# Transcending National Identity:
## Paris and London in Frances Burney's Novels

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**Summary:** *When British novelist Frances Burney decided to marry a penniless, French, not to mention Roman Catholic émigré in 1793, not even the strong opposition of her beloved father, the renowned musicologist Charles Burney, could dissuade her. "Fanny" was forty-one years old and, despite wanting to become a dramatist, had already written several influential novels, including Evelina (1778) and Cecilia (1782). The central theme in Burney's novels was the portrayal and treatment of the heroines' internal battles between the attraction of, and repulsion by London's fashionable life, where consumption was foremost and a vital part of everyday activities. London was the place where Burney grew up, began her literary career and refined her taste and acute critical attitude. Indeed, it was her contact with the most fashionable coteries of the time, primarily the Streatham circle, that introduced her to her literary mentor, Samuel Johnson.*

*Burney's parables on fashion and its effects on young women's prospective ambitions may well be best represented by her lesser known novel, The Wanderer (1812). This novel witnessed a change in setting which mirrored that of the time: the appeal of London life in the 1790s had made way for smaller resorts such as Brighton, in addition to locations further afield, of which one was Paris. Her ability to perceive the transformation of "the city" from a mere urban setting into a modern, multicultural metropolis was made possible by her marriage to Alexandre Jean-Baptiste Piochard d'Arblay and her subsequent move to Paris. The comparison between France and Britain, and especially that between Paris and London, has always been considered a leitmotif in Burney's novels. This essay highlights and demonstrates the development of Burney's views of London and Paris and the ways in which she confronts the two cities within her work.*

**Keywords:** *Paris, London, Burney (Frances), eighteenth-century, fashion, shopping, consumption, French revolution*

**Résumé :** *Quand la romancière britannique Frances Burney décida d'épouser un Français sans argent, émigré en 1793 et catholique par dessus le marché, même les protestations de son père adoré n'arrivèrent pas à l'en dissuader. "Fanny" avait quarante et un ans et, malgré son désir de devenir dramaturge, avait déjà écrit plusieurs romans importants, tels que Evelina (1778) et Cecilia (1782). Le thème central des romans de Burney était le portrait des batailles internes des héroïnes entre l'attraction et la répulsion de la vie fashionable de Londres, où la consommation comptait parmi les activités les plus*

*importantes et les plus vitales de la vie quotidienne. Londres était le lieu où Burney grandit, commença sa carrière littéraire et où elle raffina son goût et aiguisa son attitude critique. En effet, son contact avec la société la plus fashionable de l'époque, le Streatham circle en particulier, la mit en contact avec celui qui allait devenir son maître littéraire, Samuel Johnson.*

*Ses paraboles sur la mode et ses effets sur les ambitions des jeunes femmes sont sans doute les mieux représentées dans un roman moins connu, à savoir The Wanderer (1812). Ce roman témoigne d'un changement de scène: l'attirance de la vie londonienne des années 1790 avait cédé la place à des destinations plus intimes, telles que Brighton, mais aussi plus lointaines, telles que Paris. La capacité de Burney à percevoir la transformation de "the city" d'une simple scène urbaine à une métropole moderne et multiculturelle n'était possible qu'à cause de son mariage avec Alexandre Jean-Baptiste Piochard d'Arblay et leur installation à Paris. La comparaison entre la France et la Grande Bretagne, et entre Paris et Londres a fortiori, a toujours été considéré un leitmotiv dans les romans de Burney. Cet article vise à articuler et à démontrer le développement de la vision et de la confrontation de Londres et Paris chez Burney.*

**Mots-clés :** *Paris, London, Burney (Frances), dix-huitième siècle, mode, shopping, consommation, révolution française.*

In many successful novels from the mid-eighteenth century to the revolutionary period, such as Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), the protagonist's inner growth developed through a necessary journey – physical, as well as metaphorical – alternating the stillness of the country with the mutability of the city and its inhabitants. Interestingly, for Evelina and the other female characters of Frances Burney's novels with a similar pattern, the *country* from which they come is never concretely represented: rather, it functions as a frame to the relationship between the heroine and London. The city is not simply the background of the character's experience, but rather the experience itself: the variety of the urban setting corresponds to the numerous intertextual levels which, in the same way as the urban topography, entwine themselves in a complex design of nuances and perspectives. Burney's "urban novels" seem to have established "a tradition of writing" about London and Londoners (Bond, 2003), as the central theme in her early novels is the portrayal and treatment of these nuances, particularly through the description of the heroines' internal battles between the attraction of, and repulsion by, London's fashionable atmosphere. Life in the city was seen as the way to enter the real world, a bustling modernity, to become part of an early version of a global vision of progress, a first-hand experience and the chance to enjoy the latest products and innovations the world had to offer.[1] The growing need to be absolutely "in fashion", not only in the way people dressed, but also in the language they were speaking, in the books they were reading and in the places they were patronizing, was closely linked with city life, and not only in London. The new leisure pursuit of shopping was becoming an everyday activity, more specifically a typically feminine activity (Kowaleski-Wallace, 1997), and London was more and more perceived as the centre of the Empire as an Emporium, a physical place where one could acquire all sorts of new goods, eventually changing the way in which upper- and middle-class visitors and inhabitants of the city viewed consumption.[2]

The relationship between consumption and fashion has always been a fascinating one, but it is even more so in this particular period, a time when class boundaries had become blurred as an industrous middle class was asserting its right to enter fashionable high society through purchase and consumption. Burney's novels are parables on fashion and its effects on young women's prospective ambitions in the city, and, developing through *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, they offer an in-depth critique of the ruthlessness that was implicit in the city, with particular emphasis on women's experience of the city. Burney's lesser-known and later novel, *The Wanderer* (1812), however, witnessed a change in setting, mirroring that of the time. As the appeal of London life in the 1790s made way for smaller resorts such as Brighton, the novel exemplifies that entertainment and display can also be found in a rural environment, definitively far from the city, with less ostentatious behaviours. Yet far from offering the solution of a comforting, happy life in the country in opposition to a busy city life, as occurs in Burney's early novels, I shall argue that *The Wanderer* instead complicates the issue of urban life, charging it with the significant concern of identity, and more specifically with national identity.

Both Evelina and Cecilia experience the topography of London, in particular, as the mirror of their inner search for a personal identity, one they will only find through experiencing all the facets of the city, wandering from high class residences to the poor's dwellings. Their condition in the city is that of "exiles", in that they are always alone, without (or rather looking for) fathers or husbands; in a sense, they are "homeless", without their own home or property; they are "emigrants", as "little *rustic*[s] [who] know nothing of the world" (*Evelina*: 30, my emphasis) moving from the country to the city. The precariousness of the urban space is a world that Burney knew well: that of French emigrants who moved to London to escape the political persecution initiated by the Revolution. Burney's ability to perceive the several levels of the city as well as its transformation from a mere urban setting into a modern, multicultural metropolis was also made possible by her encounter with and marriage to Jean-Baptiste Piochard (or Pieuchard) d'Arblay and their move to Paris, an urban space that Burney would come to compare with London. Indeed, the kaleidoscopic protagonist of *The Wanderer*, being neither truly French nor truly English for a large proportion of the novel, ideally represents a synthesis of both urban spaces and lifestyles that transcends national boundaries. Whilst Burney's early novels had revealed an antagonism between the two cultures, the French and the British, and more specifically, between the lifestyles in Paris and London, Burney's last novel transforms this antagonism into a mutual understanding, spatially as well as ideologically suspended between France and England. She does this by introducing a double character, that of Juliet/Elinor, who struggle to find their identity, "wandering", as the title suggests, from place to place, from setting to setting, and from one cultural identity to another. The supposedly strong identity of Burney's protagonists and their need and search for ancestral cultural belonging[3], which had been portrayed in *Evelina*, slowly disintegrate through *Cecilia* and do not reappear in *The Wanderer*, where, in fact, even the name of the protagonist remains unknown for a significant part of the novel. Such a fragmentation of the characters' identities, in my opinion, corresponds to the psychological development both of her heroines and of Burney herself within the urban setting of the two cities that most influenced her views

on society. It was in the context of eighteenth-century London that young Frances Burney lived and started her career as a writer; a context in which whatever appeared as Parisian was generally considered fashionable by women, but as ridiculously effeminate and dangerous by men.[4] On the other hand, Burney as a mature woman and writer experienced Parisian life in the years following the Revolution and Napoleon's rule, and in the end, as she confided to her diary, she realized that "London and Paris render all other places that I, at least, have dwelt in, tame and insipid" (*Journals*, 1980: 8, 448).

Although London had always been a favourite setting for Burney, Paris had also always had a presence in her novels even before she lived there: interestingly, often as the context for the inconvenient "past" of the protagonist, the place from where the past returns to jeopardize the heroine's present and future respectability. Frances Burney was born in Norfolk but spent her childhood and most of her life in London with her father, who sought to make money out of his profession as a music teacher in the city. In the rather bohemian environment of St. Martin's Street, Leicester Square, Frances soon found herself living under the same roof as a large number of siblings as well as foreign guests who crowded the scene of her father's drawing room.[5] With her maternal grandmother being French and her own ability to speak the French language, Burney's awareness and understanding of immigrants and foreign origins clearly influenced her views of other cultures, as emerges in her writings. From her acute descriptions of the multicultural and extravagant foreign guests of her father's house, such as the Danish and the French ambassadors and the Russian prince Orloff in addition to musicians, castrati singers, actors and dramatists in her letters and journals (autumn 1774 to spring 1783), to the use of foreign words and expressions in her correspondence and novels, and the employment of foreign characters throughout her work, Burney's literary production gradually develops a strong perception of the rough treatment of the British towards foreigners, and particularly towards the French (Doody, 2007: 94).

After a five-year experience enjoying the high life at court as the Second Keeper of the Queen's Robes, Burney achieved financial independence and could thus marry for love: indeed, she chose a French refugee, and, when d'Arblay returned to France after the Peace of Amiens (1802) and the amnesties, to see what had become of both his family and his confiscated property, she followed him. Considering that the d'Arblays were living in an uncertain financial situation, they resided most of their time in France (1802-1812) in smaller towns such as Joigny and Passy; yet, whilst in Paris, the family lived in the centre of the city – Hôtel Marengo in the faubourg Saint-Honoré, rue de Miroménil, and rue d'Anjou.[6] Paris was in its full splendour during Burney's sojourn, and the magnificence of its buildings, which she visited, and the glamour of its entertainments were enjoyments attracting people from all over the continent. The Louvre, the Palais-Royal, the Invalides, the Tuileries with their "beautiful fairy illuminations" (*Journals*, 1975: 6, 739) provided the visitor with a sense of majesty to which Bonaparte himself also contributed. Public and private amusements such as gardens, parks, operas, theatres, and ateliers also enhanced the sensation of being a part of "the most free city now in Europe" (*Journals*, 1975: 5, 253), and Burney certainly enjoyed this freedom:

"There was no City in Europe where Foreigners were more completely at liberty to chuse [sic] their own society, & their own plans, that the visitors of Paris: & […] those who thought they must needs follow the stream, were entirely mistaken." (*Journals*, 1975: 5, 246)

She attended operas at the "Theatre Rue Feydou", actually called Théâtre Feydeau (the Opéra Comique) which was inaugurated at the beginning of 1791, and strolled in streets and parks ("a place called *La folie de Chartres*" [i.e. parc Monceau][7]). Among the numerous attractions in Paris, however, the utmost satisfaction for a foreigner visiting the French capital was the chance to meet Napoleon. And, of course, Burney was no exception. In 1804, "M[onsieur] d'Arblay had procured us 3 Tickets for entering the Apartments at the Thuilleries [sic] to see the Parade" (*Journals*, 1975: 5, 303), that is, the procession of the troops on the parade-ground of the Tuileries Palace, and Frances Burney could note with her own eyes that Bonaparte was but a man. Her description of "Le Premier Consul" is extremely objective and provides the reader not only with a very precise portrait of Bonaparte, but also with an example of Burney's sharp critical attitude and detailing abilities.[8] Burney's account of the Consul's dress was clearly not casual. It was Paris, as she already knew, that dictated the vogue of high fashion all over Europe. As we will see, Parisian elegance plays an important role in Burney's novels; when in Paris, she soon becomes caught up in the whirlwind of appearing in the Parisian fashion, and almost yields to the temptation of "refitting" her wardrobe:

In short, I found all that I possessed seemed so hideously old fashioned, or so comically rustic, that as soon as it was decreed I must make my appearance in the *grand monde*, hopeless of success in exhibiting myself in the *costume français*, I gave over the attempt, & ventured to come forth as a Gothic *anglaise*, who had never heard of, or never heeded, the reigning metamorphoses (*Journals*, 1975: 5, 290).

Paris was now to Burney what London had been to Evelina and Cecilia. They could have only imagined Paris from the inconvenient prior events that I referred to earlier, that had taken place there and were rather scandalous. As a result of these events, Evelina's possessive tutor Reverend Villars opposed her planned return to Paris to stay with her French grandmother with a peremptory ban, on the grounds that "Madame Duval is by no means a proper companion or guardian for a young woman: she is at once uneducated and unprincipled; ungentle in her temper, and unamiable in her manners" (*Evelina*: 13). Even though he does not want Evelina to witness the detested attitudes of Parisians, Villars eventually agrees that "she should see something of the world" (*Evelina*: 18), and therefore sends her to experience London. Being a "little rustic" and unacquainted with city life, she quickly discovers that "Londonizing herself" is a necessary requirement to be accepted into fashionable society, in the same way as Frances Burney in Paris would later decide to "hire me a femme de chamber, who is to make me *fit to be seen*, by various manoeuvres, which I don't rightly understand, but which are to metamorphose me from a rustic Hermit into a figure that may appear in this celebrated capital without causing convulsions or fainting fits to its inhabitants" (*Journals*, 1975: 5, 256). "To Londonize", Frances Burney's own coinage as stated by the Oxford English Dictionary, implied memorizing all the names of places

*à-la-mode*, having one's hair set and going to balls, operas and masquerades: all experiences Evelina faithfully records in her letters to Villars. On her arrival in London she swiftly becomes consumed by the flurry of entertainment and fashion, and letters begin to take the form of a journal, following one another excitedly, without dates or times. In fact, the only time reference is "Evelina in continuation", exhausted, she admits, by a "terrible reverse of the order of nature", in which "we sleep with the sun, and wake with the moon" (*Evelina*: 43). She eventually realizes that London "soon grows tiresome" (40) as it is indeed a place that only apparently reverses the order of nature.

In the modern metropolis Evelina, as well as Cecilia and Burney herself, make their "Entrance into the World", the world being the city, and, if "all the world's a stage", then "entering" the city was certainly to be considered tantamount to appearing on stage, with the self-display that acting entails. Thus, Burney's heroines' first sojourn in London is also their official entrance into upper-class and fashionable society: Evelina lives with the Mirvans in Queen Anne Street, in the West End; Cecilia lives with the Harrels in Portman Square, in Westminster, and then with the Delviles, in St James's Square, in the West End. Frances Burney lived in the centre of first London and then Paris. Both Evelina and Cecilia, though the former with more curiosity and thrill than the latter, enjoy the enviable opportunity to attend all the amusements of London during the winter season, which lasted from November until the celebrations for King George III's birthday in June. In contrast to the heiress, Cecilia, who can freely dispose of her own acquaintances, time and money, for Evelina, "her income […] will by no means allow her to enjoy the luxury of a London fine lady" (*Evelina*: 20).[9] Despite the difference in financial situations, they both attend concerts and comedies at Drury Lane, go shopping and frequent coffee-houses, where they could linger, buying and reading books, and converse with men and women. Above all, they enjoy taking walks in the most fashionable places of London at the time, the pleasure gardens. Ranelagh, St James's and Marylebone, were urban spaces in which pleasure had become a marketable product, definitively consolidating, but at the same time confounding, the boundaries between private and public spheres, between the family environment and that devoted to sociability, between an *élitaire* aristocracy and the variety of the new middle-class universe. Those who "counted", that is to say, those who were able to pay the half-crown entrance ticket, were expected to be present at the innumerable sources of "polite Amusement" (Sands, 1946: 14).[10]

What makes the two heroines and their authoress so similar, besides their common rural origins, is their complete unawareness of the "city codes" of behaviour, whether it be those of London or Paris: Evelina thinks "there ought to be a book, of the laws and customs *à-la-mode*, presented to all young people upon their first introduction into public company" (*Evelina*: 92), and Cecilia admits that she "came too late into the school of fashion to be a ductile pupil" (*Cecilia*: 286). As Erik Bond noted, Cecilia is, however, a far more complex character than Evelina, particularly in her relationship with the city. Like Evelina, Cecilia is an unacknowledged daughter, and as such, she can be considered "fundamentally homeless" (Rennhak, 2006: 589). The moment Cecilia tries to pursue an identity independent of a (male) guide, such as a

husband, father or guardian, is also the moment in which she gets lost in the chaos of the streets of London. Cecilia's search for a sense and definition of her interior struggle goes hand in hand with the confusion she experiences in the real city – that of busy commercial streets rather than of elegant assemblies and refined balls. Interestingly, her search ends when she falls into a state of madness in trying to define her personal identity without a male figure by her side. Getting lost in the city is a sort of alienation, the same experienced by the homeless and emigrants, the same Burney learns to understand through her husband's experience as an exile and one she scrutinizes when she imagines her heroines testing their roles in the city as a reflection of that of the whole nation. Their search for a personal identity in the city thus becomes a wider quest for a national identity, in a time when, as Linda Colley reminds us, Britons were "forging the Nation", defining their "Englishness" (Colley, 1992: 250) both in comparison and opposition to "Frenchness".[11] Women's reputations can be studied as a further exploration of this subject, as their attending fashionable places and meetings, and behaving as the fashion required were activities that could condemn them to the stereotypes of weakness, vulnerability, and submission to a degree that could dangerously threaten their respectability. A threat that Burney represents through the fashion of wearing Parisian clothes: Paris is indeed recognized by frivolous women as a place of temptation, and as such, indulging in it and its products meant responding to its seductive call, and at the same time becoming slaves to its fascinating charm. The milliner whom a frolicsome Miss Larolles recommends to Cecilia "has all Paris in her disposal; the sweetest caps! the most beautiful trimmings! and her ribbons are quite divine!", but "it is the most dangerous thing you can conceive to go near her; I never trust myself in her room but I am sure to be ruined" (*Cecilia*: 28-9).

Rakes were undoubtedly attracted to this type of fashionable woman, especially those with a large fortune. Evelina herself experiences how the Vauxhall pleasure gardens with their so-called "dark walks" could often become places for secret encounters between young men in search of easy pleasures and consenting women *à-la-mode*. Being physically (that is, sexually) attractive by wearing Parisian fashion was more the result of what was considered in Britain as a typically French attitude, linked with the stereotyped recurring theme of sexually oriented and voyeuristic accounts of the Parisian lifestyle. Burney's Parisian characters insist on clothes and fashion as a way to distinguish themselves from Londoners. Indeed, Madame Duval states, "it's quite a shocking thing to see ladies come to so genteel a place as Ranelagh with hats on; it has a monstrous vulgar look: I can't think what they wear them for. There's no such a thing to be seen in Paris". To this, the fop Sir Clement Willoughby, one of Evelina's insistent admirers, promptly agrees, saying: "I must own myself no advocate for hats; I am sorry the ladies ever invented or adopted so tantalizing a fashion; for, where there is beauty, they only serve to shade it, and where there is none, to excite a most unavailing curiosity. I fancy they were originally worn by some young and whimsical coquet" (*Evelina*: 65). The unveiled curiosity to which Sir Clement alludes has a clearly sexual connotation with regard to virtuous young women, and thus Paris is again depicted as a place of freedom of excess, sensuality and even secrecy. Emblematically, even the redeemed Scottish emigrant, Mr. Macartney, whom Evelina saves from committing suicide,

although a good-hearted, simple man, once in Paris could not resist the sexual energy that the city seemed to have, and abandoned himself to an (incestuous) clandestine relationship with a young girl. Macartney's episode undoubtedly recalls an episode of Burney's own biography, when her stepsister Bessy Allen, who had been sent to Paris to be educated since "she was unformed & backward to an uncommon degree" (*Early Journals*, 1990: 2, 192), seemed to have learned quite a different lesson, as she eloped with an adventurer, secretly marrying him in Ypres in 1777.[12]

At the same time, Paris was considered a necessary Grand Tour destination for young and wealthy British scions, who travelled to the continent in order to refine their manners and taste. However, given that the average upper- and middle-class male travellers usually undertook the journey in their early twenties, rather than pursuing moral accomplishments, these wealthy young men seemed to be more interested in drinking, gambling and sexual liaisons. Evelina's spellbinding Prince Charming, Lord Orville, who had also taken the Tour, when asked whether he had ever been to Paris, "only bowed" without detailing his residence in Paris, nor even a mention of fashionable places that he had undoubtedly attended.[13] As the future husband of the novel's protagonist, he is supposed to be educated and with some experience of the "world", but at the same time virtuous: symbolically, at the end of the novel, he turns Evelina's last name from An-ville, "to the city", into Or-ville, "out of the city", moving with her to live in the country, in Gloucestershire, thus making her a respectable married woman, far from the temptations of the city.

*Evelina*'s second act takes place according to a marked topographical boundary that ideally divided London at the time: whereas the protagonist's first experience of London is set in the modern and elegant Queen Anne Street, we now see her vulgar French grandmother Madame Duval, heavily (and I would say theatrically) stereotyped as "dressed very gaily [and] paint[ed] very high", take her to Bishopgate Street, physically crossing the border from the fashionable West End to the commercial, middle-class City, comprised of Shoreditch and Eastcheap. Oxford Street, St James's, Kensington and Ranelagh now fade, leaving the stage to Holborn, an address Evelina reluctantly gives to her friends and acquaintances:

> London now seems no longer the same place where I lately enjoyed so much happiness; every thing is new and strange to me; even the town itself has not the same aspect [...] Indeed, to me, London now seems a desart [sic]; that gay and busy appearance it so lately wore, is now succeeded by a look of gloom, fatigue, and lassitude; the air seems stagnant, the heat is intense, the dust intolerable, and the inhabitants illiterate and underbred. At least, such is the face of things in the part of town where I at present reside" (*Evelina*: 192).

Not far from a distillery and the Inns of Court, the Holborn area during the eighteenth century had become a seat for commercial activities and houses "to let". It was the real world of city commerce, made of shopkeepers, milliners, silversmiths, penniless poets and artists, and immigrants. It was the world of the Branghtons, with whom Evelina lives, and of Mr. Belfield, an acquaintance of Cecilia's, whose pride had enabled him to rise above his modest family and

secure career in commerce, only to find himself sick and alone after a turn of bad luck. These new characters of the city scene suddenly crowd the stage: they appear at every corner, attending "canonical" fashionable places in a clumsy, coarse, and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to become refined through imitating noble and upper-class behaviour. We see them at the opera, wearing inappropriate clothes, looking for the one-shilling seats, or at the popular spa of Sadler's Well, east London, and at balls and masquerades in Hampstead.[14]

Masquerades, not by chance referred to as "The World Upside-Down", were a clear example of that anti-hierarchical impulse that, especially in the latter part of the century, undoubtedly had a further stimulating drive from Revolutionary France. They allowed "unrestrained" eating, drinking and gambling, but their principal characteristic was the opportunity to hide one's identity and permit the free intermingling of all social classes (Castle, 1986: 26; 34). In this context, as Spacks argues, the city "implies an alternative to traditional patriarchal arrangements" (Spacks, 1984: 507), and it is, indeed, during a masquerade that Cecilia's supposed closest advisor, Mr Monckton, turns into "a tormentor" (*Cecilia*: 123): his mask, that of a devil, anticipates and reveals his role as the novel's villain. In a masquerade, any order can be reversed or subverted as the supreme protagonist of the whole transaction becomes the dress.[15] By admitting lower-class people, albeit in disguise, into "fashionable" places such as masquerades, these types of environments, often regarded as platforms for social promiscuity, became a synonym for sexual impurity and morbid pleasure. Since Cecilia "was [...] almost the only female in a common dress, [...] in her curiosity to watch others, she ceased to observe how much she was watched herself" (*Cecilia*: 106). In being herself, that is, wearing a "common dress", Cecilia reveals her own reaction to the insipidity, superficiality and selfishness present in such a "customary *appearance* of splendid gayety" (*Cecilia*: 271, my emphasis). Again, criticism against masquerades and their excesses, according to the anti-masquerade movement, insisted on the fact that they represented a cultural plague that undoubtedly had its origins on the continent, especially in France. In a sermon given in 1723, the Bishop of London condemned the "Profaneness and Immorality, within these large and populous Cities", declaring that "Masquerades [are a] Diversion that no *true Englishman* ought to be fond of, when he remembers that it was brought among us by the Ambassador of a neighbouring Nation in the last Reign, while his Master was in measures to Enslave us".[16]

Burney's intention to portray a full picture of the city, the "world" she hinted at in the subtitle of her first novel, where she believed that different social classes, nationalities and types of characters "are routinely thrown together in continuous reminder of their common humanity and in opposition to the hierarchical tendencies that elsewhere guide the narrative's deliberation" (*Evelina*: 195), becomes more complex in *The Wanderer*, as the protagonist becomes one of the "others". Whereas *Evelina* and *Cecilia* describe quite a "classical" concept of luxury and consumption linked to the codes of an *ancien régime* idea of society and the city, *The Wanderer* goes through the experience of the French Revolution and Napoleonic France to recognize and criticize the limits of such a concept, imposing instead a modern view of luxury and fashion dictated by individual taste. This individualism is the result of a sober lifestyle

and contrasts with the former collective and thus more anonymous concept of luxury. Furthermore, it is literally "in the world of fashion" (*Wanderer*: 426), that Juliet, the protagonist in *The Wanderer*, realizes what Evelina and Cecilia failed to: "the selfishness of *personal* vanity in its unmasked futility" (*Wanderer*: 426) and the tendency of the "fashion conscious" person to undervalue the labour involved on the part of the workers, in satiating their desire for consumption:

> the good of a nation, the interest of society, the welfare of a family, could with difficulty have appeared of higher importance than the choice of a ribbon, or the set of a cap; and scarcely any calamity under heaven could excite looks of deeper horrour [sic] or despair, that any mistake committed in the arrangement of a feather or a flower (*Wanderer*: 426).

After having shown that women's status in the city was closely connected with their economic value, and that consequently, shopping could be a way to emancipate and temporarily "assert" oneself in the city as well as in society, Burney, in *The Wanderer*, brings to light the other side of the coin, by portraying the two types of women who confront each other: "the dissipated and idle", and "the indigent and laborious" (*Wanderer*: 427). Unsurprisingly, the location of this confrontation is a milliner's shop, where Juliet, employed as a seamstress, also represents a new ideal of femininity, embodied by those "who learn to suffice for themselves" (*Wanderer*: 220). For this new woman, luxury has a very different significance:

> 'Luxury? What is it you all of you mean by luxury? Is it your own going to hear singing and playing? and to see dancing and capering? and to loll at your ease, while a painter makes you look pretty, if you are ever so plain? […] Luxury? do you suppose, because such sights, and such sounds, and such flattery, are luxuries to you, they are luxuries to those who produce them?' (*Wanderer*: 325).

Such a modern interpretation of labour and consumption would not have been possible for Burney without a sojourn in post-revolutionary Paris. A week after Louis XVI had been guillotined in 1793, her initial description from the outside was that of a "city of horror", but one she soon learned to discover, and enjoy. Mixing with Parisians meant crossing that idealistic boundary represented by appearance that fashionable London had inculcated in her mind.

The same word used to epitomize Evelina when entering London, "rustic", is repeated throughout Burney's description of her own "entrance" into Paris. This creates a common ground between the young Evelina going to London and Frances experiencing Paris, which, interestingly, is no longer viewed as the city of sin when compared to London. The same change in attitude can be found towards France in general, and Elinor herself clearly states this changed view at the very beginning of *The Wanderer*. When crossing the Channel to return to Britain, she meets Juliet for the first time and wonders about her supposed Frenchness:

> If […] she has one atom that is native in her, how will she be choked by our foggy atmosphere! Oh, I don't mean alone the foggy air that she must inhale; but the foggy souls whom she must see and hear. If she have no political bias, that sets natural feelings aside, she'll go off in a lethargy, from *ennui*, the very first week. For myself

I confess, from my happiness in going forth into the world at this sublime juncture, of turning men into infants, in order to teach them better how to grow up, I feel as I had never awaked into life, till I had opened my eyes on that side of the channel (*Wanderer*: 18).

Whereas, as Doody argues, "the heroine's first disguise as a black woman suggests the racial conflicts within the French and English empires" (*Wanderer*: xiii), a recurring issue also in Burney's plays, the novel's condemnation of the British attitude towards the French directly challenges the stereotype of the rivalry between France and Britain that once distinguished fashionable members of British society, who considered such antagonism as essential in the construction of what Castle describes as "national taxonomies" (Castle, 1986: 107). The French Revolution that "had just then burst forth, into that noble flame that nearly consumed the old world, to raise a new one, phoenix like, from its ashes" (*Wanderer*: 152) and Burney's awareness of the labouring world of the poor she witnessed in Paris, and more generally in France, as well as in Britain, supports the belief that *The Wanderer* "has come a long way from the economic and social world of *Evelina*" (Henderson, 2002: 28). Burney felt the need to reveal this new world as her concerns had now shifted from the representation of femininity as linked with fashion and its consumption in the city, to a sharp, and at times critical, focus on production and manual labour.[17] The emergence of a new world of production of clothes and fabrics, and in general of goods to be consumed, could not have occurred without the French events which radically changed the perception of a whole epoch in history. Such perception is best represented by the twofold character of *The Wanderer*, a (supposed) French labouring woman, Juliet, and her British counterpart, the patroness Elinor, who both struggle "to call upon us all, in this enlightened age, to set aside our long, old, and hereditary prejudices" (*Wanderer*: 375). Significantly, it is firstly as a stereotyped representative of Parisian fashion that Juliet can initiate her own activity as a milliner in Britain:

> The inexperience of Juliet in business, impeded not her acquiring almost immediate excellence in the millinery art, for which she was equally fitted by native taste, and by her remembrance of what she had seen abroad. The first time, therefore, that she was employed to arrange some ornaments, she adjusted them with an elegance so striking, that Miss Matson, with much parade, exhibited them to her best lady-customers, as a specimen of the very last new fashion, just brought her over by one of her young ladies from Paris [...]. The phrase, therefore, that went forth from Miss Matson, that one of her young ladies was just come from France, was soon spread through the neighbourhood; with the addition that the same person had brought over specimens of all the French costume (*Wanderer*: 429).

Luxury items were beginning to be sold according to their actual value on the market, rather than relying upon the social reputation of the purchaser. A similar change also took place in the relationship between sellers and buyers. Thus, whereas Cecilia could buy her books on credit, and her friends, the Harrels, could even build an entire property at Violet Banks without advancing anything else but their social respectability, Juliet, the heroine of *The Wanderer*, runs a shop by herself and "intends to take *immediate* payment from the strangers who come into the shop" (Henderson: 2002: 8, my emphasis).

Burney's idea of luxury evolves from its consumption in fashionable places described in *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, to an account of its production and retail in commonplace shops in *The Wanderer*. The evolution of this idea throughout her novels and plays links London and Paris through a common ground between the two cities, no more in order to differentiate them in a relationship of antagonism, but rather in one of correspondence. Paris and London thus rather mirror each other, both in reproducing the whole transaction of business, from production to display, as well as in bearing witness to a fundamental change in women's status in such scenery: from active consumers, as we have seen, in the London scene, albeit often regarded through the lens of a Parisian influence and deemed to subjugation and identification with the objects displayed, to their role as producers creating for themselves an active alternative to the traditional patriarchal compromise they had to face in the city. Through her critical understanding of a typical late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century English double approach to Frenchness, represented by the suspicion as well as by the attraction towards Revolutionary France, its ideals and its followers, Burney managed to reinterpret both the perception of France in the following years and give voice to the continual reshaping of Britain's own society at the time of intense industrialization, in a search for a personal identity that in the end transcended nationalism to opt for a mature, modern cosmopolitanism.

## Notes

[1] "England's commercial boom most greatly affected the rural regions and small villages, and it did so in two significant ways. First, the government-imposed Enclosure Acts encouraged emigration from the villages to the cities as they brought previously fallow land, used collectively by the village for livestock grazing, under active cultivation. This was done to increase food demands on the growing population. Second, the higher wages offered by the urban centres attracted the rural poor. The quantity and variety of commercial goods coming into and displayed in the cities drew the attention of those in pursuit of material possession. The insatiable demands of London and other growing cities effected a tremendous strain on the economy, which in turn depleted the peasantry of its traditional way of living. Even the trip to the large cities became attractive due to the construction of a national turnpike system" (Black, 1996: 41). See also Porter, 1994: 54, and Rudé, 1976: 47.

[2] For the definition of the British "Empire" as an "Emporium" I am indebted to Joseph W. Childers, in a paper delivered at the International Conference on Travel Literature and India, University of Delhi, 20-21 February, 2007.

[3] As well as for a father, who never appears in Burney's novels, except in the shape of a guardian.

[4] Burney's works as a dramatist also focus on the city (especially London) and its fashionable places and lifestyle. Indeed, in *A Busy Day* (1800-01), Eliza, the protagonist of the comedy, who returns to Britain after a residence in India, feeling at first that "I am entirely a stranger to London" (*Complete Plays*, 1995: 1, 295), later perceives London as "that noble Metropolis, which is the source of our Splendour, the Seat of integrity, the foster-Mother of Benevolence and Charity, and the pride of the British Empire" (1, 397). For the protagonist of Burney's *Love and Fashion* (1799), "enchanting" London (*Complete Plays*, 1995: 1, 5) is the place where, as the title suggests, a young girl can find both love and fashion, interestingly linked together. Hilaria's expectations concerning her adventures in the city proceed at the same rate with her intolerance towards life in the country, in a country/city opposition which is typical of Burney's production: "How I long to be gone, and quit the dreary, drowsy Country, for London – animated London!" (1, p. 119).

[5] The Burneys first resided in Poland Street, then in 1770 moved to Queen Square and finally to St. Martin's Street in 1774.

[6] Both addresses are quoted in Herve, 1842.

[7] "Mad. D'Henin took us to a place called *La folie de Chartres*, ci-divant belonging to the duc d'oreleans [sic], & now a public Garden. It is now in a state of ruin, compared with what it formerly boasted of grandeur, the River cut through it being nearly dried up, from neglect of the Fountains, the house turned into cake rooms, &c., common Benches placed in the most open part of the Garden, & the Bridges half broken. Nevertheless, with all this, M.d'ar[blay] & I, with our West Humble rusticity, thought it probably more beautiful [...] than its pristine state; for the Grass wildly growing was verdant & refreshing, the uncut Lilacs were lavish of sweets, & Nature all around seemed luxuriantly to revel over the ruins of Art" (*Journals*, 1975: 5, 296-7).

[8] "At length, the two human hedges were finally formed, the door of the Audience Chamber was thrown wide open with a commanding crash, a vivacious officer-Centinel – or I know not what, nimbly descended the three steps into our Apartment, &, placing himself at the side of the door, with one hand spread as high as possible above his head, & the other extended horizontally, called out, in a loud & authoritative voice, 'Le Premier Consul!' You will easily believe nothing more was necessary to obtain attention; not a soul either spoke or stirred as he & his suite passed along [...]. I had a view so near, though so brief, of his face, as to be very much struck by it: it is of a deeply impressive cast, pale even to sallowness, while not only in the Eye, but in every feature, Care, Thought, Melancholy, & Meditation are strongly marked, with so much of character, nay, Genius, & so penetrating a seriousness – or rather sadness, as powerfully to sink into an observer's mind: -- yet, though the Busts & Medallions I have seen are, in general, such good resemblances, that I think I should have known him untold, he has by no means the look to be expected from Bonaparte, -- but rather that of a profoundly studious & contemplative Man [...]. But the look however, of the Commander who heads his own army, who fights his own Battles, who conquers every difficulty by personal exertion, who executes all he plans, who performs even all he suggests – whose ambition is of the most enterprizing, & whose bravery of the most daring cast -- -- This, which is the look to be expected from his situation, & the exploits which have led to it, the spectator watches for in vain. The plainness, also, of his dress, so conspicuously contrasted by the finery of all around him, conspires forcibly with his countenance [...] to give him far more the air of a Student than of a Warrior" (*Journals*, 1975: 5, 313-4).

[9] Returning to Paris in November 1812, Burney noticed that "Paris is now MORE, *much* more than doubled in all expences, as well as London, within these 10 Years" (*Journals*, 1978: 7, 54).

[10] To Burney's heroines, however, London pleasure gardens could offer more than the normal amusements of masquerades, balls and concerts on offer at the Pantheon in Oxford Street, as they were also a useful mechanism in the marriage market, lessening the union between a man and a woman to the business of a commercial transaction. Cecilia's first meeting with Sir Robert Floyer, one of her admirers, powerfully portrays such an operation: "The moment Cecilia appeared, she became the object of his attention, though neither with the look of admiration due to her beauty, nor yet with that of curiosity excited by her novelty, but with the scrutinizing observation of a man on the point of making a bargain, who views with fault-seeking eyes the property he means to cheapen" (*Cecilia*: 34).

The urban gardens were a commercialised luxury, where both cultured pleasures and the pleasures of culture existed; a place where one could observe and be observed; indeed a space where men and women could meet and literally value each other. A sickened Cecilia, listening to a gentleman's conversation, discovers with disgust that "their language was ambiguous, and their terms [...] were intelligible: their subjects, indeed, required some discretion, being nothing less than a ludicrous calculation of the age and duration of jointured* widows, and of the chances and expectations of unmarried young ladies" (135). [*"Jointured" means "in possession of a property or income settled on the bride at marriage for her sole use in case of the death of the husband; the ungentle 'gentlemen' could be calculating both the duration of the widows' chastity and their life expectancy, since a widow's death and the reversion of her property could improve the lot of her husband's male heirs" (Doody, explanatory note to *Cecilia*: 972)]. While Cecilia, with her inheritance and gracious disposition, is an active consumer as well as an object of consumption, Evelina, with her obscure origins, is viewed differently. Due to her social, or rather economic, situation, she is unrecognisable or moreover "unrecognised" as an available "product", and becomes, in fact, valueless.

[11] On this point, see Black, 1986; and Jerinic, 2001: 64.

[12] Eliza Draper (Laurence Sterne's "Eliza") noted: "the little Gypsey, in question, must have been an Hypocrite in her Heart, for I remember, in the only tête a tête, I ever had with her, that she inveighed particularly against the impropriety of English Girls choosing for themselves without the Consent of their Parents, and instanced in her own case, as a piece of good fortune, *her having been educated in Paris, where they inculcated very different notions*", quoted in Sclater, 1944: 203.

[13] "'Pray, Sir, was you ever in Paris?'

  He only bowed.

  'And pray, Sir, how did you like it?'

This *comprehensive* question [...] though it made him smile, also made him hesitate; however, his answer was expressive of his approbation" (*Evelina*: 67). Burney does not offer any explanation of this "answer" from Lord Orville.

[14] The entertainment of this "new" hybrid and heterogeneous society was perfectly embodied by Vauxhall Gardens, whose eclectic and cosmopolitan atmosphere was further encouraged by Jonathan Tyers, who introduced statues, fountains and tree-lined walks, mixing them with classical, gothic and exotic elements: "Vauxhall offered its customers a variety of entertainments and spectacles. The first public rehearsal of Handel's Fireworks Music was heard there by an audience of more than 12,000. The outdoor orchestra offered exciting and eclectic programs of songs, small-scale operas, overtures, and concertos. [...] The buildings in the grounds included some of the finest rococo architecture in Britain, as well as a display of over fifty works of art. Visitors could dine in booths decorated with designs by Hogarth and Francis Hayman, visit the Rotunda whose entranceway was hung with history paintings and scenes from Richardson's Pamela, admire the statues of Handel and Milton" (Brewer, 1995: 347). Soon, however, with Queen Caroline's demand for the exclusivity of Kensington to contrast the vulgarisation of St James's, and the rise in the admission price to Ranelagh by half a crown to preserve the attendance of "genteel persons" (Wroth, 1896: 206), going to Vauxhall inevitably became linked with a fall in class hierarchy.

[15] "The dress is her object, and that alone fills up her ideas. Enquire of almost any body in the room concerning the persons they seem to represent, and you will find their ignorance more gross than you can imagine; they have not once thought upon the subject; accident, or convenience, or caprice has alone directed their choice" (*Cecilia*: 121).

[16] "and indeed there is not a more effectual way to enslave a People, than first to dispirit and enfeeble them by Licentiousness and Effeminacy" (Gibson, 1723: 20). See also Castle, 1986: 7, and Castle, 1983-4: 158.

[17] Mr Scope is clearly a medium through which Burney could make her own comment: "I am not for neglecting the farmers and trades-people; quite the contrary; for I think you should neither eat your meat, nor drink your beer, nor sit upon your chairs, nor wear your clothes, till you have rewarded the industrious people who provide them. Till then, in my mind, every body should bear to be hungry, and dry, and tired, and ragged! For what right have we to be fed, and covered, and seated, at other folks' cost?" (*Wanderer*: 324).

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