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FRANCES BURNEY AND FEMALE FRIENDSHIPS: SOME NOTES ON *CECILIA* (1782) AND *THE WANDERER* (1814)

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ABSTRACT. *British eighteenth-century fiction is rich in presentations of female friendship, a literary convention which permeated all genres and the works of women writers with different ideological backgrounds, ranging from Mary Wollstonecraft's radical views to Jane Austen's conservative ones. This paper analyses the* oeuvre *of the well-known novelist, playwright and diarist Frances Burney (1752-1840) by taking into account Janet Todd's ideas on female ties and the female spectrum in Burney's productions. The English authoress took part in a feminist polemic. Here I maintain that the complexity of the relationships between women in* Cecilia *(1782) and* The Wanderer *(1814) is directly influenced by class and social constraints. On the other hand, there is an evolution towards a more benevolent view of woman which needs revision.*

Keywords: Frances Burney, Burney Studies, women's literature, nineteenth century, friendship in literature, British literature.

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FRANCES BURNEY Y LAS AMISTADES FEMENINAS: ALGUNAS NOTAS SOBRE CECILIA (1782) Y THE WANDERER (1814)

RESUMEN. *Las amistades femeninas aparecen frecuentemente representadas en la ficción británica del siglo dieciocho. Esta convención literaria se extendió por todos los géneros y por las obras de escritoras de distintos contextos ideológicos, desde los presupuestos radicales de Mary Wollstonecraft al conservadurismo de Jane Austen. Este trabajo analiza la obra de la conocida novelista, dramaturga y diarista Frances Burney (1752-1840) tomando como referencia las ideas de Janet Todd sobre los vínculos femeninos y el universo femenino en las obras de Burney, quien participó en una polémica feminista. Aquí se sostiene que la complejidad de las relaciones femeninas en* Cecilia *(1782) y* The Wanderer *(1814) está influida directamente por la clase y restricciones sociales. Por otro lado, existe una evolución hacia una visión más benévola de la mujer que debe ser revisada.*

Palabras clave: Frances Burney, Estudios sobre Burney, literatura de autoría femenina, siglo diecinueve, la amistad en la literatura, literatura británica.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Frances Burney or Madame D'Arblay (1752-1840) was a famous eighteenth-century woman writer who achieved great success after the anonymous publication of her first novel, *Evelina* (1778). In her lifetime, and, as the daughter of the famous musicologist Dr. Charles Burney — the author of *The History of Music* (1776-89) —, Frances met diverse artists and intellectuals, such as the lexicographer Dr. Samuel Johnson, the playwright Richard B. Sheridan or the actors David Garrick and Samuel Foote. She also moved in aristocratic circles and spent five years at court as Queen Charlotte's Keeper of the Robes (1786-91). Despite writing several comedies (*The Witlings* [1779], *The Woman Hater* [1802], *Love and Fashion* [1798] and *A Busy Day* [1800-2]) and tragedies (*Edwy and Elgiva* [1788-9], *Hubert de Vere, The Siege of Pevensey* and *Elberta* [composed between 1789-91]), Burney was mainly known as a novelist praised by literary critics who considered her as the founder of the novel of manners. Admired by her contemporaries Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen for her satiric portraits, Burney struggled to be seen as *authoress,* an active participant in the production and dissemination of a feminized genre, the novel, which she did not associate with frivolous diversion and which she vindicated in the prefaces to *Evelina* and *The Wanderer*. Burney's works have been edited and reedited since the nineteenth century and are now being rediscovered thanks to The Burney Society — a competitor of The Jane

Austen Society — , which includes researchers as eminent as Dr. Peter Sabor and Dr. Margaret A. Doody, Burney's main biographer. In the last decades we have witnessed the publication of many books about Burney, her comedies have been repeatedly staged and feminist scholars have cherished her productions (Clark 2009: 105-6, Clark 2010: 173-4) to the point that the life and works of other family members, such as Sarah Harriet, Frances's younger half-sister, have caught the scholars' attention and are broadening the field of the Burney Studies nowadays. Besides, there has been a change in critics' attitudes towards Burney's fiction, so, more than as a love stories writer, Burney is currently regarded as an ambitious novelist and a student of aggression and obsession who "sees in her characters the grotesque and the macabre symptoms of a society's own perverseness and of the wildness in the human psyche that leads to the creation of such strange creatures as society itself" (Doody 1988: 3).

Burney represented the female voice as a voice of value, she fictionalised what is taken to be feminine and was particularly concerned with women's subordination to men. While Burney wrote much about women, it is surprising, however, that the study of communities of women in Burney has been a relatively neglected area in comparison with other ones. What is more, there is a generalised tendency to deny the existence of affectionate female bonds in Burney's productions, and, most of the times, scholars insist on Burney's ambiguity and uncomfortable position towards female friendships. Feminists have perceived in *Cecilia* the period's deeply anxious sexual ideologies (Epstein 1989: 200), and her last production depicts women as the greatest oppressors since "they vent their frustrations on anyone weaker than they are" (Cutting 1975: 56). Both Claudia Johnson and Miranda Burgess consider Burney a more conservative writer than it seems, and the former argues that Burney's fiction implies a horror at the disruptions effected by sentimentality and that female affectivity — and female subjectivity itself — is cast into doubt as culpable, histrionic and grotesque. For Johnson, Burney abhors virile females and the heroine's suffering reproaches these females (1995: 16-17)[1]. More recently, Sharon Long Damoff has stated that "in *The Wanderer*, Burney continues her exploration of benevolence as it relates to women — their willingness and failure to give it, and, most especially in this work, their failure to help another one and their vulnerability in accepting aid from men" (1998: 241), and, according to Barbara Zonitch, Burney is interested in the alternative social "replacements" for aristocratic protection in the modern world, including a self-supporting community of women which does not subvert the aristocratic order itself (1997: 33-32, 79). As Doody sees it, in Burney, even matriarchy is shown as potentially more oppressive for young women than patriarchy (1988: 139).

[1] See also Burgess (2000: 110).

In her illuminating book on female ties in Samuel Richardson, John Cleland or Mary Wollstonecraft, among others; Janet Todd adopts an interdisciplinary gendered-based approach and distinguishes five types of female friendship in eighteenth-century literature serving numerous functions: "They balanced a skewed psychology, ease loneliness, teach survival, and create power. At the same time they nudge women into development, where marriage can only bewilder or become a too sudden closing of the gulf society has formed between the sexes" (1980: 315). Though Todd considers Burney as "the main painter of sentimental friendship in England and France in the late eighteenth century" (1980: 311), she briefly mentions the friendship between Juliet and Lady Aurora, whom she considers as "discreetly supportive" (1980: 316). Her attention is exclusively devoted to Elinor Joddrel, a ridiculous feminist "mocked by her exaggerated actions, her uncontrollable passions, and her desperate shiftings from principle to love" (Todd 1980: 316), and Todd excludes other possibilities. For this scholar, Burney vitiated the substance of romantic friendship which is seen as limited in *The Wanderer*: "Elinor, though given room to show her force, is rejected and Aurora herself is more a rapturous shade of Juliet than an equal. Women in both *Cecilia* and *The Wanderer* may console each other and compensate for loss, but they can rarely spur to action" (1980: 317).

This article leaves female mentors, seductive and witty women or "tricksters"[2] aside to focus on the dynamics of young women's relationships in Burney's novels.[3] Instead of analysing females alliances as erotic ones or following Nancy Chodorow's idea that they derive from mother-daughter emotions and are an expression of women's general relational capacities (1978: 200), we will concentrate on the fact that these relationships — "the only one[s] the heroine actively constructs" (Todd 1980: 2) — are the place where the woman writer could negotiate with and between the dominant images of female identity in patriarchal society[4] and are in consonance with the pull between strategies of rebellion and apparent submission typical of Burney's fiction where characters simultaneously embody sameness and difference. As Dale Spender argues, both Burney and Edgeworth invested their works with ethical concerns and showed the tensions between social demand and individual conscience (1986: 273) which

[2] For Audrey Bilger, tricksters are a weapon used by Burney, Wollstonecraft and Austen to kill off the ideal woman and criticise society's absurd demands upon women. Mrs. Selwyn in *Evelina*, Lady Honoria Pemberton in *Cecilia*, Mrs. Arlbery in *Camilla* and Elinor Joddrel in *The Wanderer* are tricksters who defy rules of conduct, mock male authority and laugh as they do so (Bilger 1998: 88-89).

[3] For an exploration of other kinds of relationships, see Cutting (1977), Haggerty (1995) and Looser (2005).

[4] Heidi Hartmann defines patriarchy as the "relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women" (qtd. in Sedgwick 1985: 3).

largely determine the representation of female friendships. Instead of rejecting Todd, here there is an attempt to redefine her position and complete her analysis. Female friendships are not restricted to grotesque Elinor and sweet Lady Aurora.[5] On the contrary, they constitute a rather complex issue difficult to systematize and which also appears in *Cecilia*. Furthermore, I discern an evolution from the view of women as competitors (*Cecilia*) to a more benevolent approach of women as companions or almost copies of the protagonist (*The Wanderer*), a point which is especially relevant when we examine Burney's dependency on men (her father, Dr. Johnson, Samuel Crisp) and the efforts of women writers at that time to be recognised in the literary realm.

2. *CECILIA* OR THE FETICHISATION OF THE RICH

Selfishness and hypocrisy define the world depicted in *Cecilia*, where everybody wants to imitate the life of the upper classes. The protagonist is a virtuous heiress whose fortune is left in the hands of three incompetent trustees: Mr. Harrel, a man obsessed with living above his possibilities and completely indebted; Mr. Briggs, who is rich but lives as a poor man; and Mr. Delvile, a selfish aristocrat. The heroine has been brought up by an irresponsible uncle who imposes the condition that, if she wants her patrimony, her surname Beverley cannot be changed after marriage. The victim of an oppressive society — and no longer an *ingénue* like Evelina — , Cecilia will have to choose between her feelings towards Mortimer, Mr. Delvile son, and her economic independence. The story is enriched with many intertextual references to William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*, and it has repeatedly been pointed out that *Cecilia* reveals Frances's internal conflicts with the mentors who strongly opposed her career as a playwright (Darby 1997).

When Cecilia goes to London, she stays with Mr. and Mrs. Harrel (Priscilla), whose friendship is more formal than real, as Doody stresses (1988: 113-115), and who is a predecessor of Lady Delacour and Helen Stanley, the protagonists' confidantes in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) and *Helen* (1834) respectively. The narrator contrasts Cecilia and Priscilla very clearly from the outset: though amiable and obliging, the later has no wit neither great qualities (Burney 1988: 21). The Harrels' home in Portman Square functions metonymically as the symbol of their status and insertion in the fashionable world, which Priscilla is reluctant to leave. Conscious of her position, Priscilla is appalled by the Cits' familiarity. Cecilia's efforts to persuade her of the necessity of a change of life seem useless since "*she* [Mrs. Harrel] *did nothing but what every body else did*, and that it was

[5] For a reading of Elinor as Juliet's alter ego, see Fernández Rodríguez (2008: 52-53).

quite impossible for her to *appear in the world in any other manner*" (Burney 1988: 193). The protagonist pities her friend, she recalls their previous intimacy and unsuccessfully manages to "shew more fortitude, and conjuring her [Mrs. Harrel] to study nothing while abroad but oeconomy [sic], prudence and housewifery" (Burney 1988: 394). Meanwhile Priscilla is astonished by Cecilia's prudery and stoicism: "'You are indeed a noble creature! I thought so from the moment I beheld you; I shall think so, I hope, to the last that I live'" (Burney 1988: 425).

Priscilla stands for duplicity and manipulative friendship (Todd 1980: 4). Her interest in controlling Cecilia anticipates the cruel world that the heroine will face in *The Wanderer*. Besides, as Katherine Rogers insists, eighteenth-century women were forced to give up their wishes and to acquiesce: it was unwomanly to assert herself or to criticise the social circumstances (1990: 56). Women would rather stick to the ideal delineated by sermons and conduct books which praised obedience, modesty and chastity and condemned self-assertion. Mrs. Harrel's profligacy transgresses cultural expectations taking into account that the domestic woman regulated the capital brought home by his partner and that she was valued as long as she was able to manage the household economy. Burney's view of existing marriages is not satisfactory: Mr. Harrel uses Priscilla as an instrument to get money from the protagonist by appealing to their friendship (Burney 1988: 391).[6] Priscilla is always related to Cecilia, and, in the suicide scene in Vauxhall, she revealingly appears as Cecilia's sister when "they stood close to each other, listening to every sound and receiving every possible addition to their alarm" (Burney 1988: 414). Another important point concerning Priscilla is that, after her husband's death, she cannot exercise her right of testator, becoming a vivid anticipatory image of what Cecilia can suffer if she makes a bad choice. Although Priscilla is not a good moral guide, as Helen Thompson states (2001: 160), thanks to her, Cecilia reflects on the behaviour of the rich against whom Burney articulates a powerful criticism related to Giles Arbe's defence of the artist in *The Wanderer:*[7]

> "Who then at last, thought Cecilia, are half so much the slaves of the world as the gay and the dissipated? Those who work for hire, have at least their hours of rest, those who labour for subsistence, are at liberty when subsistence is procured; but those who toil to please the vain and the idle, undertake a task which can never be finished, however scrupulously all private peace, all internal comfort, may be sacrificed in reality to the folly of saving appearances!" (Burney 1988: 360)

[6] For Claude Lévi-Strauss the relationship of reciprocity which is the basis of marriage is not established between men and women but between men by means of women (1969: 116), and Eve K. Sedgwick goes further to state that in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (*including* homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power (1985: 25). Marriage is just one of those structures.

[7] The gentleman denounces Juliet's exploitation and difficulties to entertain the well-off (Fernández Rodríguez 2007: 142-143).

Class comes to the fore, and defines a different friendship. Henrietta Belfield is in many aspects Mrs. Harrel's opposite in *Cecilia* at the same time that she represents a young authoress' aspirations to be recognised in the literary market, as Catherine Gallagher (1994) and Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace (1994) have already emphasised by focussing on Belfield, Henrietta's brother, and on the Fable of the Genius added now as an appendix to this edition (Burney 1988: 943-945). Probably the most courageous female in *Cecilia*, Henrietta has been scarcely studied by critics despite her revolutionary assertion before Cecilia: "'those to whom I belong have more fortitude and higher spirit. I wish I could imitate them'" (Burney 1988: 209). If Priscilla is unconscious of the world she lives in, Henrietta represents the over-conscious woman and female sacrifice on behalf of the male branch of the family since Mrs. Belfield has never denied her son a present and totally ignores that Belfield was deceived by his administrator (Burney 1988: 222). The friendship between Cecilia and Henrietta may spring from an intense mother-want on both sides because mothers are inefficient, or because other women have acted as betrayers or oppressors. If we follow Todd's analysis, Belfield's sister is a mutilated daughter, neglected by her family, and she symbolically becomes Cecilia's daughter (1980: 2-3, 312).

Cecilia is surprised by Henrietta's common sense (Burney 1988: 345), and Henrietta calls her "*her brother's noble friend*" (Burney 1988: 345). She idealises and is attracted by the upper classes, and much later she equals Mortimer with the heroine ("'*You* only are like him! always gentle, always obliging!'" ([Burney 1988: 776]) Chodorow argues that adolescents, in transition, may desire the heterosexual love object of their best friend, because their identification rather than a sense of complementarity shapes desire and that that desire is often transformed from the wish *to be like* to the wish *to be with* that friend (1994: 53). This is precisely what happens to Henrietta who has a levelling spirit and admires the rich simply because they do not have problems and their lives are far from ordinary: "'Whatever has but once been touched by their hands, I should like to lock up, and keep for ever! though if I was used to them, as you are, perhaps I might think less of them'" (Burney 1988: 775). Henrietta helps Burney to introduce the possibility of an alliance between the middle and the high classes. According to the girl, there is some benefit when the classes join together: "'the rich would be as much happier for marrying the poor, as the poor for marrying the rich, for then they would take somebody that would try to deserve their kindness, and now they only take those that know have a right to it'" (Burney 1988: 777). However, as soon as Henrietta suspects the existence of a liaison between Mortimer and Cecilia (Burney 1988: 799), her feelings resemble Cecilia's ones towards her beloved Mortimer, who only finds one fault in Henrietta: "'We sigh for entertainment, when cloyed by mere sweetness; and

heavily drags on the load of life when the companion of our social hours wants spirit, intelligence, and cultivation'" (Burney 1988: 571).

The heroine appreciates Miss Belfield because she has finally found "a friend to oblige, and a companion to converse with [...] her constant presence and constant sweetness, imperceptibly revived her spirits, and gave a new interest to her existence" (Burney 1988: 794). The idea that Henrietta may marry Mortimer enables Cecilia to compare herself with Belfield's sister and to see the girl's worth. For Jane Spencer (2007: 34-36), the Johnsonian influence in the heroine's reflections look forward to Austen's free indirect discourse:

> "If", cried she, "the advantages I possess are merely those of riches, how little should I be flattered by any appearance of preference! And how ill can I judge with what sincerity it may be offered! Happier in that case is the lowly Henrietta, who to poverty may attribute neglect, but who can only be sought and caressed from motives of purest regard. She loves Mr. Delvile, loves him with the most artless affection; — perhaps, too, he loves her in return, — why else his solicitude to know my opinion of her, and why so sudden his alarm when he thought it unfavourable? Perhaps he means to marry her, and to sacrifice to her innocence and her attractions all plans of ambition, and all views of aggrandizement: — thrice happy Henrietta; if such is thy prospect of felicity! to have inspired a passion so disinterested, may humbly the most insolent of thy superiors, and teach even the wealthiest to envy thee!" (Burney 1988: 362-363)

Both Priscilla and Henrietta encourage introspection and are favourably treated at the end of *Cecilia*. The former is criticised, but she marries a rich man and continues shining in society: "quickly forgetting all the past, thoughtlessly began the world again, with new hopes, new connections, — new equipages and new engagements!" (Burney 1988: 940). On the other hand, Henrietta is eventually rewarded rather than punished and becomes assimilated to the upper classes thanks to her marriage to Mr. Arnott, one of the protagonist's suitors. We will see now that what distinguishes *Cecilia* from Burney's last novel is that in *The Wanderer* philanthropy extends to humanity in general, and that, more than generosity or ingenuousness, it is disinterestedness that characterises female friends in Burney's mature fiction.

3. SYMPATHY AND WOMEN

Burney published *The Wanderer* thirty-two years after the appearance of *Cecilia* and after the loss of her dear sister Susanna (1800) married to Captain Molesworth Phillips and an appalling mastectomy to save her life (1811). Frances and her husband, the Catholic constitutionalist and Lafayette's good friend General Alexandre Piochard d'Arblay, had spent some years on the Continent with the

hope to recover some estates, and, when *The Wanderer* appeared, Frances had to face harsh criticism in England.[8] The authoress's last production can be defined as a mixture of the Aethiopic, the Bizantine and the philosophic novel. It deals with the adventures of a strange woman who arrives disguised on the French coast and prays admission in a boat to England where she meets the underside of British society. As the story progresses, we know that Juliet Granville is the daughter of an English aristocrat and a virtuous young lady and that she has been secretly educated in a French convent. Though Burney had sworn to the custom officers in Dunkirk that "the Work had nothing in it political, nor even National […] possibly offensive to the Government" (qtd. in Burney 1991: xi), *The Wanderer* became Burney's most political novel. For Epstein, in *The Wanderer*, "the absorption of the political into the personal, rather than evading, permits Burney to analyse explicitly the ideological impact of French revolutionary politics on the European condition" (1989: 177). On the other hand, in Burney's last novel, the strong sense of the injustice of society's attitude towards women questions the validity of political and societal institutions.

Leaving Selina apart, the heroine has two good friends in *The Wanderer*: Lady Aurora, a stock character typical of a sentimental narrative, and Juliet's French friend Gabriella. Different women writers, such as Charlotte Lennox in *Euphemia* (1790), had also dealt with sentimental friendship defined by Todd as a close, effusive tie, revelling in rapture and rhetoric, which can replace heterosexual love and is a means to engage the female reader. According to Todd, thanks to the sentimental female friendship, the novel displays its didactic aim (1980: 3), and Lady Aurora appears precisely when Burney feels freest as a writer[9]. Towards the end of the narrative, the reader discovers that she is Juliet's biological sister — after his first wife's death, Lord Granville remarried —, and Lady Aurora and Lord Melbury turn to be Juliet's half-siblings. Lady Aurora sticks perfectly to the idea of the "proper lady" defined by Mary Poovey and familiar to any nineteenth-century reader: "completely without sexual desire and delicate to the point of frailty, […] the Victorian Angel of the House was to be absolutely free from all corrupting knowledge of the material — and materialistic — world" (1984: 34-35). For Katharine Rogers, Lady Aurora distils purity, self-control and tenderness, while Juliet's experience sets her apart from this stereotype (1990: 173). Like Edgeworth, Burney believed in perfectibility, and Lady Aurora's presence is necessary in the novel for two reasons. First, she gives comfort to a heroine who is continually

[8] For an overview, see Doody (1988: 333-335).

[9] However, the publishers urged her to finish *The Wanderer*, and Frances confessed in a letter to Charles Burney: "tired I am of my Pen! Oh tired! tired! Oh! Should it tire others in the same proportion —alas for poor Messrs. Longman & Rees! — and alas for poor ME!" (22nd June 1813, quoted in Hemlow 1958: 337).

abused both by the upper and the middle class ladies, ranging from the aristocrat Mrs. Ireton to the mantua maker Mrs. Hart and the milliners. Second, Burney never loses a certain degree of idealism in her productions — in fact, it was suspected that *Cecilia* was written by Dr. Johnson, the author of *Rasselas* (1759). Lady Aurora appears as a counter-figure in the novel, one of the few compassionate females surrounding Juliet. According to Joyce Hemlow, this character was probably based on Amelia Locke (1958: 341), a lady much beloved by Frances and her sister Susanna, who could also have inspired Lady Aurora (Thaddeus 2000: 204) bearing in mind that her urgent need to be close to Juliet resembles very much the affinity between Frances and Susanna[10].

Betty Rizzo remarks that the "call of blood" — or *cri de l' âme* —, was a topos common in French seventeenth- and eighteenth-century drama and in the English novel of the second half of he eighteenth century. This call of the soul, which appears when kindred spirits like Lady Aurora and Juliet meet, recognises the claims of merit over those of rank (Rizzo 2007: 131)[11]. In fact, Lady Aurora sympathises with Juliet's sufferings and wants to become her banker. The young aristocrat is frequently referred to as an angel (Burney 1991: 135, 829, 846), and many conventional scenes in which Juliet meets Lady Aurora are described with sentimental rhetoric culminating when she discovers that Juliet is her sister (Burney 1991: 817). Lady Aurora enjoys the life that the heroine should legally have had — up to a point she is what Juliet is not — and the Melburys are portrayed as true aristocrats who spend their time touring around Great Britain, visiting health resorts or devoting themselves to upper class diversions such as conversation, theatrical discussions, strictures and declamation (Burney 1991: 552). All these activities keep them close to Juliet, an accomplished artist also called 'The Ellis', who can sing, play the harp or perform diverse theatrical roles. Lady Aurora is totally different from the interested Miss Arbe, so the narrator itself distinguishes between authentic rank and formality: "her every feeling, and almost every thought, were absorbed in tender commiseration for unknown distresses, which she firmly believed to be undeserved; and which, however nobly supported, seemed too poignant for constant suppression" (Burney 1991: 117).

Like in Lady Aurora's case, Gabriella is definitely less real than other women in *The Wanderer*. The female archangel (Gabri-*ella*) is linked to Juliet/Ellis by her name, and she functions as her French half-sister because Gabriella's mother

[10] What is more, the Italian castrato Gaspare Pacchierotti considered the sisters "but one Soul — but one Mind — You are two in One" (quoted in Chisholm 1998: 13), and, before Susan's marriage to an officer in the Marines, Frances wrote: "now I consider that we are no longer destined to pursue our kittle snug Garret scheme & end our lives 2 loving Maiden cats" (quoted in Doody 1988: 109).

[11] Similarly, Johnson maintains that the yearning for the intimacy of maternal and/or female sympathy is potent in Burney's novels and recurs with the intensity of repetition compulsion. Burney brings homoerotic fervours within the bonds of the patriarchal family (1995: 178-179).

was Juliet's original protector. Gabriella interests us for two reasons: on the one hand, she is a mother who has lost her child buried by the sea (Burney 1991: 385). On the other hand, Gabriella expresses herself in French, which Burney mastered at that time after her exile in France. The British authoress felt somehow compromised with her husband's country after having written the philanthropic and scarcely known nowadays essay *Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French Clergy earnestly submitted to the humane Consideration of The Ladies in Great Britain* (1800). By positively portraying a French *emigrée*, cultural alterity is seen from an uncommon point of view in Burney's fiction — if we compare it with the images of the French in *Evelina*, for instance —, and the close connection between Juliet and Gabriella is already explained by the later to Sir Jaspar: "'We were brought up together! — the same convent, the same governess, the same instructors, were common to both till my marriage'" (Burney 1991: 640).

Juliet and Gabriella share many features in common: the later will be as alienated in England as Juliet is, and she is also introduced with her face covered. Like the protagonist, Gabriella experiences the limitations of disguise: instead of a source of emancipation, her attire restricts her movements because she is an outcast. Furthermore, both Juliet and Gabriella have French husbands like Burney herself. Belonging to an old French family and the daughter of a Marquise, Gabriella was forced to leave her country during the Revolution with a false name as Juliet did. Gabriella remains as an example of a lady of quality impelled to depend on herself. Like Lady Aurora, the French lady is related to the heroine's anagnorisis, and it is Gabriella who reveals Juliet's rank (Burney 1991: 641). Despite "all alteration of attire and appearance" (Burney 1991: 391), Gabriella preserves her distinguished air and form, and is compassionate towards those "who had lost the resources of independence which she yet possessed, — youth and strength" (Burney 1991: 401). The reader never obtains a detailed description of this woman, who is "'no great recommendation'" (Burney 1991: 384) according to Miss Matson, and meets Juliet at the churchyard where she prays in French for her dead child (Burney 1991: 386). However, the narrator explains that she had "a tragic expression of constant woe in her countenance" (Burney 1991: 635), and Juliet summarises her personality to Sir Jaspar:

> "Her excellencies, her high qualities, and spotless conduct, might make the proudest Englishman exult to own her for his country-woman; though the lowest Frenchman would dispute, even at the risk of his life, the honour of her birth. Sprung from one of the first houses in Europe, a house not more ancient in its origin, than renowned for its virtues; allied to a family the most industrious, whose military glory has raised it to the highest ranks in the state; herself an ornament to that birth, an honour to that alliance". (Burney 1991: 636)

The Wanderer is preoccupied with issues of women's professionalism and patronage, echoing Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of The Rights of Woman* (1792). It centres much on women's contribution to British economy during the Industrial Revolution. Gabriella corresponds to the social type of female friendship related to the heroine's realization in society, and co-operation and social rise are prominent here (Todd 1980: 4). Juliet and Gabriella settle in the later's small room in Brighthelmstone and earn their bread by doing needle-work (Burney 1991: 394). Later they decide to set up in London, which implies facing economic problems to assimilate themselves to the commercial class in a respectable but not genteel enterprise. When Juliet and Gabriella start a private business to support themselves and credit nearly destroys Juliet's livelihood, Burney is offering a realistic picture. Despite her efforts, Gabriella suffers as many professional difficulties as her friend does in her wanderings (Burney 1991: 622-623), and they still write to each other after Juliet's marriage to Albert Harleigh.

4. CONCLUSION

By changing the critical focus from romance to friendship, we have seen that Burney had an ambivalent and contradictory vision of female friendship and that communities of women are always a problematic alternative in her *oeuvre*. All female friends are victimised by patriarchal hegemony in different ways and have little social and legal agency. Like in radical authoresses — Wollstonecraft in *Mary: a Fiction* (1788) or Elizabeth Hamilton in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) —, the doubling technique provides the opportunity to explore actions forbidden to a more proper lady. Gender studies still have to examine how Burney's views possibly influenced later Victorian women writers, such as George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell in their famous feminocentric novels. In Burney's second work, there is an astute assessment of human relationships and the heroine's *Bildung* is possible because the female individual moves beyond community into her own subjective world and considers herself in relation to other women. As she grew older, the British authoress turned to a more positive — and generous — portrait of female bonds and co-operation. Therefore, in *The Wanderer*, the mixture of realism and idealism and the introduction of the figures of the benevolent aristocrat and the professional foreign woman affirm rather than deny Burney's reliance on female communities. At the same time that these alliances encourage intimacy and mutual sharing of a domestic environment they also express women's intense yearning for freedom, which once more confirms Burney's genius.

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