The Burney Journal

Volume 13 (2016) Article 3

Fanny, or, The History of a Not-so-young Lady's Retreat from the World

Elaine Bander

Recommended Citation
Bander, Elaine. "Fanny, or, The History of a Not-so-young Lady's Retreat from the World." *The Burney Journal*, vol. 13, 2016, pp. 37-58.
https://www.mcgill.ca/burneycentre/burney-society/burney-journal/vol13/3.

Fanny, or, The History of a Not-so-young Lady's Retreat from the World

ELAINE BANDER

In the summer of 1786, eight years after the publication of *Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance Into the World*, London-bred Frances Burney made, at the age of thirty-four (exactly twice Evelina's age), her first appearance at Court, where, with a virtuous mind, a cultivated understanding, and a feeling heart, her ignorance of the forms and inexperience in the manners of the highly ritualized, hierarchical, hermetic Court of St. James occasioned all the little incidents of her Court journals. Burney's young heroine Evelina is eventually restored to her birth family and rewarded with a new conjugal family, achieving self-realization and self-affirmation in "the World." Burney, however, was painfully aware that her entrance into Court service meant retreat from the world that she knew, exile from her birth family, and renunciation of the possibility of marriage. Although sophisticated in the ways of the world and honored wherever she appeared, at Court Frances Burney would become, in effect, an ignorant ingénue, condemned to error, obscurity and silence in a life of meaningless service as Keeper of the Robes for a Queen who had as little interest in fashion and dress as did Burney herself (see *CJL* 1: 199).[1]

Her strategy for coping with the trauma of separation from loved ones, particularly her beloved younger sister Susanna ("Susan") Burney Phillips, was to withdraw as far as possible from social and emotional engagements—a strategy that her Court journals reveal almost comically in her repeated attempts to extricate herself from the duties of the courtiers' tea table and more tragically in her attempted emotional retreat from her "beloved Susan."[2] This need to withdraw is understandable. More surprisingly, however, Burney's letters and journals for the years 1784–86 reveal that her retreat from the world began many months before she was called to Court.

When she first received the Queen's offer on 11 June

1786, two days before her thirty-fourth birthday, Burney was horrified, as a letter she wrote the following day to her friend Charlotte Cambridge reveals: "[The Queen] is indeed one of the sweetest characters in the World—will *you*, too, condemn me, then, that I feel thus oppressed by her proposal? . . . It is not from perverseness,—I have always & uniformly had a horrour of the thought of a life of attendance & dependence."[3] Burney had to bear this horror largely alone, with neither a Reverend Villars nor a Lord Orville to mentor or to rescue her. Her ambitious father, Charles Burney, was delighted with the prospect, as was her newest surrogate mother-figure, elderly Mary Delany, who lived at Windsor and wished Burney to be always near her. Burney dared not confide her true feelings to either of them, and the halting words that she wrote to Charlotte Cambridge betrayed her conflict and agitation:

> I cannot even to my Father utter my reluctance—I see him so much delighted at the prospect of an establishment he looks upon as so honourable—but for the Queen's own word *permanent*—but for her declared desire to *attach me entirely*—I should share in his pleasure,—but what can make *me* amends for all I shall forfeit?—I must do the best I can.[4] (*AJL* 1: 426)

By the end of June, Burney confessed to her newly-married younger sister Charlotte,

> I have been in a state of extreme disturbance ever since [the Queen's offer], from the reluctance I feel to the separation it will cause me from all my friends. Those, indeed, whom I most love, I shall be able to invite to me in the Palace, but I see little or no probability of ever being able to make—what I most value—excursions into the Country. (*AJL* 1: 434–35)

These words suggest that Burney was most anguished not about her impending loss of the social world of London, nor of the patriarchal world of her father's house, still dominated by her difficult step-mother but now bereft of beloved siblings. Rather, she dreaded permanent exile from her favorite country retreats and from the beloved sisters who inhabited them.

Country retreats had always been important to Burney. As a young woman in her late teens and twenties, writing first *Evelina*, and later *Cecilia*, novels about young women from the provinces entering London society, Burney had found laughter, happiness, escape from her stepmother, and peace for writing at Chessington, the remote Surrey boarding house where all the Burneys enjoyed paying visits to elderly Samuel Crisp. Burney said of Chessington in 1771, while on her first visit there in five years: "'tis a place of peace, ease, freedom & chearfulness, & all its inhabitants are good humoured & obliging & my dear Mr Crisp alone would make it, to us, a Paradise" (*EJL* 1: 164), and in 1777 she claimed, "there is no place where I more really enjoy myself than at Chesington . . ." (*EJL* 2: 232). Indeed, Crisp offered Burney a perfect model of cheerful retreat from the world. Within a year of Crisp's death in April 1783, Burney had found a new "Paradise" (*AJL* 1: 119), as she called it,[5] in the little world of Mickleham, Surrey, less than eight miles from Chessington, to where her most intimate companion, Susan, had moved with her husband Molesworth Phillips in the spring of 1784, and in Norbury Park, the neighboring estate of their dear friends William and Frederica ("Fredy") Lock, whom Burney had first met in London that spring and had pronounced "angelic" (*AJL* 1: 157).

Until her thirties, Burney had enjoyed those country retreats as temporary respites from the world, but she had no wish to emulate Crisp and retire completely. Indeed, from the time she was Evelina's age, Burney was very comfortable in society, where she was accustomed to the company of the best and the brightest talents of Georgian London and could more than hold her own in conversation with clever young men like her older sister Esther's admirer, Mr. Seton, or with a learned older man like Samuel Crisp. Always eager to make new acquaintances, she enjoyed evening parties with the Poland Street neighbors and outings to public assemblies, pleasure gardens, and theatres. In her twenties, Burney continued to enjoy "the World," merrily journalizing her lively experiences for Samuel Crisp or for absent siblings. Frequent excursions to visit friends

and relations in the countryside gave her further experiences to write about, as the *Early Journals* document throughout. After the publication of *Evelina* in 1778, Burney entered the glittering world of Streatham. With her new patron and intimate friend Hester Thrale, she attended society events in Bath and Brighton; in London, with the Thrales or her father, she frequented grand salons, fashionable dinners, and theatres, all of which she described enthusiastically in her letters and journals. The publication of *Cecilia* on the eve of her thirtieth birthday merely increased her fame, prestige, and apparent delight in the World.

That apparent delight, however, changed as she entered her third decade. In fact, her psychological retreat from "the World" began in 1784, a full two years before she went to Court. In her letters and journals for 1784, 1785, and early 1786, she repeatedly expresses frustration with time-consuming, expensive social visits and the burdensome duty of accompanying her father on his rounds of evening parties. He had boasted of his social contacts in 1784: "My dinners & Conversations increased this year so much, that to 21 houses of old acquaintance 16 new were added, where I dined & spent evenings for the 1st time."[6] For his daughter, some of those evenings offered stimulating conversation, visits with valued friends, or a chance to meet distinguished people, but more often they merely imposed an expensive, uncongenial preoccupation with fashion and dress, tedious hours in tiresome company, and the anxiety of being effectively on stage and under surveillance. She began to make excuses to stay away.

Burney's growing distaste for "the World" had two causes: the rupture of her intimate friendship with Hester Lynch Thrale and her troubled relationship with George Owen Cambridge. In 1784, the widowed Thrale, in love with her daughters' music master Gabriel Piozzi, had retired to Bath. Burney lacked the means to visit her there, nor was she able to acknowledge Piozzi as a suitable husband for Thrale, thus bitterly offending her friend. In April 1784 she wrote to Susan: "I can go no where with pleasure or spirit, if I meet not somebody who interests my Heart as well as Head, & I miss Mrs. Thrale most woefully in

both particulars" (*AJL* 1: 56). To Burney's lasting grief, Thrale dropped all communication with her after marrying Piozzi in July 1784.

Meanwhile, Burney had met George Owen Cambridge two years previously, in 1782. Everything about the handsome, talented young clergyman's behavior indicated that he was an eligible suitor, and his family embraced her like a daughter or sister—yet he never proposed marriage. Early in their friendship Burney had declared,

> the *rest* all talk of *Evelina* & *Cecilia*, & turn every other word into some *Compliment*, while He talks of *Chesington*, or *Captain Phillips*, & and pays me, not even by implication, any Compliments at all. . . . If I met with more folks who would talk to me upon such rational terms . . . how infinitely more ease & pleasure should I make one in these *Conversationes*! (*EJL* 5: 249–50)

Sometimes, indeed, their meetings were more mirthful than rational, with Burney and Cambridge merrily sharing witticisms to the exclusion of the other guests. But as the months, and then years, went on, their relationship was complicated by his inconsistent behavior and her consequent defenses. Cambridge alternately ignored and pursued her, crashing parties to which she, but not he, had been invited, or calling uninvited at the Burney home on St. Martin's Street, where he would linger, snubbing and angering Mrs. Burney. Burney was emotionally engaged but cautious and self-controlled, obsessively aware of his words and actions and of how their relationship appeared to others. When she did go out to parties, it was in hope, or fear, of encountering him, and with great self-consciousness about how to "perform" her feelings for Cambridge.[7]

As false rumors spread about their impending marriage, Burney developed a Camilla-like horror of the sharp eyes of the Bluestockings, describing, for instance, her confusion when George Cambridge arrived at a party: "when Mrs. Ord's Eyes were already fixed upon my Face . . . & with the provoking consciousness she was *watching*—which is always confusing"

(*AJL* 1: 66). Worse, the Cambridge family blamed Burney for those rumors. At least twice she was forced to defend her circumspect behavior to her friend Charlotte Cambridge, through whom Burney communicated indirectly with Charlotte's brother George.[8] This "perplexing" situation, as Burney repeatedly called it, was exhausting, infuriating, and, eventually, impossible to bear. In May 1784, two years into their friendship, after Cambridge had kept away for months, Burney wrote to Susan, revealing how Cambridge and Thrale-Piozzi were dual motives in her reluctance to attend evening parties: "Does Mr. G. C. shut himself out of these Parties or do they not invite him? & without Mrs. Thrale, Mrs. Lock, or himself, they are now to *me* insupportable!" (*AJL* 1: 61).

During the spring of 1784, therefore, just before Mrs. Thrale's marriage to Piozzi, and halfway through her four-year struggle over Cambridge, Burney initiated a campaign to extricate herself from accompanying her father on his rounds of London visits, a campaign that presaged her later strategies at Court: "I refused Mrs. Vesey, who sent to me for the Evening. I am quite glad of a little rest & respite," she wrote, adding in some detail to Susan:

> yesterday I Dined at Mrs. Fitzgerald's where my Father *desired* me to go, as he went himself, & Charlotte; & Mr. Burney & Hetty met us. We did *well enough*. But I am so tired of visiting so incessantly, that I have, though with infinite difficulty, contrived to obtain permission for sending seven excuses since you went.—viz—to Mrs. Ord—Mrs. Montagu—Mr. Pepys—The Bishop of St. Asaph,—Mrs. Wilmot & Miss Palmer, & Mrs. Garrick . . . After a respite, I shall go to them again with more spirit. But Invitations have poured in with such speed of late, that really neither my Time, Purse, nor inclination can keep any pace with them. (*AJL* 1: 47)

Burney had to pay for her truancy from "these Parties." On April 24, 1784, she described an evening party with "Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Garrick, Miss More, Mr. & Mrs. Pepys, Mrs. Chapone, &

two or three less eminent. I had many flattering reproaches for my late truancy from these Parties . . . . I have absconded so long, that I must now go a general round" (*AJL* 1: 57–58). A few days later, she described her use of the stealth tactics that she would later employ at Court: "I have lately spent a great deal of time at Home, for I have now a little broke my Father in to permitting my sending excuses, & indeed I most heartily tired of visiting, though the people visited have been among the first for talents *in the kingdom*" (*AJL* 1: 56). Nine months later Burney was still trying to evade "these Parties," writing to Susan at the beginning of 1785: "With great difficulty I excused myself going to Mrs. Vesey. My dear Father grows impatient at my evasions—but I dread all these parties now" (*AJL* 1: 172). In a letter of advice to Hester Thrale's eldest daughter, Hester Maria ("Queeney") Thrale, written on 13 June 1784, Burney's thirty-second birthday (just before Thrale married Piozzi), Burney declared: "Safety & quiet,—those are the Ports I ever try to make for myself" (*AJL* 1: 84).

Neither safety nor quiet were to be had at home with Mrs. Burney, and certainly not in the gatherings where Burney was under constant scrutiny by Bluestocking watchers and could be "attacked" (as she called it) by Cambridge. Just as Burney had once sought tranquility in retreat at Chessington, her old "paradise," so now she looked to Norbury Park. By October 1784, she wrote to Susan from Norbury: "I am bent upon saving myself, to the utmost of my power; from all risk of even a possible renewal of the perplexities [i.e. the ambivalent behavior of George Cambridge] that so harrassed me. I will tie myself faster & faster to the sweet people of Norbury, who give me nothing but calm, comfort, & uninterrupted tranquility" (*AJL* 1: 103–04). She praised "that internal contentment which Norbury Park seems to have gathered from all corners of the World into its own sphere. . . . The serenity of a life like this smooths the whole internal surface of the mind. My own, I assure you, begins to feel quite glossy . . . these are sights to anticipate a taste of Paradise" (*AJL* 1: 118–19).[9] Mourning Mrs. Thrale's absence from, and fearing Mr. Cambridge's presence in, "the World," Burney preferred the

safety of retreat.

These two failed relationships were still haunting Burney at the end of her first year at Court. Their frequent pairing in her oblique comments implies that they were linked in her mind and heart. In her final journal letter for 1786, for example, she wrote:

> Two Friendships, unhappily misplaced, & forcibly pulled out by the roots from my very vitals, are vanished for-ever,—nothing can call them back . . . They have left, however, an Aperture that will not entirely close . . . O what a *waste of affection*—as my sweet Fredy sweetly expressed herself for me, have I experienced!" (*CJL* 1: 324)

Only Susan and Fredy could have healed "the Aperture," but at Court Burney was still mourning, alone, the rupture with Thrale-Piozzi and the failure of Cambridge to offer marriage, while physically isolated from the comfort of her beloved friends.

Rather than seek new friends at Court, from her first evening at Windsor, on 17 July 1776, Burney had vowed to limit her social contacts by following the advice of Susan and Fredy, "that I would secure to myself all my Time, except at Dinner" (*CJL* 1: 12. n. 56). She soon realized, however, that established custom and the jealousies of her fellow Keeper of the Robes Elizabeth Juliana Schwellenberg meant that her duties would involve more than merely assisting the Queen's elaborate dressing and undressing three times a day, and that any private time would be hard won and scarce. The first two volumes of the *Court Journals and Letters* recount her continual struggles and strategies to preserve her precious privacy using the passive-aggressive tools available to those who lack power and agency.

The primary battlefield upon which Burney fought to salvage personal space and time was the contested site of Mrs. Schwellenberg's tea table. Burney struggled to keep her social contacts and commitments at Court to a minimum in order to buy precious time to herself. "There is, indeed," she assured Susan and Fredy during her first week at Court, "Nobody at Windsor I wish to make the smallest exertion for visiting but Mrs. Delany herself . . ." (*CJL* 1: 19). Although regularly plagued by requests

from courtiers who wished to visit her and to introduce her to their friends, she confessed, "indeed I am far enough from glad, & wish only for quiet, when I cannot regale myself with my beloved Mrs. Delany" (*CJL* 1: 29). At the end of her first week, Burney explained to Susan and Fredy: "After Coffee, I again made my apology, that I might go & sit an Hour with Mrs. Delany. I wished to bring that into a custom. It breaks the irksome length of a whole afternoon & Evening & Night, in unwished for society, & gives a chear to my spirits which they very much solicit" (*CJL* 1: 29). Mary Delany's love and companionship were now the full compass of Burney's social and familial existence, and her tea table was infinitely preferable to Mrs. Schwellenberg's.

For the other courtiers, however, Mrs. Schwellenberg's tea table offered a valued social respite from the rigors of Court service: "the best half Hour of the whole Day" a new equerry, Colonel Goldsworthy, declared it during an amusing tirade about the physical *longeurs* of attendance upon the King (*CJL* 1: 203–04). As a meal, "tea" meant not the later Victorian "afternoon tea," but rather, an informal evening beverage service with sweets offered between dinner and supper (*AJL* 1: 59 n. 293). At Windsor, in the Queen's Lodge where Burney lived, dinner (an ample meal consisting of dishes removed from the King's table) was served around five o'clock in "the Eating Room," next to Burney's own rooms, and was followed around six o'clock by coffee, usually served in Mrs. Schwellenberg's room upstairs (*CJL* 1: 9–10). At about eight o'clock in the evening, the presiding female would order tea to be served in the Eating Room for any dinner guests and any gentlemen courtiers in residence. Male courtiers could not drink their tea in the Music Room, where the King and Queen enjoyed regular evening concerts (usually around nine o'clock), because no man was permitted to sit in the Queen's presence (*CJL* 1: 37). The tea table thus provided an opportunity for informal refreshment and relaxed conversation. Most courtiers looked forward to this sociable hour.

Since Burney was a gentle-mannered, attractive young woman as well as a celebrated writer much honoured for wit and wisdom, while Schwellenberg was a bad-tempered old lady with

an imperfect command of English and little conversation, most courtiers and visitors to Mrs. Schwellenberg's tea table preferred to talk to Burney. Schwellenberg, however, jealously resented any attentions paid to Burney by guests as intensely as she resented Burney's absence from her table on those evenings when the ladies dined alone. Burney quickly learned, therefore, to remain silent in company, a strategy that she would much later assign to Juliet Granville in *The Wanderer* when dependent Juliet tries to avoid Mrs. Ireton's sarcastic criticisms. And just as Sir Jaspar Herrington avoids speaking to Juliet in the presence of his bad-tempered aunt, so too the male courtiers soon learned to ignore Miss Burney in order to avoid provoking Mrs. Schwellenberg. About six weeks into her stay at Court, Burney learned from one of the equerries that "there was not a man in the Establishment that did not fear *even speaking to me*, from the apparent jealousy my arrival had awakened . . . they had all agreed *never to address me*, but in necessary civilities" (*CJL* 1: 154). Burney claimed, "[I] applauded the resolution, which I saw might save *me* from ill will, as well as themselves" (*CJL* 1: 154).

Once aware of this reason for "the almost total reserve & taciturnity at our Tea meetings," Burney vowed to remain more "aloof than ever" (*CJL* 1: 154), for "A mind ill at ease little misses society." She declared, "I now sometimes spend a whole Evening in total silence" (*CJL* 1: 154). When Mrs. Delany came to tea around this time, she was shocked to see how Burney, once so celebrated in the Bluestocking salons, was now ignored at Mrs. Schwellenberg's tea table. Delany urged her to "*exert, & assert*" herself, but Burney confessed to Susan: "in truth I like the present state of things better than . . . I should any reform in them" (*CJL* 1: 161). Self-preservation required Burney's social retreat from tea-table conversation. Silence and obscurity were now her objectives.

During Schwellenberg's occasional absences from Court, Burney was required to assume the presidency of the tea-table, hosting visitors and equerries. By October 1786, three months into her Court residence, while the Court was staying at Kew, she determined to free herself from these duties: "No sooner

did I find that my Coadjutrix ceased to speak of returning to Windsor, & that I became, by that means, the President*ess* of the Dinner & Tea Table, than I formed a grand design: no other than to obtain to my own use the disposal of my Evenings" (*CJL* 1: 200). Her predecessor Mrs. Hagedorn and her "Coadjutrix" Mrs. Schwellenberg, she reasoned, were elderly German ladies with no friends outside of the Court. It was natural for them to spend all of their time at Court, but it was not one of Burney's official duties to make tea for the equerries every evening (*CJL* 1: 200). For several evenings, therefore, Mrs. Delany and her teenage grand-niece Georgiana Mary Ann ("Marianne") Port joined Burney so that she would not be alone with the gentlemen, but when Burney subsequently spent an evening with Delany, the abandoned equerries were deeply offended. Eventually, Burney learned that her impudent servant John had been summoning the equerries in her name to tea every evening (*CJL* 1: 203–04). Of course they had resented being invited, then stood up for "the best half Hour of the whole Day." With this misunderstanding finally resolved by frank disclosures, Burney explains, "Colonel Goldsworthy soon recovered all his spirits & good humour" (*CJL* 1: 204).

The episode, however, was not forgotten. In early November, the Court again removed to Kew, where life was less formal, more familial. Burney's dinner table there expanded to include the women courtiers who waited upon the young Princesses. On November 4, Burney spent the evening with "Mrs. Smelt, Mr. Giffardiere & Mr. Fisher. . . . Our conversation was almost all concerning Colonel Goldsworthy, *the Tea*, & John." She told them frankly of her wish to free herself from her tea table duties:

> I knew that both Mr. Fisher & Mr. Giffardiere were frequently with the Equeries, & I hoped for some assistance from them, in furthering my scheme, by making it known; & therefore I openly concluded my narration by saying that, far from intending to *send* for the Gentlemen, I had never understood our meeting *at all*, in the absence of Mrs. Schwellenberg, was

> expected, or necessary. (*CJL* 1: 240)

Burney's frankness did not have the desired effect: "I believe they were all rather surprised, partly at my ignorance of the supposed duties of my office, & partly to find me refractory with that very portion of them they imagine to be the most pleasant" (*CJL* 1: 240). Once back at Windsor a few days later, with Mrs. Schwellenberg still absent, the equerries again expected her presence at the tea table (*CJL* 1: 252).

During the Court's November residence at Kew, however, Burney had acquired a new ally in her campaign to free herself from tea duty. Margaret ("Peggy") Planta, English Teacher to the Princesses, had dined with Burney while at Kew.[10] Once the Court returned to Windsor, where the princesses had a separate household, Miss Planta confided to Burney that she had no "official" table other than Mrs. Schwellenberg's—she usually dined with Windsor friends—but in Schwellenberg's absence, Planta was eager to join what was now effectively Burney's dinner table. Burney was pleased despite the consequent loss of privacy:

> I could not but repay this confidence by making her, on my own part, as comfortable as I had power to do so; & by accepting her offered society in a manner that might satisfy her. 'Tis true,—I saw, by this means, that *Time* for myself was never, by *any* change or chance, to fall to my lot,—but, that point excepted, in all the rest I was really well pleased;—She is a character so friendly & so worthy, & of such high desert in her station . . . . (*CJL* 1: 260)[11]

If Burney had to dine in company, she preferred that company to be Planta. With Planta, moreover, Burney effectively recreated the Burney children's "treasons" against Mrs. Burney. While the two women travelled together from Town to Windsor on December 1, for example, Burney savoured their "treason" and "caballing" against the male courtiers:

> I had a great deal of petty treason with my Companion who seemed much delighted to enlist me as a Conspirator—a feeling one was I, in truth!—There is something in a little *caballing* certainly very

> interesting,—for we both joined in rejoicing that our Esquires were absent, & that we could break forth without restraint. (*CJL* 1: 275)

Planta proved a valuable co-conspirator, for upon their return to Windsor, Burney records, "I prevailed with her in the Evening to take my Tea-Table presidency, that I might fly to my dearest Mrs. Delany" (*CJL* 1: 275). When Mrs. Delany fell ill the following day, Burney, at the Queen's urging, happily spent the evening caring for her. On the third evening back at Windsor, Burney again deserted the equerries to visit her friend, ordering her servant John to provide tea for the gentlemen, who rebelled against this snub: "But the Gentlemen declined employing John, or entering the Tea Room; they stayed in their own Quarters, & ordered Tea from their own Servants" (*CJL* 1: 275). On the fourth evening, with Mrs. Delany on the mend, Burney and Miss Planta made tea for the two neglected courtiers, Colonel Goldsworthy and General Budé.

In describing these events, Burney reminds Susan and Fredy of her original plan to break the tea-table custom established by Hagedorn and Schwellenberg, "who, having no natural society in this Country, covetted all they could acquire," whereas Burney "covetted, then, nothing but solitude, or Mrs. Delany. . . ." She explains: "I grew urgent to resume my time, & obtain my freedom. And I had Miss Planta warmly on my side, who advised me, with a high hand, to settle it at once: but for that I had not courage: I wished to do it gradually, *accidentally*, as it were, & without room for offence" (*CJL* 1: 277). Even with Planta's encouragement, Burney could not *assert* or *seize* her right to private time. Rather, the incremental strategy that she had once employed to accustom her father to her staying home from parties she now applied to the equerries in order to liberate a few hours for herself.

When Mrs. Delany recovered a few days later, she joined the Burney-Planta conspiracy by inviting the two courtiers to tea at her house. Burney explained: "Mrs. Delany hoped by this means to bring the Colonel into a better humour with my desertion of the Tea Table, & reconcile him to an innovation of which he must

then become a partaker" (*CJL* 1: 281). While the courtiers were amusing themselves at Delany's tea table wondering if anyone would notice their evening's absence from the Queen's Lodge, the Queen herself called upon Mrs. Delany; she expected to find Burney there but was "extremely surprised" by the presence of the gentlemen. Burney "was ashamed to appear the leader" of this innovation. On duty later that evening, Burney explained to her Royal mistress: "'Mrs. Delany, Ma'am . . . as she had taken away their Tea-Maker, thought she could do no less than offer them Tea for once at her own Table.' And here [Burney tells Susan] the matter rested. But the enterprize has never been repeated" (*CJL* 1: 282).[12] Burney's stealth tactics, which apparently displeased the Queen, were dropped.

As December advanced, Burney managed occasional escapes from tea duty to visit Mrs. Delany, and she even began to enjoy her power at Windsor (unlike at Kew or St. James) to invite her own dinner guests sanctioned by the Queen, or to abandon *on occasion* her own tea table for that of Mrs. Delany (*CJL* 1: 295). As Windsor began to fill with guests for the Christmas festivities, however, Burney found that she "had neither the spirits nor pretensions to the honour of receiving" a stranger, Dr. Hurd, Bishop of Litchfield, who "had always dined with Mrs. Schwellenberg & Mrs. Haggerdorn upon these visits . . ." (*CJL* 1: 297). She therefore prevailed upon the equerries to invite the Bishop to their table instead, but everyone from other courtiers to the Queen seemed "vext & disappointed" at her move (*CJL* 1: 298). It was in any case to no avail. To her immense frustration, Burney wrote, "At Tea time, when I returned to the Eating Parlour, I found the General & the Colonel, & they told me that the Bishop had desired them to introduce him & was just coming to my Room, when the King sent for him" (*CJL* 1: 298–99). Eventually, the Bishop found his way back from the Concert Room to Burney's tea table, where his manners struck her as "extremely well bred" but "cold, & rather distancing" (*CJL* 1: 299). After repeated visits, Burney came to value the Bishop, but she always regretted his intrusion upon her time.

Burney's first year of service closed with a distressing

episode that her journals and letters only hint at. Susan had ever been her dearest companion, her other self, far more essential to her happiness than either Hester Thrale or George Cambridge. In April 1784, while still "in the World," Burney had written to Susan that "nothing upon Earth can do me so much good when sad, as your society,—Dearest of All dear souls to me . . . Constantly to hear from you & to write to you is the next best thing," and a week later she added, "your Letters are only less valuable to me than yourself" (*AJL* 1: 45, 49). On 24 December 1784, Burney asked Susan for the "soothing support of confidential sustenance;—We have given it to each other in every distress of our joint lives, & the comfort of affording each other all the pain of communicating sorrow. I know it is so with you, for I feel it so with myself" (*AJL* 1: 163).

At the beginning of her Court service, however, aware that she would likely never again have the freedom to enjoy a country visit to Susan, Burney had resolved to "think less" of Susan, her second self: "*To wean Myself—From Myself; —to lessen all my affections; to curb all my wishes, to Deaden all my sensations*" (*CJL* 1: 309). Just one month into her residence at Windsor, on 20 August 1786, Burney apologizes for failing to write to her sister by hinting at her emotional withdrawal: "O my beloved Susan!—'tis a refractory Heart I have to deal with!—it struggles so hard to be sad—& silent—& fly from you, since it cannot fly entirely to you" (*CJL* 1: 146). Burney could bear her unbearable life at Court, but her longing for Susan *was* unbearable, requiring her to suppress thoughts of Susan. Thus, concurrent with her *avowed* campaign to limit her social obligations and visitors, Burney had apparently been implementing a *secret* project of emotional withdrawal: her attempt to "think less" about Susan in order to limit the pain of separation. This project she kept to herself until mysterious circumstances at the end of 1786, her first year at Court, led her to reveal her strategy.

A brief meeting in Town with Frederica Lock on Friday, 1 December 1786 seems to have precipitated a crisis only hinted at in Burney's letters to Fredy and Susan by allowing Fredy to see Burney's true feelings, hitherto repressed in her journals

and letters. Burney alludes to this moment at the close of her November 1786 journal (written and sent many months after the fact), admitting that she had hitherto repressed her feelings of profound unhappiness in her journal letters to Susan and Fredy: "In writing Facts & circumstances, I have wholly omitted the state of my Mind,—& let me omit it still—omit—Good God!—I cannot write about that time!" (*CJL* 1: 272). Burney could not, however, hide her feelings when she met Frederica Lock on "that awful . . . Friday morning" in Town (*CJL* 1: 307): "the sight of my too feeling—too penetrating Fredy was a sort of electric sensation, that thrilled me through-out with an agony of distress I never dared fully vent—never could even apparently disguise!" (CJL 1: 272). Whatever negative feelings she revealed to Fredy on that occasion, Burney later regretted her lack of self-control, apologizing for alarming Susan and Fredy, and begging them to forget the episode: "Anarchy & wretchedness had then the whole of my Mind to themselves;—all that was calm, decent, or momentarily chearful, was constraint, force, self-violence!" (*CJL* 1:272).

This passage, like all of Burney's monthly Court journals, was written retrospectively from notes and sent months after the events being described,[13] but in an agitated "Alive"—that is, a brief letter sent as soon as written, in this case on 26 December 1786—Burney was at pains to remove what she called "a constraint" in her previous letters from Susan and Fredy by explaining her protective strategy of emotional withdrawal. Essentially, she had to explain to her most intimate friends why she had hid her most profound feelings from them.

Burney told Susan that "so long ago as the first Day my dear Father accepted my Offered Appointment," she had been attempting to wean herself mentally and emotionally from the aching loss of Susan's companionship: "To *think* of you less, is all my aim,—not less to love you, when I *do*—when I *dare* think of you" (*CJL* 1: 309, 307). Her experience at Court, so much worse than even the worst that she had anticipated, had intensified her need to shut down her feelings, she told Susan, invoking a situation that must surely have informed her later depiction of

Juliet Granville's plight as "humble companion" to autocratic, sadistic Mrs. Ireton in *The Wanderer*:

> Such being my primitive idea, merely from my Grief, of separation—imagine but how it was confirmed & strengthened when the interior of my position became known to me! when I saw myself expected by Mrs. Schwellenberg not to be her Collegue, but her dependant deputy! not to be her visitor, at my own option, but her Companion, her Humble Companion, at her own command! (*CJL* 1: 309)

Burney's anxiety to clear the air with Susan is visually manifest in this much-amended letter: "What erazures! Can you read me? I blot—& re-write—yet know not how to alter—or what to send—I so fear to alarm your tender kindness—dearest dearest <Friend>" (*CJL* 1: 310). Torn between her relief at finally being able to confide her misery to Susan and Fredy and her fear lest her confidences "alarm" her beloved sister and friend, Burney nevertheless resolved to continue to endure the unendurable rather than to disappoint her father by complaints or to pain a generous Queen by telling tales about her longtime servant (*CJL* 1:309; Sabor xxv).

Burney thus began her second year of service at Windsor with renewed resolve to make the best of her situation. In February 1787 she could write to Susan and Fredy of her "returning tranquility" and acceptance of her monastic life (*CJL* 2: 74–75), even if the price of peace were personal sacrifice. The tea-table battles, however, continued unabated. Assuming the tea table presidency during Schwellenberg's prolonged absence, Burney had refused to invite a newly-arrived equerry, Colonel Greville—at the time, the only male courtier in residence—hoping therefore to avoid an awkward intimacy; in this resolve Burney was supported by Miss Planta: "she told me that she knew the Equeries in general had long wished the same liberty," but Mrs. Delany urged that no innovations should take place without permission of the Queen (*CJL* 2: 13–14). Burney thus resigned herself to making tea for those among the King's attendants whom she already knew while resisting any new introductions.

Unfortunately, Mr. Guiffardière badgered Burney about poor Colonel Greville, eventually forcing his introduction to Burney and, hence, to the tea-table.

In September 1787, when Schwellenberg at last returned to Windsor and to the presidency of the tea table, the crowd of equerries who had happily flocked to enjoy Burney's company now pointedly snubbed Schwellenberg: "They all came in together, sat down, took one Dish of Tea, without speaking two words, & then all arose, & all at once decamped" (*CJL* 2: 256). Burney felt obliged in compensation to devote her evenings to Schwellenberg, even learning to play piquet to amuse the old lady, in order to prove that she had no part in this boycott; she was rewarded by Schwellenberg's temporary civility. Burney assured Susan, "I had never a moment to myself from the Hour of Dinner; but even that sacrifice is better, with civility, than half escapes at the expence of it" (*CJL* 2: 259).

But all civility evaporated at the end of November 1787, in response to the notorious episode of the carriage window on the journey to and from Town: to the horror of her fellow courtiers, a furious Mrs. Schwellenberg forced Burney to sit in the draft of an open carriage window until her eyes were enflamed and her arms ached from holding her muff to her eyes (*CJL* 2: 291–93). At dinner afterward, Burney reported,

> "not a word was said to me! yet I was really very ill all the afternoon . . . ." Mrs. Delany, arriving later for tea, folded me in her arms, & wept over my shoulder! . . . Too angry to stand upon ceremony this Evening, she told Mrs. Schwellenberg, after our public Tea, she must retire to my room, that she might speak with me alone. This was highly resented, & I was *threatened*, afterwards, that she would come to Tea *no more*, *& we might talk* our secrets always. (*CJL* 2: 293)

Mrs. Delany's grandmotherly arms offered temporary comfort but could not shield Burney from the wrath of Mrs. Schwellenberg.

The comic-opera intensity of these tea-table battles and the painful pettiness of the stratagems show how much Burney's

world had contracted while at Court and how hard she struggled to shrink it even further. Mrs. Delany's death in the spring of 1788 was a further contraction of emotional ties. Eventually, Burney did develop attachments to some of her fellow courtiers, but she never ceased to mourn her loss of the "Paradise" of Norbury. It would be five hard years before she regained it, returning first to "The Natal Home!" in July 1791 to be born again into "the World" (*JL* 1: 1), and then, in 1792–93, during a long visit to Mickleham and Norbury, finding at last true love, happy marriage, and a country retreat of her own among her beloved friends.

NOTES

[1] Volume 1 (1786) of *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney*, edited by Peter Sabor, and Volume 2 (1787), edited by Stewart Cooke, will be cited parenthetically as *CJL* 1 and *CJL* 2.

[2] Burney could bear her unbearable life at Court, but her longing for Susan was unbearable. Just one month into her residence at Windsor, on 20 August 1786, Burney apologized for failing to write to her sister: "O my beloved Susan!—'tis a refractory Heart I have to deal with!—it struggles so hard to be sad—& silent—& fly from you, since it cannot fly entirely to you" (*CJL* 1:146).

[3] *Additional Journals and Letters*, 1: 427, which will be subsequently cited as *AJL*. I will cite Frances Burney as "FB," Susanna Burney Phillips as "SBP," and Charles Burney as "CB."

[4] This letter may well have been intended to prompt a marriage offer from Charlotte's brother, George Cambridge, but he failed to save Burney from her fate.

[5] At about the same time, FB wrote from Norbury to her brother, Charles Burney, Jr., in a letter dated 6 Nov. 1784, describing Norbury as "a place, indeed, the most precisely to my taste of any I have ever inhabited, not any excepted. Perfect tranquility, incessant good humour, well chosen Books, lively

Children, beautiful walks, & kindness the most unremitting—these are what I meet with not only Daily, but Hourly, & uninterruptedly" (Beinecke), from a typescript prepared by The Burney Centre, McGill University, Montreal.

[6] *Frag. Mem.* (Osborn), qtd. in *LCB* 413 n. 12. See also "To Mrs. [Susanna Burney] Phillips, 25–26 April 1784": "This is a terribly hurrying time of the year, in Conversationi Concerts & calls" (*LCB* 413).

[7] For a detailed account of this troubled relationship, see Abbott, "'This long & cruel perplexity.'" See also *AJL* 1, for the full extant correspondence, and Cooke's "'Twickenham'" for new research into this sad story.

[8] Claire Harman has claimed that FB was "the ardent watchful lover" and Cambridge "the effeminately passive party" in their relationship, thus reversing the gendered roles of Edgar Mandelbert and Camilla Tyrold (84), but Burney's surviving correspondence from 1784–86 reveals unmistakably that she was frequently retreating from encounters with members of the Cambridge family, especially George, while George Cambridge, on several occasions, aggressively pursued Burney in person and, through his sister Charlotte's letters, upbraided her both for blackening his reputation and for avoiding his company. In each crisis he managed to convince Burney that his motives were innocent, and she, in response, would affirm her friendship with a family she truly admired; in later years, however, she claimed that she had ceased wishing to wed Cambridge, having learned that he was not emotionally trustworthy.

[9] See also Abbott, "'Paradise,'" and Bander 286.

[10] When Burney first met Planta in Windsor at the close of 1785, she described her as "sensible & well informed, but very affected, & therefore unpleasing" (*AJL* 1: 307).

[11] Burney was less pleased with the company of pesky Madame de la Fite, Instructress to the Princesses, who sometime came uninvited to tea. Indeed, Burney had written about her on her first day at Windsor: "I fear she will expect more of my time than I feel inclined to give any body here but my dear Mrs. Delany" (*CJL* 1: 11).

[12] In the "Answers" that Burney wrote some months or even years after the fact in response to queries from her correspondents Susan and Frederica Lock, she admitted: "The whole affair of the Tea, the Dinner presidency, & the Evening Liberty has now been fully settled, & at least I have seen, that what was then apparently relinquished, was no more than what would, otherwise, have been inevitably claimed" (*CJL* 4: 709). Her campaign was always doomed to failure.

[13] In this case, probably a year later. See Clark's "Dating the Undated" for a detailed account of the vexed dating of the journals; see also Sabor xx.

WORKS CITED

Abbott, John L. "'This long & cruel perplexity': Frances Burney in Love, 1784-86." *The Age of Johnson* 17 (2006): 261–96. Print.

——. "'Sights to anticipate a Taste of Paradise': Fanny Burney at Norbury Park, 1784–86." *The Age of Johnson* 13 (2002): 337–71. Print.

Bander, Elaine. "Family Matters in Burney's *Camilla*." *The Age of Johnson* 22 (2012): 281–97. Print.

Burney, Charles. *The Letters of Dr. Charles Burney*, 1751–1784. Ed. Alvaro Ribeiro, S.J. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991. Print. [Cited as *LCB*.]

Burney, Frances. *The Additional Journals and Letters of Frances Burney*. Ed. Stewart Cooke. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015. Print. [Cited as *AJL*.]

——. *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney*. Ed. Peter Sabor et al. 4 vols. to date. Oxford: Clarendon, 2011— . Print. [Cited as *CJL*.]

——. *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*. 5 vols. Ed. Lars Troide et al. Oxford: Oxford UP, and Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1988–2011. Print. [Cited as *EJL*.]

——. *Evelina*; or, *The History of a Young Lady's Entrance Into the World*. Ed. and Introd. Edward A. Bloom. London: Oxford UP, 1968. Print.

——. *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame d'Arblay)*, 1791–1840. Vol. 1 (1791–92). Ed. Joyce Hemlow. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972. Print. [Cited as *JL*.]

Clark, Lorna J. "Dating the Undated: Layers of Narrative in Frances Burney's *Court Journals*." *Lifewriting Annual* 3 (2012): 119–39. Print.

Cooke, Stewart. "'We want you at Twickenham': Frances Burney and the Cambridges." Pride and Prejudices: Women's Writing of the Long Eighteenth Century Conference. Chawton House Library, Hampshire. 4–6 July 2013. Address.

Doody, Margaret Anne. *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1988. Print.

Harman, Claire. *Fanny Burney: A Biography*. London: HarperCollins, 2000. Print.

Hemlow, Joyce. *The History of Fanny Burney*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1958. Print.

Sabor, Peter. Introduction. *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon, 2011. xvii-xxv. Print.