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Frances Burney and the French Revolution: Politics in Burney's *Court Journals and Letters*

GEOFFREY SILL

When the six volumes of *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney* and two volumes of *Additional Journals and Letters* have been published—a moment that is drawing near—all of Frances Burney's surviving correspondence from 1768 until her death in 1840 will be in print in modern editions.[1] The period covered in the *Court Journals* includes the years 1786–91, when she served as Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte in the court of George III.[2] The publication of the *Court Journals* will assist readers to understand more fully Burney's development as a celebrity author in the years after *Cecilia* or, put another way, to understand the events, personalities, inhibitions, and prohibitions that complicated her writing in the 1780s and '90s.

One of the problems yet to be addressed by Burney scholarship in this period has been the divergent views of Frances Burney and her father, Dr. Charles Burney, on the politics of the French Revolution. Readers familiar with Frances Burney's journals know that, although she initially concurred with her father's condemnation of the violence of the Revolution, she came not only to sympathize with the colony of *émigrés* from France at Juniper Hall in Mickleham but also to choose one of them for her husband over her father's objections. Her admiration for Germaine de Staël, the host of a salon in Paris in which political ideas were discussed before and during the Revolution, and her choice of Alexandre d'Arblay, formerly an *adjutant-général* to the Marquis de Lafayette and a member of the *constitutionels*, were distinctly contrary to the Tory views of her father, which she mirrored in her journals and letters.[3] If she agreed with her father that violence and "mob rule" in France were regrettable, did she also agree that the Revolution itself was illegitimate? Did their views diverge only in 1792, after she had come under the influence of Madame de Staël and begun a courtship with General d'Arblay, or is there evidence of an earlier evolution of her political thought? When did she become aware of the

difference between her views and her father's, and how did she encode that difference in her letters and journals? This essay will address these questions by examining several journal entries from 1789 in which she refers to conversations she has had with eyewitnesses to the political events that led to the Revolution.

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Frances Burney had been cautioned, when she began her service at court in July of 1786, not to enter into political matters or to commit her thoughts on political questions to writing.[4] In her first letter from court to her sister Susanna Burney Phillips, she gives herself permission to keep and share a journal, as long as she never makes "the most distant allusion to politics, to the Royal family's private transactions or opinions, nor to any state affairs of any kind" (*CJL* 1: 1–2). Throughout her court service, she was careful to maintain a public appearance of disinterest in politics, though her journal entries sometimes belie this appearance. Her interest in politics is evident from her meticulous accounts through the course of 1788 of the trial for corruption of Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of India. As Lorna J. Clark has pointed out, Burney focuses not on the political issues of the trial but on the human drama, including the verbal battle between herself and William Windham, one of the managers for the prosecution (*CJL* 3: xviii–xix). As they watch the proceedings of the trial from the gallery of Westminster Hall, Burney admits to Windham that she had "never entered" (*CJL* 3: 123) into the specifics of the case against Hastings but that she was convinced of his innocence from her knowledge of his character. Windham, rather taken aback, listens attentively as she contributes "my small mite towards clearing, at least, so very wide a mistake" as she believes the charges against Hastings to be; and "when I saw he listened, I was most eager to give him all I could to hear" (*CJL* 3: 124). In narrating her effect on one of the prosecutors, Burney succeeds in making a political statement about the Hastings trial while maintaining her self-imposed contract not to discuss specific political issues. She was to use this novelizing technique to discuss other political questions, including the French Revolution.

Dr. Burney's political views, on the other hand, are explicit and outspoken. His biographer, Roger Lonsdale, calls him an

"unshakeable" conservative and monarchist.[5] According to Lonsdale, Charles Burney had a "proud and defiant attachment to the existing structure of society," which caused him to regard the "abominations of France" with horror (Lonsdale 364). Though he had faith in the English constitution, he rejected any democratic restraint on the monarch, whose government of the nation was sovereign. In the Tory philosophy to which Charles Burney subscribed, as Richard Tuck explains, a monarch might delegate some of his or her authority to a ministry or legislative body but could not transfer sovereignty.[6] It was, however, the inevitable tendency of the Revolution to displace this sovereignty onto another power—whether it was to be the "People," or a national assembly, or a constitution, or an elected "limited-time" monarch—and to govern the nation according to a set of unwritten but "fundamental" laws.[7] From the beginning, the intent of the revolutionaries—or at least those who came to be known as the *constitutionels*—was that France after the Revolution was to be governed by a constitution to which all persons, including the monarch, would be subordinate—something that monarchists like Dr. Burney could not envision.

Margaret Anne Doody describes Charles Burney's politics a little differently. Though a man of undoubted genius and drive, Charles Burney was a "devout snob" (300) who "always found difficulty in acting without permission" (16). He "was to inculcate in his children the pervasive dread of offending someone whose permission should be asked" (16). Frances Burney's reticence to enter into political questions, her tendency to novelize political discussions rather than to engage in them directly, and her ambivalent statements about the French Revolution make it difficult to determine when, or even if, she fully relinquished the anti-democratic views of her father, but her letters and journals of 1789 suggest that she heard accounts of the events in France from several eyewitnesses whose perspective on the Revolution differed from Dr. Burney's.

Burney makes several oblique references to the French Revolution in the weeks after the fall of the Bastille on 14 July 1789. She first mentions it in a letter to Susanna dated Sunday, 25 July. The royal family had embarked on a tour of the southwestern counties of

England, meant to help the King recover his health and to demonstrate to the world that he was still "himself" (*CJL* 5: 141). In unspoken but unmistakable contrast to the travails of the House of Bourbon in France, Burney emphasizes the "applauses" that follow this "beloved King" throughout his progress from one town to the next, which are "so affecting … that, upon my word, I have taken it in turn, almost to *laugh* & *cry*" during their time on the road. "Hurras, shouts, blessings, processions, triumphal arches, Illuminations, follow all his footsteps—& he receives it all" with "a moderation, an equanimity & composure (*CJL* 5: 398). In Weymouth, the royal party attends a performance of Elizabeth Inchbald's comedy *The Midnight Hour*, followed by *The Commissary*. The afterpiece, says Frances, is "comic to convulsion," and the "burlesque of [John] Quick and Mrs. [Mary] Wells united, made me laugh quite immoderately" (*CJL* 5: 332). Her laughter in this paragraph, however, is suddenly reversed in the next paragraph but one, when she notes the arrival of a visitor, Mr. Parish,[8] who has just come "from France—where all is confusion, commotion, & impending revolution" *(CJL* 5: 332). Burney does not enter into the details of Mr. Parish's account, nor does she characterize his political views, probably in deference to the contract she has made with herself through which she can write, but not about politics. Her reticence may be due as well to the fact that the views of her sister (and those of the Locks, to whom Susanna could be expected to read the letter) were a good deal more republican than her own.[9]

A second, very brief reference to the events in France comes about ten days later, on the 4th of August, again in a journal letter. Burney describes a dinner party attended by the Queen's Reader, a Swiss national named Jean André De Luc, who has brought his nephew to Weymouth to "shew off" at court (*CJL* 5: 356). Mr. De Luc "started France—& took up the whole discourse in talking over its affairs" (*CJL* 5: 356). Burney comments several times in the journals on her difficulties in understanding De Luc, "a Person so slow & methodical in discourse, so explanatory of everything & nothing" that listening to him was "truly painful to endure" (*CJL* 4: 535), so it is perhaps not surprising that she does not record his remarks on the Revolution. But De Luc's discourse, even if delivered in his "very imperfect knowledge

of English" (*CJL* 1: 259), probably offered Burney some insights into the Revolution presumably from an Enlightenment perspective. A member of the Royal Society in London and a former member of the Council of Two Hundred in Geneva, De Luc maintained a wide correspondence with literary, scientific, and political figures on the Continent, and in 1793 he was invited to return to Geneva to help restore the constitution of 1768 (an invitation he declined).[10]

Two weeks after the dinner (perhaps drawing on De Luc's discourse without specifically alluding to it), Burney gingerly describes the events in France as "a picture of voluntary misery that is dreadful," a passage that she later obliterated (*CJL* 5: 398). In his reply on the 2nd of September to his daughter's letter, Dr. Burney passes on some accounts he had received from Arthur Young, who had been travelling in France at the time of the fall of the Bastille. Dr. Burney writes indignantly of the "present Mob-governmt of France," which he compares adversely to "that of Constantinople or Morocco" (Berg).[11] The "Mob in the Senate," he declares, "breathe by choice or compulsion the impracticable principles of the Mob *out* of doors. The *rights of mankind,* are talked of by both as absurdly as Cha^{s} Fox's *majesty of the people*." He denounces the idea of "*Egalité* de condition" as "impracticable nonsense." Men of reason, probity, and abilities, says Dr. Burney, are "*leveled*" with ignorance and rascality during a revolution. "Nature has made our minds no more alike than our face & figure. There are tall minds, as well as tall bodies. Difference of intellect as well as of muscular strength will always occasion inequality," which is the natural state of mankind. The French Revolution, on the other hand, disturbs the natural order of subordination of one rank to another in society.

Burney replies to her father's letter on 22 September. With lavish hyperbole, Burney assures her father that no King before George, "except in the moment of Victory or foreign triumph," has been so well received. "His footsteps have almost been kissed, his name is almost adored;—the contrast with our poor ruined neighbors, which has struck all ranks of people in our Tour, seems to have heightened both fondness & exultation" (*CJL* 5: 432). She has read Dr. Burney's comments on the state of France to a "great Lady," not further

identified but possibly the Queen, who has acknowledged their "aptness and excellence—particularly the truth of his epigram, 'There are Tall minds as well as Tall bodies'" (*CJL* 5: 432). Burney adds her own praise to her father's epigram, which she says is "so spirited, & so just, that I have seen nothing upon the melancholy subject" that surpasses it (*CJL* 5: 432–33), and she adds an epigram of her own—"Surely those poor people have all been bit by mad Dogs—there seems too little method in their madness to suppose it simply of deranged intellects" (*CJL* 5: 433). In her epigram, Burney deflects her father's criticism of the French with an ironic suggestion involving rabies, dismisses the notion that the madness of the French is due to "deranged intellects," and segues into an area in which they can agree, which is the absurdity of a recent review of Dr. Burney's *History of Music*. It seems likely that Burney disagrees with her father's extreme skepticism of the possibility of human liberty and equality but is reluctant to dispute the point with him.

Burney further elaborates her position on the Revolution in a letter to her father dated 27 October. Burney feels "joy & thanksgiving" mixed with a "recollective melancholy" when she reflects on King George's madness, which might have led to a political revolution had he not recovered. It is impossible for Burney not to feel joy at "*our escape*" without immediately comparing it to the "sudden adversity of the French" (*CJL* 5: 441). "Truly terrible & tremendous are revolutions such as these," she says; "There is nothing in old History that I shall any longer think fabulous" (*CJL* 5: 441). Burney likens the *poissardes*, the working-class women of Paris who led the protest against the price of bread on 5 October, to the Amazons of ancient mythology. She also compares the leaders of the mob that sacked the Bastille to the legendary heroes Theseus and Hercules, both of whom slew monsters associated with an *ancien regime*. If the stories coming out of France are true, says Burney, then the ancient legends may be true as well. There is nothing in ancient history "more wonderful, nor of more *sounding* improbability, than the demolition of this Great Nation, which rises up, all against itself, for its own ruin—perhaps annihilation" (*CJL* 5: 441). Burney's comparisons seem at first to suggest that the reports of heroic deeds by ordinary men and women in France are as improbable

as the ancient legends; if, however, the reports are true, then we can "no longer doubt their existence or their prowess" (*CJL* 5: 442). Her sentiments about the Revolution are still ambiguous, because she does not applaud the *poissardes* or the mob that attacked the Bastille, but she clearly now believes in the historical significance of their revolution.

On the 29th of October—two days after Frances Burney compares the *poissardes* and the mythological Amazons—Charles Burney borrows his daughter's *bon mot* in a letter to Arthur Young. "The *Poissardes* are but the *amazons* of the present day," he says, "& the leaders at the attack of the *Bastille* the *Hercules* and *Theseus*" (Berg). In re-cycling his daughter's analogy between ancient and modern history, Dr. Burney draws a conclusion exactly opposite to the point she had made: "whether a total *levelling scheme* can be rendered permanent in a great Empire, or no, time, not experience, can shew. I used to think *la loi des plus forts*, only existed among savages, and that in Society there were *tall minds* as well as tall bodies; but none such have yet appeared in France," he intones. Thus Dr. Burney calls for the emergence of a "tall mind in a tall body" to re-establish order in France, not knowing, of course, that the future emperor of France would be a bit shorter than average in stature.

A few weeks after this exchange with her father about the historical precedents of the revolution in France, Frances attended a royal command performance of the comic play *The Dramatist, or Stop Him Who Can* by John O'Keefe. The playhouse, the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden, is so crowded that, although Burney's party has a reserved box, not even the manager of the theatre can escort them to it. Burney and Mrs. Stainforth, the housekeeper at the Queen's House in London, accept the assistance of a gentleman who seems to know who they are, though he later asks each of them individually who the other lady is. This enterprising gentleman was Hervey Redmond Morres, 2nd Viscount Mountmorres (1741/2–97) of Castle Morres, co. Kilkenny, Ireland.[12] He was known to Stainforth, and Burney had met him once before, the previous year at Cheltenham, although she could not recollect where she had seen him.[13] Stainforth, having lost her cloak and loudly lamenting her loss, asks anyone who finds it to bring it to the Queen's House (*CJL* 5: 452), which gives Lord Mountmorres an

opportunity to offer his services. De Luc, their designated protector, stands in the middle of the crowd, making "grave arguments" about their "*right to proceed*, & the *wrong of not making way for us*" as the mob pushes past him (*CJL* 5: 451). As Burney develops the scene, it begins to resemble a parody of the recent pandemonium in Paris in which Burney and Stainforth represent the Amazonian *poissardes*, while the crowd resembles the "many-headed mob" that acts with uncontrolled passion, ignoring both the rational arguments of the French *philosophes* and the commands of the royal bodyguards.

When King George enters the theatre, there was "such thundering clapping, knocking with sticks, & shouting, & so universal a chorus of God save the King" that Burney forgets the inconveniences of her situation and cries for joy (*CJL* 5: 453). Her Irish lord joins in the celebration by knocking his stick on the floor, but he wonders aloud to Burney that the King, who is a man of fine feeling, must find the display of loyalty embarrassing. Mountmorres's sensibility, along with the disclosure that he had strongly supported the Pitt administration's side in the debates in the Irish House of Lords on the Regency question, gives him the appearance of a sympathetic and trustworthy character. While returning to Ireland for the Regency debates, he had suffered a coaching accident in which his leg had been severely injured. This injury, which still causes him pain, makes him something of a sufferer for the Regency—a term that Burney often applies to the King himself—and gives Burney an additional reason to invite Mountmorres to be seated next to her when she is finally shown by the theatre manager to his own box, just above the royals.

As the evening wears on, the noise in the theatre prevents Burney from hearing the actors, and it is Mountmorres who becomes the chief source of her entertainment. "We talked a great deal of France," Burney writes, "& he related to me a variety of anecdotes just fresh imported [from] thence" (*CJL* 5: 456). Mountmorres tells Burney that he had attended the "first assembling [of] the Notables" and had seen "impending great events from that assemblage." He was chiefly impressed by "two remarkable things . . . in this wonderful Revolution": "first, that the *French* Guards should ever give up their *King*, & secondly, that the chief spirit & capacity hitherto shewn

amongst individuals, had come from the *Ecclesiastics*" (*CJL* 5: 456).

Once again, Burney gives only a brief summary of their conversation. She says enough, however, to show that she and Mountmorres entered deeply into the politics that led to the Revolution. Mountmorres, it seems, had attended the Assembly of Notables that was convened to consider the financial reforms proposed by Jacques Necker.[14] The Notables decided that all reforms, especially new taxes, should be referred to a newly revived body, the Estates General, in contradiction to the will of Louis XVI, who held that his edict alone was sufficient to adopt any new schemes. The Estates General, consisting of the clergy, the nobility, and a Third Estate of landowners and gentry, was convened in May of 1789 and almost immediately transformed itself into a National Assembly. An important factor in the proclamation of the National Assembly on June 17 was the alliance of a significant number of the lower clergy and some of the nobility with the Third Estate, which enabled the creation of a single legislative body.[15] Additionally, not long after the proclamation of the National Assembly, defections also began to occur in the ranks of the *Gardes Françaises*, or French Guards, an elite regiment of infantry in the King's household, which shared responsibility with the Swiss Guards and the *Garde de Corps* for maintaining public order in Paris. On the 14th of July, deserters from the French Guards seized arms from the Invalides, which they then used in the storming of the Bastille (Hardman 327–28).[16]

These two defections have one common characteristic: each constitutes a repudiation of the absolute authority of the monarch. The clergy and nobility who joined the Third Estate in the proclamation of a National Assembly defied the clear preference of Louis XVI for three orders, each of which would have a single vote, rather than a unitary Assembly which would vote by head count. Similarly, the refusal of the French Guards to follow orders constituted a mutiny against the military commanders whose authority derived ultimately from the King. Instead of obeying orders or seeking permission to dissent, the clergy and the French Guards acted on their own authority, running the risk of the consequences. Lord Mountmorres does not defend their conduct (at least as Burney summarizes the conversation), nor does

he give a lecture on the Rights of Man (as De Luc might have done if he were not still down in the lobby, haranguing passersby about Mrs. Stainforth's cloak). But it is significant that the two moments of the French Revolution recorded by Burney from the account given by Lord Mountmorres are those in which there is an abrogation of the principle of subservience to persons of superior rank and authority that was so highly valued by Dr. Burney.

The scene concludes with a prediction by Lord Mountmorres that the "spirit of the times" will eventually "come round to this Island" (*CJL* 5: 457). When Burney asks him what might be the "pretence" of a revolution in Britain, Mountmorres replies "The *Game Laws* . . . & the *tithes*." The Game Laws, a series of Acts that restricted and criminalized the taking of game in royal forests or private lands, and the tithes, a system of land taxes paid in agricultural produce, were considered oppressive in many quarters of Britain and Ireland as they had been in France. Once again, Burney merely records these grievances, without entering into their justice or their merit as grounds for revolution. But she credits Lord Mountmorres with having "enlarged my *political knowledge* abundantly" (*CJL* 5: 457), which suggests that she has absorbed the constitutional and economic issues that underlay the agitations in France, rather than dismissing the Revolution as the effect of the bites of mad dogs or the mindless action of the mob. It is possible that Mountmorres, who went on to publish numerous books and essays on constitutional questions in Irish politics, benefitted from this conversation as well as Burney.

The demonstration of affection for the King by the audience at the playhouse points to another contrast between England and revolutionary France that Burney develops in her journals. As the royal party progresses through the country towns of Winchester, Romsey, Lyndhurst, Salisbury, Blundford, and Dorchester, Burney records the "acclamation" with which the King is received (*CJL* 5: 305–10). She notes that his "popularity is greater than ever," and that his "late sufferings" have "endeared him now to all conditions of men." When he bathes in the sea at Weymouth, "a machine follows the Royal one, into the sea, filled with Fiddlers who play God Save the King as His Majesty takes his plunge!" (*CJL* 5: 316). When the King and

Queen eat dinner, the "delighted mob . . . broke down all the paling, & much of the Hedges, & some of the windows," so eager are they to see their "Monarch at Table"; yet, they are "perfectly civil & well behaved" (*CJL* 5: 307).[17] When the royals walk through Weymouth, "an immense crowd attended them,— Sailors, Bargemen, Mechanics, Countrymen,—& all united in so vociferous a volley of God save the King, that the noise was stunning" (*CJL* 5: 311). Not until the royal party returns to Windsor in September does Burney give any hint that the popular reception of the King may be something less than universal and spontaneous, and even then she blames the absence of a cheering multitude on his early arrival: the King "was to have been received by this favoured Town with every mark of grateful exultation; but by anticipating expectation 2 full Hours, the Joy was unprepared" (*CJL* 5: 425). Burney's dry passive voice, "was to have been received," shows how well she knew that this reception, if not all of the others, was to have been a carefully stage-managed affair.

Burney knew that the popular acclamation of the recovered King, even if it was contrived or assisted in many instances by local authorities, was an important part of the British monarch's claim to sovereignty. As Burney implies in her journal entry, and as Linda Colley confirms in her history of the Hanoverian period, George III had not been a particularly popular king through the 1760s and '70s (208). Not until after he had suffered his debilitating illness in the winter of 1788–89 and after he had emerged from it to become a symbol of national unity in the face of turmoil and disunity in France, did he enjoy widespread public acceptance (Colley 212). In a sense, George III had played the part of Thomas Hobbes's "sleeping sovereign" during his madness.[18] The "sleeping sovereign" was a monarch whose appointees govern in his stead while he is absent from power, which raises the question of whether (and how) his authority is to be re-established on his return. In the absence of any democratic process for the renewal of a hereditary monarchy, the acclamation of the crowds along the route of the royal progression or in the theatres to the tune of "God Save the King" gave George the visible public endorsement he needed to withstand the Regency on the one hand, or revolution on the other, either of which might, in the absence of public

acclaim, have brought an end to his reign. In her insistence upon that acclaim, even if it should not be entirely authentic, Burney seems to show her sensibility of the need to celebrate and to validate the return of the sleeping sovereign—a need which her father, who never doubted the monarch's sovereignty, may not have felt.

After leaving the court in July 1791, Burney evidently felt freer to take a more active role in alleviating the effects of the Revolution. With the newspapers full of reports about the plight of the French clergy, who had been required by the Jacobin government to take a "Civic Oath" that in effect placed them under secular rather than religious authority,[19] Burney and Anna Ord took a "Tour for Health" in August to Winchester and Salisbury (*JL* 1: 18). Burney happened to view the ruins of the "King's House" in Winchester, a palace that had been begun, but was never completed, by Charles II in 1683. She notes in her journal that she would like to see it completed, "for an Hospital, or Infirmary; I have written Mrs. Schwellenberg an account of its appearance & state, which I am sure will be read by Her Majesty" (*JL* 1: 14). As usual, Burney is reticent about the content of her letter, which has been lost, so it is not certain what use she proposed to Mrs. Schwellenberg for the hospital. But within a few months, the Home Office received (presumably from the royal household) a memorandum that called for "the protection and victualling" of the French clergy at Winchester, and by September 1792 the project of converting the King's House into a hospital for French clergy had received royal approval.[20] It would appear that Burney was the initiator of the project for compassionate if not for political reasons. At the request of Frances Anne Crewe, Frances wrote a pamphlet, *Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French Clergy: Earnestly Submitted to the Humane Consideration of the Ladies of Great Britain*, which sought to raise money for the emigrant clergy, but when she was asked by Mrs. Crewe to contribute to a new anti-radical publication, she declined (Doody 205).

In all of these ways—her willingness to engage in conversations about revolutionary politics, her memorializing of public acclaim for an unelected sovereign, her interest in remedying the effects of the revolution on an expatriated clergy—Burney demonstrated a political

sensibility that differed from her father's. Yet it is still not quite clear when or how the difference between their views became visible to both. For Frances, the difference must have become apparent in the first weeks of 1793 after the execution of Louis XVI and the arrival of the small party of *émigrés* in Mickleham led by the comte de Narbonne and Madame de Staël. The latter's effect on Frances Burney was immediate: in her conversation, her authorship, and her grasp of European affairs, Madame de Staël was the antithesis of the type of the courtly lady whom one might expect the wife of the Swedish ambassador to be. She was, Burney enthused to her father, "a woman of the first abilities, I think, I have ever seen," superior even to the beloved Mrs. Thrale (*JL* 2: 17). Similarly, Burney found in Alexandre d'Arblay "one of the most singularly interesting Characters that can ever have been formed," a man with "a sincerity, a frankness, an ingenuous openness of nature" (*JL* 2: 19) markedly superior to the coldness and duplicity of her previous suitors, the Reverend George Owen Cambridge and Colonel Stephen Digby. Dr. Burney warned his daughter in a letter of 19 February 1793, that her new associate, Madame de Staël, had kept a house in Paris that was "the centre of Revolutionists" (*JL* 2: 20), among them her reputed lover, the comte de Narbonne. She was, he further remarked, the daughter of Jacques Necker, whose administration "first joined in the violent measures that subverted the anct establishmts by the abolition of nobility & ruin of the Church" (*JL* 2: 20). Dr. Burney thus blamed Necker, and implicitly his daughter, for initiating reforms that they could not control, and which had since led to mob rule. To this letter, Frances sent a detailed reply on 22 February, distinguishing between the "revolutionists"—the Jacobin party, which had condemned the King and other aristocrats to death—and the "Constitutionalists," now considered counter-revolutionary, some of whom had emigrated to England and other nations. It was a great point to Frances Burney—though the point was now moot—that many Constitutionalists would have accepted a limited monarchy as part of their system of government, while the Republicans (or "revolutionists") had no room for an unelected sovereign. To her father, however, all of the events in France since 1789 were "abominations," all democrats were "oppressors," and all governments formed on the "majesty of the

people" were so much tyranny of the mob.[21]

The question of the mob and its role in a democracy brings us back to the *Court Journal* for 1789, in which Burney's tale of an evening with Lord Mountmorres is concluded with an odd remark about the radical politician John Wilkes. "But I must tell you," she writes, addressing her sister Susanna Burney Phillips, "a good sort of *quirk* of Mr Wilkes: who, when the power of the Mob, & their cruelty, were first reciting, quarreled with a Gentleman for saying the French Government was become a *Democracy*, & asserted it was rather a *Mob*ocracy" (*CJL* 5: 457). Wilkes, once known as the champion of liberty who was able to draw on the "mob" for his support, had become in the 1780s an ally of the Pitt ministry against the new liberalism of Charles James Fox.[22] "Thus do we veer about!" comments Burney plumply. Her comment is both ironic and oddly prescient: ironic in that it puts Dr. Burney and his nemesis, John Wilkes, on the same side with respect to the mob; and prescient in that it foretells the way that her own opinions, almost without her knowing, were beginning to "veer about" from the Toryism of her father toward the constitutionalism that would permit a measure of liberty while putting restraints on the rule of the mob. In separating herself from Wilkes, she also distances herself from her father, and, through the intervention of Lord Mountmorres, starts down a path that will lead her, a few years later, to a little party of *émigrés* at Mickleham and the next chapter of her life.

NOTES

[1] For bibliographical information on the volumes of the *Court Journals and Letters*, see the Works Cited. Volumes cited in the text are abbreviated as *CJL*; volumes of the *Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* are abbreviated as *JL*.

[2] Frances Burney's Court service is briefly summarized by Peter Sabor in the Introduction to Volume 1 (*CJL* 1: xvii–xxv) and described at length by Hester Davenport in *Faithful Handmaid: Fanny Burney at the Court of King George III*.

[3] Margaret Anne Doody describes the political views of Alexandre d'Arblay in *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1988), 199–200. The differences among the political parties in revolutionary France are defined by d'Arblay himself in a memorandum quoted by Joyce Hemlow in *JL* 1: xii–xiv. For Burney and Germaine de Staël, see Doody 199–200.

[4] Peter Sabor suggests that the person who thus cautioned Frances was her father (*CJL* 1: 1 n. 3), but the advice may equally have been given by Mary Delany, who advised her on the protocols to be followed at Court, or by Leonard Smelt, who assisted in obtaining her the appointment. See Davenport 25 and 37.

[5] Roger Lonsdale, *Dr. Charles Burney: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965), 347.

[6] The historical distinction between sovereignty and government is the subject of Richard Tuck's *The Sleeping Sovereign: The Invention of Modern Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015). Tuck argues that Rousseau's political philosophy was "Hobbes's with an inconsistency removed" (141) in that Hobbes denied that the monarch's sovereignty could be transferred but did not deny transfers of power from one assembly to another, which essentially meant that democratic assemblies were not sovereign.

[7] The sovereignty of Louis XVI of France and the need for a written constitution are discussed by John Hardman in *The Life of Louis XVI* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2016), 29–30. Hardman describes the unwritten "fundamental" laws of France on pp. 5, 161, 286.

[8] Burney does not fully identify "Mr. Parish," but he is probably Woodbine Parish (*c.*1768–1848), the son of a friend of the father of Margaret Planta (1754–1834), who served as English teacher in the Royal nursery and was a member of the tour. See *CJL* 5: 332 n. 819.

[9] In a letter to her sister (August 1791), Frances quips that she has become acquainted with several French aristocrats, which she says went better for them "than it would have done with you Republicans of Norbury and Mickleham!" (*JL* 1: 15). Susanna's reply admits the "confusion and anarchy" of the Revolution but defends its goals.

[10] For De Luc's family and career, see Tunbridge, as well as the articles on De Luc in the *ODNB* and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1910–11).

[11] In a letter (September 1792) to Frances Anne Crewe, who shared his political views, Dr. Burney gave his conviction that there is "no Tyrant so cruel, nor no Sovereign so worthless, as that of the Mob" (Lonsdale 364).

[12] Hervey Redmond Morres (1741/2–97), 2nd Viscount Mountmorres, was the son of Hervey Morres (d. 1766), 1st Viscount Mountmorres of Castle Morres, co. Kilkenny, by his first wife, Letitia Ponsonby (*c.*1720–54). He was a member of the Irish House of Lords and of the Irish Volunteers and published numerous books and essays on Irish political subjects. He died by suicide in 1797, depressed by the state of Irish affairs (Robert Dunlop, revised by Alexander Du Toit, "Morres, Hervey Redmond," *ODNB*).

[13] For Burney's account of her encounter with Mountmorres at Cheltenham, see *CJL* 4: 421–22.

[14] For a fuller account of the political events that led to the formation of the National Assembly, see Hardman 248–50 and 304–12.

[15] For a contemporary account of the role of the clergy in the formation of the National Assembly, see the *London Chronicle*, 2–4 June 1789.

[16] Contemporary newspaper accounts also noted the alliance of the clergy and military: a "Letter to the Clergy" in the *Whitehall Evening Post* for 19–22 September 1789 remarked that "the clergy and the military in France seem to have entered into a reciprocal engagement: if the parsons will pray for the soldiers, the soldiers declare their resolution of fighting for the parsons."

[17] Burney's description of this dining scene in her journal letter of 25 June (*CJL* 5: 307) also appears in her letter of 26 June to her father. A striking similarity in the two passages is the civil behavior of the "mob" in both cases: "they broke the windows, by their multitudes, & forced down all the wooden fences round the House, yet without the *least* riot or disorder, merely by the weight of their numbers." The crowd sang "God Save the King" until they were "so hoarse, I longed to

send them out a little *sugar candy*, or some Lozenges; though perhaps they would have said Ale would do as well.—" (*CJL* 5: 314).

[18] For Hobbes's use of the "sleeping sovereign" metaphor in *De Cive* and the *Elements of Law*, see Tuck 86–91. Hobbes, however, is interested in the question of the sovereignty of a monarch who has gone into exile, not madness, as well as the role of an elected or "time-limited" governor who may take the sovereign's place.

[19] See for example *Lloyd's Evening Post* for 10 June 1791.

[20] For the memoranda, see National Archives HO 42/22/1 Fol. 1–2; HO 42/21/240 Fol. 599–601; HO 42/21/253 Fol. 631–32; HO 42/21/276 Fol. 691–92. In the last, the Duke of Richmond urges the Home Secretary to provide bedding and furniture for the French clergy at the King's House in Winchester and not to be put off by "any of Pitt's stinginess." *The Times* of London for 27 September 1792 reports that "It is decided" that the French clergy are to be housed in the King's House at Winchester.

[21] Charles Burney to Mrs. Crewe, 19 September, 31 October, and 2 December 1792, quoted in Lonsdale 364.

[22] Wilkes's political reversal is recounted by Colley (108), who cites an election manifesto from 1784, British Library Add. MS. 30866, fol. 54.

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