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Putting Burney in Her Place

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In the summer of 2017 in Montreal—home of the Burney Centre at McGill University—the newspapers featured one lead story for weeks on end: the city's landmark Olympic Stadium had become a shelter for refugees from the United States who were seeking a new home in Canada. Nigerians, Turks, Mexicans, and especially Haitians, with their belongings stuffed into whatever suitcases or backpacks they could carry, formed a surge of border-crossers who feared that new immigration policies in the United States could lead to their deportation. This crisis arose from the modern state's power to determine the individual's rightful place inside or outside of national borders, as the exertion of such power created homeless, stateless, and alienated people by the thousands. Despite their hopes, the immigrants faced an uncertain future, and despite the warnings from Canadian authorities that asylum was not a certain thing, their numbers continued to grow.

At first glance, nothing seems more removed from the lives of refugees in the Olympic Stadium than the life of Frances Burney. Daughter of a renowned musicologist and a celebrated author in her own right, Burney stood at the center of Britain's social, political, and cultural scene from her young adulthood well into old age. Her friends and acquaintances included luminaries in letters, art, theater, music, and politics, as well as aristocrats in the highest reaches of society, including the royal families of Britain and France. Yet despite Burney's apparently firm toehold in the elite circles of her time, her letters and journals detail her experiences with the threatened or very real loss of her moorings—those deep relationships with people and places that fostered Burney's sense of who she was, what she was, and where she belonged. In these writings, Burney represents the trauma of insecurity over her place, particularly in three salient instances: her exposure as the author of *Evelina*, her position at Court attending Queen Charlotte, and her residence in France from 1802 to 1812

and during the Hundred Days of Napoleon's return from exile on Elba and final defeat at the battle of Waterloo. Whether they were jotted down in haste or carefully crafted, the journals and letters describing these episodes detail Burney's progress through crises of place and identity that grew less manageable and more terrifying over time: they recount her forced estrangement from her familiar world while also recording her attempts to shape her experiences in narrative forms that would mitigate their danger to herself. In her reflections on the relation between community and identity, Simone Weil states that "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul" (43). By detailing the feelings that accompanied her loss of rootedness, Burney confronts the instability she shared with so many of her contemporaries as they faced a world that seemed to offer no secure, permanent home.

In order to understand the magnitude of Burney's physical, psychological, and intellectual journey away from home, we need to recognize what home meant to her. Beginning with Burney's teenaged years, her journals record life in a household that seemed to be the epicenter of culture in her day. By the time Charles Burney received his doctorate from Oxford in 1769, he had given music lessons to pupils from wealthy, elite families for years, and through these encounters he cultivated connections to the principal artists, actors, and writers of the time. The Burney family residences in Poland Street, Queen Square, and after 1774, St. Martin's Street, were filled with visitors, many of them A-list celebrities, and Burney felt lucky to live among such a mix of intellectual, artistic, and cosmopolitan guests. The most exotic of them included Omai, the Polynesian native befriended by Burney's brother James on Captain Cook's second expedition to the South Seas (*EJL* 1: 41), and Count Alexseĭ Grigor'evich Orlov, assassin of Czar Peter III and favorite of Catherine the Great, whom Burney mistakenly believed was Orlov's lover (*EJL* 1: 161).[1] Less notorious but no less illustrious, Sir Joshua Reynolds lived a stone's throw away from the St. Martin's Street house, and the entire Garrick family popped in frequently, with David Garrick usually performing impromptu comedy, "taking off" figures such as Thomas Arne and Samuel Johnson. Burney first

met the object of Garrick's comic sketches when Johnson visited the Burneys in the company of Hester and Queeney Thrale, the latter of whom was a pupil of Charles Burney; when finally eased away from the library, Johnson "entered freely & most cleverly into conversation" (*EJL* 2: 226), including a debate with Hester Thrale over who received the most fulsome dinner invitation from Elizabeth Montagu: "'Your note,' cried Dr. Johnson, 'can bear no comparison with *mine*,—I am *at the Head of Philosophers*; she says.' 'And I,' cried Mrs. Thrale, '*have all the muses in my Train*!'" (*EJL* 2: 227).

While Burney's sister Esther—an accomplished musician—was called to play the harpsichord, Burney herself "spent the morning sitting quietly in a corner" (*EJL* 2: 224 n. 24), silent yet obviously taking in every word the visitors had spoken. At home, Burney could remain an unnoticed observer—a role that she loved and clearly enjoyed, for anonymity allowed her to assess the characters of others and construct mostly comic scenes with them while remaining secure in not having to perform a part herself. Although Burney did find the courage to take a role in home theatricals as Mrs. Lovemore in Arthur Murphy's *The Way to Keep Him* and Huncamunca in Henry Fielding's *Tom Thumb*, she preferred staying in the background, and her family's prominence in musical circles allowed her to remain obscure. Since Esther was her father's star student, she and her husband Charles Rousseau Burney played accompaniment to visitors such as Elizabeth Linley, the talented young singer who later married the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and the celebrated Italian soprano Lucrezia Agujari, whose "Pantheon-price" was 50 guineas per song (*EJL* 2: 75). Apparently Agujari was worth every penny: she gave a concert at the Burneys' house, solely for the Burney family, that lasted five hours, prompting Burney to exclaim "She is a wonderful Creature!" (*EJL* 2: 156). The Burney family home was wonderful as well. Besides Linley and Agujari, singer Giuseppe Millico—"the divine Millico"—composer Antonio Sacchini, and violinist Eligio Celestino performed for the Burneys and their friends in what Burney called a "heavenly Evening" (*EJL* 1: 234). Perhaps a bit spoiled by the richness of her own home life, Burney expressed her impatience and disappointment when she and her sister Susanna returned the

visit of some friends: "[N]o music! no Millico—! no Sacchini!—every thing stupid & heavy" (*EJL* 1: 261). Given her familiarity with an atmosphere of music, drama, and literature, it is no wonder that Burney—aged 23 and mature enough to marry—rejected the proposal of the hapless Thomas Barlow. She was perfectly sincere in telling him she had not "the slightest thoughts of ever leaving this House" (*EJL* 2: 142), for at this time, her father's home was her place of comfort, stimulation, and enjoyment.

Ironically, Burney herself was partly responsible for changing her place. With the publication of *Evelina* in 1778 and the subsequent discovery of the novel's authorship, Burney in a sense lost her home, and Evelina's confused outburst—"I hardly know myself to whom I most belong" (353)—applied to Burney's situation as well. Trying to wean Burney from her "over-delicacy" in not wanting to appear "as an *Authoress*" (*EJL* 3: 63), Hester Thrale teased her about the dilemma that success had brought her: "'Poor Miss Burney!—so you thought just to have played & sported with your sisters & Cousins, & had it all your own way!—but now you are *in for* it!—but if you *will* be an Author & a Wit,—you must take the Consequence!'" (*EJL* 3: 115–16). Burney, though, did not share in the laugh. Turning author unexpectedly removed her from the "snugship," or the privacy and "dear old obscurity" (*EJL* 3: 143) that she had enjoyed in her household:

> I part with this my dear, long loved, long cherished *snugship* with more regret than any body will believe, except my dear sisters who *Live with* me, & know me too well & too closely to doubt me: but yet, I am niether [sic] insensible to the *Honours* which have wrested my secret from my Friends, nor Cold to the *pleasures* attending a success so unhoped for: yet my fears for the *future*—& my dread of getting into *Print*, & thence into *Public Notice*,—I niether [sic] now can, or believe I ever shall, wholly Conquer! (*EJL* 3: 135–36)

Despite her longing for snugship, Burney found that her friends—including Hester Thrale, her "Daddy" Samuel Crisp, and especially her father—"absolutely *prohibit*[ed] a retreat" (*EJL* 3: 211)

to her former way of life, instead insisting that her new place was in the public sphere as a recognized literary talent. Even stasis, they warned her, was impossible, since turning author required meeting the public's and print culture's expectations for constant productivity. As Crisp declared, "Now You have gone so far, & so rapidly, You will not be allowed to Slacken your pace" (*EJL* 3: 187); her recognition as an author depended upon feeding the fame machine. Yet Crisp also cautioned her to avoid publishing any work—like *The Witlings*—that might offend her admirers or, even worse, "sacrifice a *Grain* of female delicacy" (*EJL* 3: 238). Anxious at the pressure she faced and unsure how to proceed, Burney worried that it was all downhill from *Evelina*—that no new production could ever match, let alone surpass, the accolades given to her first novel: "[I]f *I* move, it must be in *descending*! I have already, I fear, reached the *pinnacle* of my Abilities, & therefore to *stand still* will be my best policy:—but there is nothing under Heaven so difficult to do!—Creatures who are formed to motion, *must* move, however great their inducements to forbear" (*EJL* 3: 36).

During this period, between the publication of *Evelina* and *Cecilia* (1782), Burney did move—back and forth between the Thrales' residence at Streatham and her home in St. Martin's Street, between the salon and snugship, and her ambivalence about where she really belonged is expressed in terms of space and place. At Streatham, Burney had access to an even larger artistic and literary circle than she did at her father's house: joining Johnson, Garrick, and Sheridan were Edmund Burke, Arthur Murphy, and women writers such as Elizabeth Carter and Elizabeth Montagu. Yet the price of admission to Streatham was high. This intimidating, even exhausting environment required Burney to prove her talents again and again by exerting herself in conversation and by writing new fiction equal in merit to *Evelina*. Sensing these expectations, Burney proclaimed Streatham "the *last* place where I can feel of any consequence" (*EJL* 3: 155), yet Hester Thrale insisted that her house was Burney's real home or the place where such a great talent belonged. With no intention of giving up Burney's presence as a literary lion or company as a friend, Thrale made clear her proprietary

claims: "[S]he is *our* Miss Burney . . . we were the first to catch her, & now we have *got*, we will keep her" (*EJL* 3: 155).

Despite Burney's reluctance at being "Domesticated" with Thrale (as the *Bath Chronicle* publicly described her [*EJL* 4: 354]), claiming the power to choose her home, her acquaintance, and her time to write became increasingly difficult. Hester Thrale's own journal entry unwittingly records Burney's dilemma of being caught between life at Streatham and the "homely home" that Samuel Crisp repeatedly charged her with forsaking. Calling Charles Burney a "Monkey" and a "Blockhead," Thrale inveighed against his wish to have his daughter return for a visit:

> [I]s not She better and happier with me than She can be any where else? . . . . If I did not provide Fanny with every *Wear*able, every *Wish*able, indeed, it would not vex me to be served so; but to see the Impossibility of compensating for the Pleasures of St. Martins Street, makes me at once merry & mortified. (*Thraliana* 1: 502)

Knowing the value of the gifts and opportunities she gave to Burney—from clothes to a writing desk to the chance to circulate among the cultural elite—Hester Thrale believed her friend belonged to Streatham, as it nurtured her in a way that the "old *homely home*" could not. But in a letter to her father, Burney refers to the "articles" that kept her bound to the Thrales as if she were an indentured servant and describes her pain at being withheld from the people to whom she felt most connected: "I quite die to go Home *seriously*,—I have almost been an *Alien* of late,—nobody in the World has such a Father, such Sisters as I have,—nobody can more fervently love them,—& yet I seem fated to Live as if I were an Orphan" (*EJL* 4: 199). Although Hester Thrale disparaged them, the "Pleasures of St. Martins Street" and the identity conferred by that home were important to Burney, as were the pleasures of Samuel Crisp's Chessington, where she retired to write and eventually complete *Cecilia*: both locations allowed her a retreat from the fatigue of being on display and allowed her to reconfirm her status as a writer rather than a lion in the Thrales' keeping. Ironically, with several homes claiming her—all with their different possibilities for her intellectual

growth and emotional comfort—Burney had no settled, secure place from which to define herself and possessed only a tenuous sense of control over her career's trajectory. Balancing Streatham and St. Martin's Street or fashioning a public identity that complemented "the life of deep domestic attachments" (Schellenberg 144) and security that she desired, was a process always contingent upon circumstances that she felt were beyond her control.

With the death of Henry Thrale in 1781 and his widow's remarriage three years later, Burney irrevocably lost her home at Streatham; in July 1786, aged 34, she lost her home at St. Martin's Street as well. Her sisters Esther, Susanna, and Charlotte Ann had left their father's house as brides, but this transition to a husband's house did not occur for Burney when her courtship with George Owen Cambridge came to nothing. To the delight of Charles Burney, their dear friend Mary Delany's relationship with the royal family secured his daughter a place: Burney was appointed Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte with a salary of £200 and residence in the Queen's household. But the position at Court that Charles Burney and Delany imagined as an honorable, protected haven for a poor but meritorious single woman turned out to be anything but a home: her Court journals recount her five years in service as a period of radical displacement and nerve-wracking insecurity—experiences described in terms of her difficulty adapting to an alien culture.

Upon her arrival at Windsor, Burney recorded feeling almost overwhelmed by the strangeness and often overt hostility of her new environment; she describes her entry into the Queen's service as a reluctant bride facing a set of circumstances best described by Richardson's Clarissa: "[T]o be engrafted into a strange family . . . to go no-wither: to make acquaintance: to give up acquaintance—to renounce even the strictest friendships, perhaps" (148–49).[2] Burney's journal entries reveal the resentment, chagrin, and confusion she experienced as she tried to comprehend her nebulous place as a courtier. Even while she received congratulatory visits on her new appointment, she discovered that, like a servant's, her time, her movements, and her location were at the disposal of others, and her early days at Court were consumed by her attempts to figure out what

was required of her and to discipline herself mentally and physically to meet those demands. The first several entries describe the scenes in the manner of a stage comedy, recording Burney literally running the corridors of Windsor in order to be on time for her service to the Queen and occasionally arriving late, half-dressed and half-coiffed, with her robe askew and her hair falling around her ears (*CJL* 1: 25).[3] In these incidents, Queen Charlotte's tact, patience, and "sweetness" eased Burney's discomfort and obvious embarrassment. But as her narrative progresses, the comic scenes become darker, with her sense of dislocation escalating into psychological panic. Attending the Queen's birthday celebration at St. James's Palace, Burney nearly became unhinged when, leaving the ball, she tried to find the Queen's apartments: completely unaware of her own address and carried by drunken chairmen who were also ignorant of the right direction, she enacted a version of Evelina's coach ride with Sir Clement Willoughby: "I found they had both been drinking the Queen's Health till they knew not what they said, & could with difficulty stand!—yet they lifted me up, & though I called out, in the most terrible fright, to be let out, they carried me down the steps. I now actually screamed for help" (*CJL* 2: 32). A young man came to her assistance and ended what seemed like an abduction, but both of them "wandered about, Heaven knows where, in a way the most alarming & horrible" (*CJL* 2: 34), until they finally came upon a servant who recognized her and led her to the Queen. Burney's sigh of relief—"I found myself just in time" (*CJL* 2: 35)—both refers to her finding the right apartments and to gaining her own composure after a period of frightening displacement that quite literally made her ill for days afterward.

Despite her growing affection and genuine admiration for the royal family, who came to love her in return, Burney experienced a state of internal exile at Court, separated both by distance and household protocols from family and friends who could hardly comprehend the world in which she lived.[4] Although she felt reluctant to disturb her father's peace of mind or dampen Mary Delany's "kind joy in [her] situation" (*CJL* 2: 293), her poignant "alives"—quick notes that let her relatives know of her

whereabouts—suggest both the difficulties of communication and how badly Burney needed her friends' continued recognition and attention, especially when her residence at Court began to resemble captivity. With a litany of restrictions placed upon their comings and goings, courtiers often battled over the allocation of territory within their enclosure: over who had the right to invite guests to dinner, who would preside over the tea table, who could make use of a drawing room, and the like. "Tyrannical" and "ill-disposed," Elizabeth Juliana Schwellenberg—the other Keeper of the Robes—tried to keep Burney in her place by isolating her from friends and family, demanding her constant attendance, and publicly displaying her privilege to bully her whenever she pleased. The entry for November 1787 details the infamous coach ride from Windsor to London and back in which a helpless Burney suffered an eye inflammation from a window left open by Schwellenberg's orders ("'It is *my* Coach!—I will have it selfs!'" [*CJL* 2: 291]): although her father gave her "*permission to rebel*" (*CJL* 2: 290) against such damaging treatment, Burney knew that neither she nor any of her companions could exert authority over the space they occupied for fear of severe retaliation.

Burney's experience of internal exile intensified when the King's first attack of porphyria in October 1788 led to a virtual sealing up of the royal household; fearful that this physical and mental derangement might last interminably and anxious to preserve a sense of normality, the Prince of Wales and other ministers severely restricted access to Windsor as well as news coming into and going out of the palace. As Burney recorded, "From this time commenced a total banishment from all intercourse out of the House, & an unremitting confinement within its Walls!" (*CJL* 4: 535). The feeling of incarceration within the palace and disconnection from the world outside haunted Burney, and she proclaimed it impossible to "give any idea of the dismal horrour of passing so many Hours in utter ignorance, where every interest of the mind was sighing for intelligence" (*CJL* 4: 543); the pain of being held incommunicado added to her sense of being "*placed in a monastary for Life*" (*CJL* 4: 546) or made an unwilling votary to her position. Each new development in the King's illness or new treatment of

it by his physicians only added to the sense of confinement that Burney experienced, as her residence shifted from the relative familiarity and comforts of Windsor to the more severe deprivation of Kew: her journal narrates scenes of Burney freezing in unheated corridors and rooms sandbagged against the cold, making her way up and down narrow, dirty staircases, and stumbling over pails left by chambermaids as she ferries messages to and from the Queen. Stephen Digby—a courtier with a pronounced romantic interest in Burney and an equally pronounced reluctance to commit himself—described her place as agonizing: "'What a situation . . . it is!—to live, pent up thus, Day after Day, in this forlorn Apartment!—Confinement!—attendance!—Seclusion!—uncertain, for months to come, how long it may last—'" (*CJL* 5: 29). Yet when her sister Charlotte, fearful that Burney "should be quite *Killed* by living such a life" (*CJL* 5: 29), offered her a home, Burney demurred. Loyal to the Queen and reluctant to leave her at a time of distress, she may also have realized that the "species of independence" (*CJL* 5: 30) offered by her life at Court was preferable to dependency in her father's house in which as a superannuated daughter, she no longer had a definite place. Declining health and her father's consent finally enabled her to leave her post in July 1791, but only in 1793 did Burney find the "peace of mind & retirement" (*JL* 2: 136) that her family home denied her by marrying—against all expectations—a political exile from France.[5]

Joyce Hemlow has called the period of Burney's early marriage and motherhood the "happiest in [her] long life" (*JL* 1: xxxiii), and the journals certainly confirm this view. Yet the contentment that Burney found in the new home that she created was at least in part dependent upon fictionalizing her husband's identity and experiences in exile. General Alexandre d'Arblay, a Constitutionalist opposed to the establishment of the French Republic, fled to England in 1792 after the rise of the Jacobin party; upon joining the colony of French émigrés at Juniper Hall in Surrey, he met Burney at Norbury Park, home of William and Frederica Lock. Persuaded that they could live the simple life on an income of £120—£100 of which was provided by Burney's government

pension—the couple quickly married in July 1793 and three years later built a "little neat & plain Habitation" (*JL* 2: 179) on land deeded to them by William Lock: the proceeds of her novel *Camilla* (1796) financed the construction of their cottage by that name. Delighted at having a husband, family, and finally a place she could call her own, Burney described her new phase of life as a rural idyll and transformed her new spouse from a French soldier who escaped politically-motivated persecution in his homeland to an Englishman escaping to pastoral pleasures in the country. In a letter to her brother Charles announcing her forthcoming marriage, Burney asks him to recollect a gentleman "whose Face . . . looked *any thing* but French":

> This Gentleman . . . is one of the noblest Characters now existing.—An Exile from patriotism & loyalty, he has been naturalized in the bosom of Norbury Park & Mickleham, amongst the dearest & best of my Friends—he wishes there, in that vicinity where he has found a new Home, new affections, new interests, & a new Country, to fix himself for life: he wishes, in that picture, to have a Companion—an English Companion,—with whom he may learn to forget in some measure his own misfortunes, or at least to sooth them.
>
> Can you guess the Companion he would elect? (*JL* 2: 175)

Here Burney attempts to anglicize her husband, reminding her brother and other family members that d'Arblay bears no visible ethnic resemblance to the French, desires to sever himself from his homeland, and studies English, his adoptive language, "6 Hours regularly every Day!" (*JL* 2: 135) in the unlikely hope of gaining a place in the government of the country that gave him sanctuary. Yet Burney herself knew that despite his apparent dedication to becoming naturalized, d'Arblay faced suspicion from those (including Burney's own father) who believed his allegiance was only temporary and that he would "fly away the moment a road is open to his own Country" (*JL* 2: 135). Written during this time, Burney's *Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French Clergy* (1793)—an appeal to British women for charitable support of the priests who

had fled the Terror—shows a clear understanding of the prejudice and even hostility that emigrants encountered in their land of refuge. Writing to her father in the period from August 1793 to 1794, Burney carefully dismantles d'Arblay's identity as a soldier, mentioning that he has "just taken to *Gardening*" and that although his enthusiasm wears him out physically, this fatigue is better "than incessant reading & writing" (*JL* 3: 3–4)—activities that could, in the repressive climate of the 1790s, be interpreted as subversive or incendiary, especially if his letters were addressed to comrades in France. Understanding that the atmosphere of "fear and insecurity" arising from concerns about Britain's national safety could "only be sustained through the ongoing, anxious production of foreignness" (Marciniak 94), Burney tried to counteract the alien status of her husband and deflect her friends' anxiety about his occupations by constructing a new character for d'Arblay: that of Abdolonime, the humble gardener in Fontenelle's comedy *Abdolonime, Roi de Sidon* (1725), who heroically battles weeds and insects instead of enemy troops. To convince her father that d'Arblay was docile, harmless, apolitical, and even comically inept, she makes her husband an object of amusement:

> I wish you had seen him, yesterday, mowing down our Hedge—with his *Sabre*!—with an air, & attitude so military, that if he had been hewing down other legions than those he encountered— —i:e: of spiders—he could hardly have had a mien more tremendous, or have demanded an Arm more mighty. God knows—I am 'the most *contentte personne* in the World' to see his Sabre so employed! (*JL* 3: 73)

What Burney feared was d'Arblay's failure to adapt to civilian life and to exile—or his lapse into a state of dejection and discontent that could compromise their marriage—and she seems to have observed him closely for signs of his adjustment to his new home. In nearly every letter to her father in the years right after her marriage, Burney mentions d'Arblay "immensely slaving as abdolomine" [sic] (*JL* 3: 79), erecting a tree house, toiling in the garden and orchard, and constructing Camilla Cottage alongside the hired hands. Although

her husband appeared ultimately unsuited to his work—d'Arblay was, after all, an aristocrat and a military commander, not a laborer—Burney delighted in recording even his failed efforts as proof that "retreat, with a chosen Companion, is become his final desire" (*JL* 2: 179).

Burney, however, somewhat mistook the complex nature of her husband's desire. After ten years as an émigré, d'Arblay in 1801 grew anxious to return home, hoping to recover his military pension and reclaim his right to confiscated family property. Yet his journey to Paris bore no success: failed negotiations with Napoleon Bonaparte's government over the possibility of military service left him stranded in France, for he refused to take up arms against England, his host country, and could not secure a passport for a year. In April 1802, Burney and their young son Alex crossed the Channel to accompany him, expecting to stay until d'Arblay's year had expired. But on May 16, 1803, Britain declared war, and on May 19, Napoleon issued a "decree, ordering all the English between the age of eighteen and sixty to be constituted prisoners of war" (*JL* 5: xxvii). With this order, Burney crossed the border "between being and not being a valid, culturally sanctioned subject" (Marciniak 93); that is, she herself became an alien and experienced the prejudice and even antipathy entailed by that status.

At first, Burney's place appeared fairly comfortable rather than a state of exile. From 1802 to 1812, Burney, d'Arblay, and Alex, living in or near Paris, enjoyed the company of luminaries in French society, politics, and arts, and she felt thankful for what she called "my good fortune in my adopted friends in this my adopted country" (*JL* 6: 585).[6] But as the years of separation wore on and the opportunities for sending letters became more infrequent, Burney's longing for home and for her family intensified, and she describes herself weeping over the handwriting of her friends and the memories of the garden at Camilla Cottage. Writing almost three months after her mastectomy in September 1811, Burney explains that her hand is shaking from the "tender thoughts & wishes" (*JL* 6: 617) she wants to express, but does not mention the psychological pain of being denied family support during her surgery and recovery or the bodily

pain involved in simply moving her arm to write. The experience of exile became increasingly politicized and traumatic for Burney as the power of the state appeared more intrusive. In 1812, Napoleon instituted a policy of universal conscription for men beginning at age eighteen, and as Burney explains, d'Arblay—with a sense of honor superior to the interest and policy of the new regime—refused to have their son Alex "bear arms against the Country which had given him-self as well as his Mother, birth" (*JL* 6: 708). Provided with passports in part secured by a gift of *Evelina* to the daughter of Monsieur Saulnier, Parisian Chief of Police, Burney and Alex traveled to Dunkirk to embark upon the *Mary Ann*, a passenger vessel ostensibly headed home to America but "privately" scheduled to dock at Dover. Burney knew the precariousness of her safety: while she was convinced that the police helped connive at her escape, she also realized that her husband, left behind in Paris, became "a real, though not a nominated captive" (*JL* 6: 709).

Burney's "Police-Adventure at Dunkirk" (*JL* 6: 702)—her first encounter with abusive state authority—proved one of the most terrifying episodes in her life. The world had changed since her arrival in Dunkirk ten years before: national borders were closing, and those individuals denominated foreign also found themselves designated dangerous enemies—a classification that apparently legitimized their detention and even incarceration without cause. An act of charity—giving money to Spanish prisoners of war on the quay at Dunkirk—left Burney at the mercy of an "Officer of the Police," who, "wearing his Badge of authority" and armed with "Pistols & Daggers," accosted her "with a Voice of Thunder! vocifirating Reproach, Accusation, & Condemnation all in one" (*JL* 6: 721, 723, 722). Although Burney steeled herself against this attack, it frightened her "even to the soul" (722), as did the interrogation that followed regarding her name, her marital status, and her reason for being apart from her husband; upon learning that Burney was English, the officer demanded that she follow him into the station:

> I impulsively, involuntarily stopt. To enter a police office with so ferocious a Wretch;—alone, helpless, unprotected, unknown; to be probably charged with planning some

> conspiracy with Enemies of the State . . . my breath was gone,—my power of movement ceased;—my Head—or Understanding, seemed a Chaos, bereft of every distinct or discriminating idea;—& my Feet, as if those of a Statue, felt rivetted to the Ground, from a vague, but overwhelming belief I was destined to incarceration in some Dungeon, where I might sink ere I could make known my situation to my friends. (*JL* 6: 723)

What terrified Burney was her emerging sense of helpless abjection; she realized that the officer could condemn her to the abyss of invisibility, or a state of nonbeing—that dungeon where she would disappear without anyone's knowledge. Burney's "motionless & speechless dismay" (*JL* 6: 723) proved a useless act of resistance in the face of such authority, and the officer relished his ability to enact psychological violence upon her in the name of the law, observing her frozen in panic with "a sneering sardonic grin that seemed anticipating the enjoyment of using compulsion" (*JL* 6: 723). The police officer's obvious willingness to use force on a 60-year-old woman indicates how far Burney had become removed from the protection usually allotted women of genteel appearance; identified as an "Anglaise"—a foreigner capable of endangering the French nation—Burney lost the markers of class and gender that might have kept her safe from harm. Yet what Burney feared most was not her own physical safety, but the power of the French state to appropriate the body of her son for military service: "the greatest of all perils" was the "accusation of intending to evade the ensuing Conscription" (*JL* 6: 724), which would have rendered Burney's actions criminal and thus punishable.

This ordeal ended with the appearance of Alex, who corroborated his mother's statements regarding her identity and itinerary, and, crucially, with Burney's reference to Mr. John Gregory, a well-regarded Scottish merchant at Dunkirk. The fact that Gregory, a man "of the highest respectability" (*JL* 6: 724) and a long-time resident of the city, could vouch for Burney ended the inquisition, and Burney, accompanied by Alex, sailed a few days later for England. Luckily for Burney, the *Mary Ann* was captured by the

Castilian, a British war ship, and she and her son were transported on that ship to Deal; upon arriving, Burney, in full view of the officer who escorted her (and who was "well pleased" at the sight), reconfirmed her national allegiance: "I took up, on one knee, with irrepressible transport, the nearest bright pebble, to press to my lips, in grateful joy at touching again the land of my Nativity, after an absence nearly hopeless of more than 10 Years" (*JL* 6: 727). Alex's identity was reconfirmed as well when Burney insisted that her son was born in England and thus not a "French person" (*JL* 6: 727) needing a passport and government permission to enter the country. With these words Burney herself participated in the tightening of national boundaries. Having a French father, Alex was at least in part a "French person," and the French government claimed him a citizen subject to conscription, but Burney characterized her son as a native of England alone. Beginning her sojourn in France as a cosmopolitan, Burney ended it as an alien. Writing three years later, in 1815, to her friend Mrs. Waddington, who had expressed admiration for Napoleon, Burney reflected upon her decade-long experience, emphasizing not the social, intellectual, and cultural activity she had enjoyed, but the latent feeling of "Tyranny" that overshadowed her existence abroad: "[T]he safety of deliberate prudence, or of retiring timidity, is not such as would satisfy a mind glowing for freedom like your's: it satisfies, indeed, NO *mind*, it merely suffices for *bodily* security. It was the choice of my Companion, not of my Taste that drew ME to such a residence" (*JL* 8: 282–83).

D'Arblay's choice of career again drew Burney to France in late 1814, when the threat of Napoleon's return from exile produced a demand for his military services. Understandably, Burney felt distraught that her husband, aged 60, was called to serve and complained that "Private life . . . should be sought, while it yet may be enjoyed" (*JL* 7: 359). After settling their son Alex at Cambridge—which, given his lack of "Reason & Common sense & Order" (*JL* 7: 394), was no small task—the d'Arblays arrived together in Paris in November. With Napoleon's approach to the capital and the beginning of the Hundred Days in March 1815, d'Arblay left for service with a company attached to the Gardes du Corps of Louis

XVIII; Burney soon afterwards fled for safety in Belgium with little more than the clothes on her back "in the carriage of a Friend, & only upon a few hours warning" (*JL* 8: 280). Departing in the dead of night, Burney describes the sense of panic that nearly paralyzed her: "My ideas were bewildered; my senses seemed benumbed; my Mind was a Chaos" (*JL* 8: 357).

Like other refugees of war, Burney experienced a traumatic dissociation from the familiar patterns of the life she had known, and the disorder, fear, and anxiety she suffered appear in her letters for months after her initial flight. Writing to Esther Burney in July, she details the loss of identity, memory, and family history inherent in the loss of her belongings:

> All the Mss I possess—all the works, begun, *middled*, or done, large or small, that my pen ever scribbled, since the grand Firework of destruction on my 15th Birthday, are now There! [in Paris]—unless seized by the Police. And with them all our joint Mss of my dearest Father—his Letters—his Memoirs—his memorandums! And all my beloved Susan's Journals, & my own that she returned me, with every Letter I have thought worth keeping, or not had leisure for burning, from my very infancy to the day of my flight. . . . Here, at Bruxelles, in the solitude in which I generally pass my time—without my family—my *maternal* occupations, or my *conjugal*.—& without my house-keeping, my work, or a single Book—how usefully & desirably I might have dedicated my time to the examination & arrangement of those papers! (*JL* 8: 279–80)

These manuscripts, letters, journals, and works-in-progress—all of which established her character as a writer and as a Burney—were threatened with destruction, along with the rest of the d'Arblays' property. Moreover, stranded in Brussels without her husband, her son, and her household to care for, Burney lost her "occupations," or those duties that gave her a sense of purpose and self-worth. Torn from what Edward Said calls "the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography" (174) and isolated in her "migratory destiny" (*JL* 8:

83), Burney awaited the outcome of Waterloo alone, with no news from her homeland and no friends to share it with. As she wrote to Mrs. Waddington, "I am tranquil in nothing during this wandering, houseless, homeless, Emigrant life. This is no siecle for those who love their home, or who have a home to love" (*JL* 8: 284). At this time, Burney had indeed lost her home, for after his father's death, William Lock, Jr. insisted on a forced sale of Camilla Cottage, leaving the d'Arblay family without a place to call their own. Finally, as the decisive battle between the French and Allied and Prussian forces drew nearer, Burney was forced to relinquish all signifiers of her identity, including her very name: preparing to escape Brussels for Antwerp if the French were victorious, Burney instructed d'Arblay to write to her as "Mad[e] *de* Burney" with "*No street, Nothing else*" (*JL* 8: 213) in order to protect herself from detection and retribution as the wife of a royalist general.

What intensified the pain of Burney's exile was the failure of the myths she employed to explain it and contain its effects upon her. About twenty years earlier, Burney fashioned her husband as Abdolonime the gardener to make the exiled d'Arblay appear more endearing and less threatening to her family and friends. During her account of the Hundred Days, Burney chose the figure of Athanasius to describe herself and her husband: the fourth-century Bishop of Alexandria who was exiled by no fewer than four Roman emperors, Athanasius had become "a fashionable emblem of rural withdrawal and solitude" (*JL* 8: 27 n. 3) in Burney's time. Yet during Napoleon's invasion, d'Arblay withheld his acceptance of the character Burney had prepared for him; he felt his honor engaged to serve his king, and Burney responded to him with desperate reminders of the tranquil life they had planned together:

> Oh mon ami! will you indeed, when Honour is satisfied, *planter là* all Ambition, & *planter chez nous vos choux*?—and shall I see you again All yourself?—i e—all, at once, that is *RIGHT* & that is *KIND*?—& shall the inimical (duty) that gave you a semblance so cold, so hard, so changed be blotted as an ugly dream from my remembrance? (*JL* 8: 141–42)

While Burney recalls their plans to escape the chaos of the times by retiring with their cabbages and their son, her quietism did not and could not shield her from the events of that "dreadful *siecle*" (*JL* 8: 199); the claim that Burney "stands apart from attempts, both in her day and in ours, to 'politicize' her everyday life" (McCrea 89) is belied by her becoming an unwitting object of forces that created a political identity for her—and by her recording every aspect of that alienating experience. Even after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, the insignificance of individuals caught in disputes between states clearly horrified Burney. Travelling from Brussels to Trier in order to nurse d'Arblay, who was injured by a kick from a horse and inept surgical treatment, Burney confronted "gross authority & unfeeling harshness" from the police acting as border guards: over and over she encountered "the same peremtory [sic] demands of who & what I was; the same insolent contempt of my Passport; the same irascible menaces to send me back for one more recent & satisfactory" (*JL* 8: 492). Through her various interrogations, Burney came face to face with the power of the state to transform individuals into refugees and "illegals"; she joined the ranks of what Hannah Arendt calls a "new kind of human beings" (265) excluded from the protections afforded by citizenship and made subject to detention and punishment. Although she finally reached her husband, their journey back to Paris involved similar humiliations: still recuperating from his accident, d'Arblay faced hostile scrutiny by a Prussian sub-officer at the border between France and Germany. Burney insists on d'Arblay's joy at the restoration of the monarchy, yet she also records his shock and anger at needing the "permission of Foreigners" (*JL* 8: 529) to enter the country of his birth. Made painfully self-conscious of their distinct, even oppositional national identities in occupied France, husband and wife grew unusually silent, embarrassed, and ashamed in front of each other; feeling "jarred & unstrung" (*JL* 8: 540) from the ordeal, they crossed the Channel to rejoin their son and resettle in England for good.

Although she seems to have little in common with the border-crossers of today, Burney herself experienced home as provisional and exile—metaphorical and actual—as an ongoing way of life. Becoming

a professional woman writer meant leaving the domestic security of her "snugship" to engage with the larger, more public intellectual community at Streatham, a transition accompanied by a sense of being orphaned or bereft of kin. The loss of Streatham and her subsequent appointment at Court brought Burney a more intensified alienation from anything resembling an established home as her "place" transformed into a series of confinements and dislocations in an increasingly unstable environment. Finally, although her marriage to the exiled d'Arblay allowed her to fashion their rural life as a pastoral retirement from the world, d'Arblay's career brought Burney squarely back into the vortex of rapid social and political upheaval: first, she became an unwilling exile herself, nearly barred from fleeing home to England with her son, and then she became a homeless refugee, bearing witness to the destabilization of civic life brought on by states at war. As Burney herself admitted, she did not belong in this "siecle for the Adventurous" (*JL* 8: 284). Yet her profound understanding of exile and of unsettled, itinerant existence secures her a place in our own time, and her resistance to those forces that imperil the self's need to be rooted—those forces so destructive of home—gives Burney's writings new urgency and importance. Struggling with questions about inclusion and exclusion, foreignness and belonging, we can turn for insights to Burney's portrayal of her life, as she attempted to find her place in a turbulent, unsettled, and conflicted social landscape.

NOTES

[1] *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* will be cited parenthetically as *EJL*.

[2] For an account of the strategies Burney adopted to endure Court life, see Bander.

[3] *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney* will be cited parenthetically as *CJL*. In a letter to her confidant Susanna, Burney recounts her initial mishaps over the demands of her position: "[J]ust as I was in the midst of my Hair-disshevelling, I was summoned. I was obliged to slip on my Morning Gown, & a large Morning Cap, & run away as fast as possible. The Queen, who was only preparing for her own Hair-Dresser, was already en penoir; she sate down, the man was called in, & then, looking at me with a smile, she said 'Now Miss Burney, you may go & finish your Dress'" (*CJL* 1: 25).

[4] Similarly, Katharina Rennhak uses the term "metaphorical exiles" and "metaphorical emigrants" to describe the situation of women and subordinate men who are marginalized and dispossessed — or homeless —within their native country (582). I argue that Burney's life at Court gave her a sense of the exile's experience.

[5] *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame d'Arblay)* will be cited parenthetically as *JL.*

[6] To Burney, the "Vivacity" and "Politeness" of French coteries recalled the atmosphere of the best English circles (including the one at her father's house): "In select French Society there is a Life, a Spur, a spirit of pleasure, that give it a zest rarely indeed to be met with in England—though, to MY favoured lot, that rarity has been singularly accorded. At Streatham, at Norbury Park, at Mrs. Delany's, and at my dear Fathers—each of which places were to me made a Home . . . I have, personally, been delighted with as exquisite social intercourse as Paris itself . . . has afforded me" (*JL* 6: 730).

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