panopticon, the prisoners of the building do not know if they are being watched by a limited number of observers at any time and always act as though they are being watched. In the panoptic mode of

socialization, people can be fairly certain that they are being constantly watched by everyone around them whenever they are in a public situation. By establishing methods of categorization and identification of individuals in social settings based on the consistency and appropriateness of their behavior, a situation in which “the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole” is created. We can see that society’s supervision has a tangible power over individuals as Evelina changes her behavior and attitude according to the observations and expectations of others. Therefore, this aspect of Foucault’s social version of the Panopticon is seen to be at work.

However, there is an important discrepancy between Foucault’s analysis and the power systems at work in the eighteenth century, both fictionally and historically. Foucault distinguishes the Panopticon as “a machine for dissociating the seeing/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen” (202). In the public sphere in which the proposed panopticism of *Evelina* functions, however, the potential reciprocity of the “seeing/being seen dyad” is very much present. As we have already seen, Evelina and others are acutely aware of the observation of others. The watcher in this situation does not see everything without being seen; on the contrary, each individual is constantly being watched even as he or she watches others. The awareness of the gaze and its functions, I believe, detracts from the panoptic qualities of surveillance in eighteenth-century literature and cultural events. Rather than facing confusion as to whether they are being watched as in the structure of the Panopticon, members of society are aware that they are being watched constantly and can see by whom they are being watched.

The formal activity of watching-others-watching is, in fact, a part of the culture expressed in *Evelina*. We have already seen that Evelina's awareness of the observations of others changes as she becomes more a part of society. An important difference to note is that between her reaction to the first play she witnesses versus her reaction to a play later in volume I, *Love for Love*. Evelina writes to her guardian, Rev. Mr. Villars, on Saturday night in Letter X:

O my dear Sir, in what raptures I am returned! Well may Mr. Garrick<sup>17</sup> be so celebrated, so universally admired – I had not any idea of so great a performer. Such ease! such vivacity in his manner! such grace in his motions! such fire and meaning in his eyes! – I could hardly believe he had studied a written part, for every word seemed spoke from the impulse of the moment (27).

She goes on at length, lauding the performance of the celebrated Shakespearean Mr. Garrick; almost the entire letter consists of her description of the actual play and the actors. In contrast, she later attends the play *Love for Love* with the Mirvans which Sir Clement Willoughby, Lord Orville, and Mr. Lovel also attend. The letter describing this event is five and a half pages long, but the entire description of the actual play consists of the following:

The play was Love for Love, and tho' it is fraught with wit and entertainment, I hope I shall never see it represented again; for it is so extremely indelicate, - to use the softest word I can, - that Miss Mirvan and I were perpetually out of countenance, and could neither make any observations ourselves, nor venture to

---

<sup>17</sup> David Garrick, a celebrated actor of the London stage at this time in historical reality. This reference, along with many of the other references to actual people and events in London, helps to set up *Evelina* as a realistic text.

listen to those of others. This was the more provoking, as Lord Orville was in excellent spirits, and exceedingly entertaining (80).

This section along with the remainder of the letter lacks any real description of the play apart from the subject matter, and Evelina focuses her description on the reactions of others to the play as she observes them. In these passages, she claims that listening to the observations of others regarding the play is more interesting than making any observations herself. She is more concerned with the performances of people she knows than with the simultaneously occurring scripted performances.

As a character, Evelina is subtle in making this preference known, but another character, Mr. Lovel, explicitly states the fact that he considers the actual content of the play to be secondary to the nature of the play-going experience, which, for him, is marked by interactions with one's friends. Mr. Lovel enters a heated argument with Captain Mirvan (at least on the Captain's end) who, throughout the novel, represents an outdated perspective, adverse to the commercial nature of entertainment in the late eighteenth century:<sup>18</sup>

'For my part,' said Mr. Lovel, 'I confess I seldom listen to the players: one has so much to do, in looking about, and finding out one's acquaintance, that, really, one has not time to mind the stage. Pray – (most affectedly fixing his eyes upon a diamond-ring on his little finger) pray – what was the play tonight?

'Why, what the D–l,' cried the Captain, 'do you come to the play, without knowing what it is?'

---

<sup>18</sup> The Captain's ideas and notions about society are considered to be outdated because he has recently returned from a long sea voyage and has not been in contact with society for several years.

‘O yes, Sir, yes, very frequently; I have no time to read playbills; one merely comes to meet one’s friends, and shew that one’s alive’ (82).

In comparison to the Captain’s view of the purpose of public entertainment (which is similar to Evelina’s original view), Mr. Lovel’s comments convey the social norm that public entertainment is more about watching others and being seen in a favorable and fashionable light himself than watching the ostensible spectacle. While Mr. Lovel is not the most sympathetic character in the novel, his explicit explanation of a social phenomenon matches with the behavior and attitudes of Evelina and other characters as described in her letters.

Evidence that people involved in the culture of looking in eighteenth-century England were very much aware of the gazes of others and the constant surveillance they were under shows that the “seeing/being seen dyad,” as Foucault calls it, was not only present, but a formal part of the social activity of individualizing and categorizing others. This awareness eliminates some of the isolating function of the panoptic gaze that has been cited by Foucault and by applications of his theory on literature, such as that of Susan McNeill-Bindon. The reciprocal nature of the gaze in *Evelina* and the social functions which the book consists of must be explored further.

## **V. Eye Miniature Portraits and an Alternative Mode of the Gaze**

It is important to remember in analyzing the Foucauldian aspects of the gaze in late eighteenth century England that this is the period in which Foucault claims that the panoptic gaze in the institutional form of the Panoptic as well as more figurative panoptic social ordering and discipline arose. The assertion that the gaze in eighteenth century



England served to classify and define people and society cannot be denied as at least somewhat valid. However, in taking such a definitive analysis of the gaze as a cohesive and complete picture of its function in this time period, we pass over not only valuable insights for a modern audience, but also the contemporary interest in the gaze in eighteenth century London society itself.

Evidence of interest in the various aspects of the gaze in eighteenth century English society can be seen in the rather bizarre trend of the eye miniature portrait. In 1785, just seven years after the publication of *Evelina* and the very same year in which Jeremy Bentham designed the Panopticon, the Prince of Wales commissioned a portrait of his eye, reproduced below, which was sent to Mrs. Maria Fitzherbert, a widow to whom he had proposed marriage, with the words, “P.S. I send you a Parcel ... and I send you at the same time an Eye, if you have not totally forgotten the whole countenance. I think the likeness will strike you” (Shane Leslie qtd. in Grootenboer 496). The eye miniature portrait portrays solely the eye of the subject, disregarding even other facial features, such as the nose, that would normally be in the empty space left in the portrait. In this way, it is clear that this portrait and other eye miniature portraits were deliberately non-mimetic.

The Prince’s gift of an eye miniature portrait started a trend in the fashionable circles of England to commission portraits of eyes that were often given to lovers and worn on the person. Art historian Hanneke Grootenboer argues,

Eye miniature portraits [...] imply a reversal of the object and subject of seeing and should be considered as (prephotographic) instances of “being seen” rather

than of seeing. As such, they stand at the foundation of an alternative, reciprocal model of vision, exemplified by the camera (496).

The form of the miniature portrait was popular in the late eighteenth century<sup>19</sup> and reflected the increased emphasis on individuals and the personal nature of representation. Miniature portraits were generally contained in a precious item such as a locket. Marcia Pointon notes, “the worth of the subject was irrevocably endorsed by the precious materials, producing at the symbolic level a sign of unique distinction” (56). The miniature portrait was meant to represent an individual in an intimate manner as different or unique. The eye miniature portrait, as a subset of the miniature portrait, was meant to portray individuals in an intimate manner to their loved ones, but Grootenboer argues that they served a slightly different purpose than the typical miniature portrait:

I consider the eye miniature not as a mere picture of someone’s eye, but rather as a portrayal of an individual’s *gaze*. In most cases, the gaze portrayed looks directly at the beholder, causing confusion as to who exactly is doing the scrutinizing. [...] With eye pictures [...] the confrontation with the viewer outweighs the representation. A gazing eye, or rather the *return* of the beholder’s gaze, is the sole event of the painting. The eye miniature’s subject matter, in fact, is intimate vision (497).

If we accept Grootenboer’s proposal that the eye miniature portrait represents the gaze of the subject rather than just the physical representation of the eye, then we are led to several conclusions. First, as eye miniature portraits were given as gifts to intimate

---

<sup>19</sup> According to Grootenboer, the eye miniature portrait specifically disappeared by the 1830s and was “an emblem of the spinster’s plainness and limited independence” by the time Charles Dickens wrote *Dombey and Son* in 1848 (496).

relations, often lovers, the returned gaze is an act of intimacy more than it is an act of conquest, as it would seem to be desired by both involved parties. The mutual nature of “intimate vision” implies a meeting of two subjects gazing upon each other, presumably transforming the other into an object, but encountered with a returned gaze.<sup>20</sup> The intimacy involved in the return of the gaze will be further explored later in this paper. Second, it is possible, or at least believed by many to be possible, to capture the gaze in a non-photographic medium. While fine art is a medium of visual representation, Grootenboer insists that “the confrontation with the viewer outweighs the representation” in the case of eye miniatures. If this is the case, we are presented with a philosophical rather than aesthetic question and made to question what exactly is the mode of representation that may adequately capture the gaze.

## **VI. Martin Buber’s *I and Thou* and the Reciprocal Gaze in *Evelina***

A Foucauldian analysis of public life in *Evelina* and eighteenth-century English culture in general would seem thus far to lead to the conclusion that the ever present gaze of others is inescapable without resort to physical disguise and that observation is always defining in its grant of subjectivity, to borrow a phrase from McNeill-Bindon. If this is true, it would appear that in granting someone subjectivity through the gaze, a person is actually identifying the gazed upon as a sort of object with limited subjective powers. This is the case of the gaze as depicted in *Evelina*. The action of the gaze presupposes at least two participants: the gazing and the gazed upon. The gaze itself is a relation. In *I and*

---

<sup>20</sup> This mirrors the scene of Catherine Breillat’s *Romance* analyzed by John Phillips. However, in this situation, the element of conflict is greatly lessened.

*Thou*, written in 1923,<sup>21</sup> the Viennese Jewish philosopher Martin Buber suggests two different relations in which the “I,” or the self, may exist: I-It and I-You.<sup>22</sup> According to Buber,

Whoever says You does not have something for his object. For wherever there is something there is also another something; every It borders on other Its; It is only by virtue of bordering on others. But where You is said there is no something.

You has no borders. Whoever says You does not have something: he has nothing.

But he stands in relation. (55)

The I-It relation expressed here matches with Foucault’s and McNeill-Bindon’s notions of the gaze as assigning social roles and realities. The key term in Buber’s definition of the I-It relation is “borders.” If one engages in an I-It relation, one is essentially defining the other player in the relation by some set of characteristics or roles, just as the panoptic mode of socialization categorizes people and identities by comparing them to some other person or group of people, creating a border between that which is and is not that individual. In the scene of *Evelina* that has been briefly examined, Evelina seems to be afraid of Lord Orville’s gaze in this type of relation. Lord Orville does not pass by her

---

<sup>21</sup> *I and Thou*, or *Ich und Du* was published in German in 1923, but was not translated into English until 1937. This translation, by Walter Kaufmann, maintains the traditional title of *I and Thou* but uses the term “I-You” to refer to what has previously been called the “I-Thou” relation in translation.

<sup>22</sup> It must be acknowledged that Buber was quite interested with mysticism, not solely with epistemology. The second and third parts of *I and Thou* postulate upon man’s interactions with nature and God, respectively. However, for the purposes of this paper, I will refer only to the first part of the book, which theorizes the interactions of humans with other humans. I will not further address the mystical nature of Buber’s argument as this paper is involved in epistemology. This should not be assumed to interfere with the integrity of the use of Buber in my argument as the first part of *I and Thou* only hints at the mysticism involved in the later parts of the book and is not dependent upon this mysticism.

party without physically seeing her; instead, he simply does not recognize her and engage her in a reciprocal gaze, but instead deems her unworthy of his authentic attention by presuming that he understands her social status and behavior. This is what Evelina truly fears, being defined by her current company and becoming a part of it in social reality, being assigned to this social role not just in the present moment, but also in future encounters with Lord Orville and others of his class. However, since Lord Orville does not differentiate her from her companions, the group is one conglomerated “It” categorized broadly as a different group of people rather than a collection of individuals defined by the borders of their separate identities and placed in direct comparison with one another. This mode of relation, in which Evelina serves as an “It” in the “I-It” basic word with Lord Orville, is most representative of the claims that Foucault and theorist influenced by his thought make regarding the function of the gaze.

Moments later in the same scene, however, another mode of relation can be observed and another function of the gaze studied which resembles Buber’s “I-You” relation. Evelina is actually seen by Lord Orville later in this scene, but in a significantly different manner than that with which she expected to be seen by him while walking with her companions. After she has found her party and faced the embarrassment incited by her company, Evelina comes upon Lord Orville again. This time, not only does he recognize her, but he meets her eyes in a concerned gaze:

... unhappily I caught his eye; - both mine, immediately, were bent to the ground; but he approached me, and we all stopped. I then looked up. He bowed. Good God, with what expressive eyes did he regard me! Never were surprise and concern so strongly marked, - yes, my dear Sir, he looked *greatly* concerned; and

that, the remembrance of that, is the only consolation I feel, for an evening the most painful of my life (236).

The greatest difference between this gaze and the potentially destructive gaze earlier in the scene is that it is a gaze with the purpose and character of engaged concern rather than objectification and evaluation. Lord Orville is not simply looking at Evelina, but meeting her gaze, and the action carried out through this gaze is anxious regard rather than appraisal. Buber notes the difference between his two sets of relations, “The world as experience belongs to the basic word I-It. The basic word I-You establishes the world of relation” (56). In this interaction with Evelina, it is clear that Orville is engaging in the world of relation rather than the world of experience. Buber distinguishes the “world of experience” from the “world of relation” by defining experience thus:

Man goes over the surfaces of things and experiences them. He brings back from them some knowledge of their condition – an experience. He experiences what there is to things [...] Those who experience do not participate in the world. For the experience is ‘in them’ and not between them and the world. The world does not participate in experience. It allows itself to be experienced, but it is not concerned, for it contributes nothing, and nothing happens to it. (55-56)<sup>23</sup>

According to this definition, experience is the process of gathering information from the world without interacting with it. Essentially, engaging in experience, or the “I-It”

---

<sup>23</sup> Here the translator notes that the German verb used for “goes over the surface of things” is related to the verb that means to drive or go “possibly by traveling.” He also notes that by linking the verb for “to experience” with the verb “to drive or go” suggests that the experience “stays on the surface.” Buber’s original manuscript contained the phrase “Thus the fisherman gets his catch. But the find is for the diver” after the sentence “Man goes over the surfaces of things and experiences them” (55). This creates a sense that experience transitory and sequential, while relation is timeless.

relation, means to take whatever entity one with which one is engaging as an object, indifferent to the actions of the “I” member of the dialectic. In contrast, Buber writes that “Relation is reciprocity. My You acts on me as I act on it” (67). According to the definition of subjectivity that has been utilized thus far in this argument, the fact that the action of the “I-You” relation is reciprocal means that the “I” member of the dialectic is granting subjectivity to the “You” member by accepting that the two members may act simultaneously upon one another.

In the scene above, if Lord Orville were to gaze upon Evelina as she walked with her previous companions and categorize her as one of them, this would exemplify the way in which the gaze enables experience. Orville would experience the physical person of Evelina as belonging to a particular category of women and occupying a highly stigmatized role in society. He would categorize her and identify her as an object appropriate for comparison to other objects. His concerned gaze, however, is an example of relation with Evelina through the I-You relation. At this moment, Evelina is not an object with defined boundaries, as in the I-It relation, but a subject separable from the social role assigned to her through constant observation and categorization. Buber claims that in the I-You relation, the You loses the characteristics that define that person when he or she is in the role of an It, but this is only a temporary state:

I can abstract from him the color of his hair or the color of his speech or the color of his graciousness; I have to do this again and again, but immediately he is no longer You. [...] The human being to whom I say You I do not experience. But I stand in relation to him, in the sacred basic word. Only when I step out of this do I experience him again. Experience is remoteness from You (59-60).

Quoting Grete Schaeder, Sylvain Boni clarifies this idea: “In the world of Thou, a person takes his stand with his unmediated being. The I-Thou relation, according to Schaeder, ‘...is nothing but pure Presentness, limitless and incomparable: everything else lives in its light” (114)<sup>24</sup>. In other words, the I-You relation stands outside of time and almost outside of the physical world completely. Essentially, the consciousnesses of two human beings meet and become intersubjective, each fully granting the other subjectivity rather than experiencing the other as an object from which to gain knowledge or use to impact the world. In contrast to the I-It relation, the relation between the members of the I-You dyad is an end in itself rather than the means to another end for the individual subject in relation to an object, whether human or not. The physical characteristics and categorizations that define that person’s identity are lost in this interaction, but the moment that they return to the consciousness of the involved parties, the relation becomes I-It instead of I-You.

Evelina’s pleasure at being seen by Lord Orville in the second instance of this scene comes not from the physical act of seeing, as that has been shown previously to incite fear. Rather, she is consoled by his gaze because it carries expression and concern, not categorization or evaluation. I contend that this is an instance of engaging in the I-You relation because Lord Orville is expressing emotion toward Evelina through his gaze rather than experiencing something himself. This is only a temporary state which is broken as soon as the two cease to look at each other, but at this moment, the gaze serves not as a tool of either creating or destroying subjectivity, but of recognizing it and

---

<sup>24</sup> Quoting Grete Schaeder, *The Hebrew Humanism of Martin Buber*, trans. Noah J. Jacobs (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), p. 151.



engaging with it. Evelina and Lord Orville exist intersubjectively for the brief moment during which the gaze lasts, but once it is broken, Evelina once again becomes an object, or It for Lord Orville.

The eye miniature portraits previously discussed in this paper may serve as evidence of the ability of the gaze to engage in reciprocal relations, which fits into Buber's I-You relation. In "Treasuring the Gaze: Eye Miniature Portraits and the Intimacy of Vision," Grootenboer notes,

An eye picture will always fail to make its sitter present in the way that a miniature portrait presented the beloved [...] for one reason, because it is unable to serve as a stand-in. [...] Having abandoned nearly all mimetic qualities with regard to the sitter by its exclusive focus on the gaze, an eye picture is not only an object of contemplation, it is the *subject* as well (501).

The gaze, in these portraits, is essentially considered infinite or undefined; Buber might say that it has no borders. It is not meant to represent the physical person of the sitter, but rather, that person's subjectivity, the ability to act and interact. Grootenboer persuasively argues that the major purpose of the eye miniature was to represent the gaze of the sitter and to create confusion regarding who was looking at whom. She argues that since an eye portrait cannot represent the physical body of a person, "having abandoned nearly all mimetic qualities with regard to the sitter by its exclusive focus on the gaze, and eye picture is not only an object of contemplation, it is the *subject* as well" (501). Likewise, intimate gazes between two people in *Evelina* are able to create an I-You relation, at least briefly. However, the major scenes of being seen in *Evelina* are located in public places, where one is seen by many more people, and even the ostensibly private scenes contain

elements of public life and identity. Therefore, we must ask: what is the difference between being seen in public and being seen in private?

## **VII. The Gaze and Subjectivity**

In her exploration of eye miniature portraits and their function in the fashionable society of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England, Hanneke Grootenboer notes,

As a portrayal of a gaze rather than part of a face, the eye picture adds a significant aspect to the network of gazing games that remains unaddressed in portrait miniatures: namely, how the beholder could be subjected to someone's gaze in the sense that she or he becomes a sight (500-501).

The eye portrait, as a stand-in for the actual gaze as performed in social situations, represents an awareness of the effects of being subjected to the gaze in actuality. The eye portrait deliberately creates another spectator or subject in the act of looking at a painting, wherein the observer of the painting becomes the observed as well. This action mirrors the social function being performed in the theatre scene explored above. Each participant in the event is watching others with the awareness that he or she is also being watched by these same others. Citing Gerard Wajcman's Lacanian analysis, Grootenboer later writes:

For Wajcman, Alberti's painting-window signals the birth of the spectator, the subject who sees without being seen and without being called on to see. This intimacy with oneself, Wajcman argues, is achieved by the absence of the gaze of the other. In the context of Wajcman's ideas, eye portraits present a paradox, creating an intimacy with the beholder that is achieved precisely because the

painted gaze is returned. Instead of promising the comfort of Albertian painting, eye portraits confront their viewers by creating the illusion of being watched.

(504)

According to this analysis, the presence of the gazes of others, as opposed to their absence, creates intimacy with the beholder, replacing self-intimacy. In this instance, the person being beheld is, to a certain extent, dissociated from his or her own self awareness and becomes aware of the changeable nature of the self based on surroundings and companions, as opposed to the comfortable assurance of the self presented by the absence of the other. In the case of *Evelina*, the constant presence of both figurative and literal gazes creates an awareness within *Evelina* that her subjectivity rests outside of herself. She gains agency through knowledge of things and of other people, which we see more as the novel progresses. The person of *Evelina* cannot exist without an audience, either through people literally gazing upon her or through the removed audience of Mr. Villars, the recipient of her letters. She becomes a subject precisely because she is aware that she is also an object, the target of someone's thoughts and actions.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

Throughout Burney's *Evelina*, the gaze is present in the consciousness of both the characters and the reader. In the majority of instances, it functions as a disciplinary force, assigning people to categories and roles which to which they must fit themselves. However, by focusing on this ordering function of the gaze, we fail to recognize the opportunities for intimacy between individuals facilitated by the gaze. The panoptic, oppressive gaze, described within Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* does cause people to

behave in the manner in which they believe they are expected to behave. However, the gaze can also function as a tool of intimacy rather than oppression, representing the meeting of the consciousnesses of two individuals. If the gaze is an instrument of agency or subjectivity, as I have explored above, by meeting the gaze of another, one performs an act of inter-subjectivity, engaging with another human being as an autonomous subject rather than a passive object. This may be a temporary and intermittent state, but it is important to an understanding of the development of subjectivity throughout the eighteenth century English novel as well as in a full understanding of gaze theory to accept that there are alternative models of the gaze that are not mutually exclusive.

## Works Cited

- Boni, Sylvain. *The Self and the Other in the Ontologies of Sartre and Buber*. Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982.
- Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Touchstone, 1970.
- Burney, Frances. *Evelina or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance Into the World*. Ed. Edward A. Bloom. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Castle, Terry. *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986.
- Foucault, Michel. "Panopticism." *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. 195-230.
- Grootenboer, Hanneke. "Treasuring the Gaze: Eye Miniature Portraits and the Intimacy Of Vision." *Art Bulletin*, 88:3 (2006). 496-507.
- McNeill-Bindon, Susan. "Site/Sight and Sensibility: The Socializing Function of the Gaze in Sarah Fielding's *The History of Ophelia*." *Literary and Cultural Intersections During the Long Eighteenth Century*. Ed. Marianna D'Ezio. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008. 58-75.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989. *Theories of Representation and Difference*. Gen. Ed. Teresa de Lauretis. 14-26.
- Nussbaum, Felicity A. *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
- Pointon, Marcia. "Surrounded With Brilliants: Miniature Portraits in Eighteenth-Century England." *Art Bulletin* 83 (2001). 48-77.
- Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1957.

